

**Traversing the Periphery: Focalization in Cen Shen's Frontier Settings
Within the Context of Chinese Frontier Poetry**

by

Daymon Joseph Macmillan
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2000

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Pacific and Asian Studies

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University of Victoria

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has two main objectives: to first discuss the defining characteristics of frontier poetry (biansaishi 边塞诗) while showing how this subgenre of poetry blossomed during the Tang 唐 period prior to the An Lushan rebellion (anshizhiluan 安史之乱), and then to focus on one Tang frontier poet in particular, Cen Shen 岑参 (715-770), for a sustained critical investigation into how the poet-narrators of his texts focalize three types of frontier settings, namely landscapes of intense heat, cold and vast distances. These two objectives necessitate dividing the thesis into a bipartite structure, which is further subdivided into six chapters. Chapters one through three address the first objective of the thesis, that of surveying frontier poetry as it pertains to the subgenre's flourishing during Tang period. Chapters four through six endeavour to traverse Cen Shen's frontier settings with a critical eye on uncovering patterns behind the manner in which the poet-narrators perceive China's borderland regions, and to show how these patterns are repeated across disparate poems where the frontier setting itself features prominently. The result of such an analysis is the realization of an underlying foundation of focalization connecting the poet-narrators in each of Cen Shen's three major frontier environments.

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Part One: Overview of High Tang Frontier Poetry

Introductory Remarks

Part one of the thesis seeks to acquaint the reader with the core thematic concerns of Chinese frontier poetry, and to show how during the High Tang (sheng Tang 盛唐) period, especially those years prior to the outbreak of the An Lushan rebellion, poets writing within the frontier poetry subgenre treated its major themes with a degree of depth and complexity that often far surpassed thematically similar texts of preceding eras. The three chapters comprising this first part of the thesis are also meant to establish a background for part two's more precise investigations into one specific aspect of frontier poetry, that of focalization in Cen Shen's frontier landscapes.

Chapter one is an introductory overview of historical and cultural factors influencing the impetus among many learned men to serve on China's frontier, actions which in turn impacted the writing of frontier poetry. The chapter also defines “frontier” (biansai 边塞), and then acquaints the reader with the geographic frontier through a short tour of the Tang borderlands as revealed through excerpts of several Tang dynasty frontier poems.

Chapter two then discusses several pre-Tang poetic works which anticipate three core thematic elements of Chinese frontier poetry: responses to frontier war, both of those dispatched to the border and those far from military clashes yet who were still affected by the phenomenon; descriptions of encounters with the people and customs of China's borderlands; and illustrations of the geography and meteorological conditions of these regions. When relevant, the chapter also juxtaposes examples of Tang frontier poetry with these early thematic precedents in order to connect such early thematic stirrings with texts that have since come to be regarded as the epitome of the subgenre.

Finally, chapter three explores how a number of Tang poets, most notably Gao Shi and Cen Shen, remained within the basic conventions of the subgenre yet also enhanced the thematic scope of

frontier poetry by writing poems that often blended the standards of conventional renderings with personal experience and insight into living on the frontier. The result of such infusions was a more complex body of frontier poetry that combined the reality of the frontier with established literary practices of portraying the events, peoples and setting of the region. However, before detailing and discussing such progress, the chapter opens with a summary of critical concerns with the “frontier poetry” paradigm in categorizing both poetry and poets, and how such a classificatory scheme, while offering a particular approach to understanding a body of poetry, can also limit readers' appreciation of a poet's thematically diverse oeuvre when the poet himself becomes exclusively associated with one subgenre.

Without these preceding chapters on the sub-generic features and development of frontier poetry during the Tang dynasty, the more theoretical and specific concerns of part two would seem far too removed from the poetic tradition within which the primary texts being explored exist. It was out of respect for both the literary context visited in part two of the thesis, as well as a desire to become better acquainted with the subgenre's heritage and principal themes, that these first three chapters were written. If successful, part one of this thesis will also familiarize the reader with the main thematic features of frontier poetry, especially that of frontier poetry during the High Tang period, and thus preempt any confusion that might arise regarding the breadth of the subgenre when in part two one specific feature is rigorously examined using an approach about which little has been written in either English or Chinese language criticism.

Part One: Overview of High Tang Frontier Poetry

Chapter One: General Introduction

1.1. A Brief Historical Sketch

While the Han 汉 dynasty¹ was a time of discovery and military expansion, and the Northern and Southern dynasties² (Nanbei chao 南北朝) an era of reversal which witnessed the incursion of non-Chinese peoples into northern China, the Tang 唐 (618-907) dynasty was a combination of both movements as China at this juncture was both expanding outwards while concurrently encountering large numbers of non-Chinese peoples and their associated culture and customs. Under the Han, China's borders were populated by nomadic tribes whose cultures and lifestyles were unfamiliar and seen as inferior by many people who identified themselves as Han Chinese. This sense of “Chinese” as defined through systematic contrasts with northern nomads at the the empire's borders became a key notion of Han civilization, one which would become blurred when ruling families derived from peoples inhabiting these peripheral lands would control northern China during the time of the Northern and Southern dynasties. However, by the time of the Tang circumstances had changed. The territories belonging to the previous Northern and Southern dynasties had been unified under the Sui 隋 (581-618) until an uprising led to the imperial reins passing on to what would become the Tang dynasty, and again, as had been the reality during the Han dynasty, a world of Eurasian states with China at the centre emerged.³

1 The Han dynasty is divided into two periods with the Western Han (西汉) covering the years 206 BC to 25 AD and the Eastern Han (Dong Han 东汉) occupying the years 25 AD to 220 AD on China's dynastic time scale.

2 A series of Northern and Southern dynasties lasting from 420 to 589 AD.

3 This paragraph borrows heavily from Mark Edward Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 145-46.

Every dynasty had “frontier” issues – instabilities along borders which abutted non-Chinese peoples – but this was especially complex during the Tang as foreign encroachments were mounting from every border region⁴ of the empire, forcing great expenditures of wealth and attention that were to have a huge influence on every facet of Tang society.⁵ One notable sector was the literary, in particular those poets whose complex responses to the country's northern and western frontiers ranged from imaginative musings to personal experiences with the terrain, conflicts and cultures of China's near abroad. Given the presence of a multiplicity of non-Chinese ethnic groups and the consequent incursions and clashes endured by inhabitants on both sides as the Tang sought to pacify, while enlarging its borders, what would come to be read as “Tang frontier poetry” would occupy an important position in the Chinese literary world. The plethora of military themed poems with titles such as “In the Army” (“Congjun xing” 从军行) and “On the Frontier” (“Chu sai” 出塞), poems composed by an array of writers both associated and unassociated with frontier poetry, among whom some also had experience serving military generals in China's border regions, is testament to the impact of the frontier on Tang literary society.⁶

Until the An Lushan rebellion⁷ (Anshi zhi luan 安史之乱) rattled the foundations of the Tang empire, there had been a relatively long period of stability and prosperity in the country. It was during these halcyon decades when many poets hankered to have the value of their opinions and ideas recognized by influential officials. With the empire's domain ever increasing, the potential for fame and

4 A definition of “frontier”, one both linguistic and geographic, will follow shortly.

5 Hong Zan 洪赞 *Tangdai zhanzhengshi yanjiu* 唐代战争诗研究 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe 文史哲出版社 1987), p. 7.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 83

7 The An Lushan rebellion began on December 16th. 755 when general An Lushan revolted in response to a plot to have him removed from power. After thirty four days of haphazard resistance, An captured Luoyang 洛阳, one of two capitals of the Tang, and proclaimed himself emperor of a new, albeit ephemeral, dynasty. The rebellion was finally quashed in early 763 after having continued under a number of An Lushan's successors. The effects of the rebellion were especially devastating on Tang border defences whose troops were withdrawn to confront the uprising. The resultant military weakness and loss of territory would gradually enervate the former power of the Tang empire. See Charles Benn, *China's Golden Age: Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 9-13. For a detailed account of the rebellion, see E.G. Pulleyblank, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

recognition through martial employment as an officer or official's assistant simultaneously rose; by rendering meritorious service on the frontier, often as clerks or secretaries to generals or other military officials based beyond central China, those who had not advanced their position in society through more conventional means could possibly attain their long sought success. This route to official advancement led many literarily capable men to express a concern for the situation on the Tang borders, which in verse was often articulated, though by no means exclusively, as an enthusiasm for heading to the frontier with the hope of engaging in military work.⁸

The Tang period witnessed numerous men of literary inclinations committing themselves to military campaigns in far off northern regions. Aside from patriotic fervour, a Confucian concern for implementing one's studies⁹ as well as an attitude of self sacrifice¹⁰ and sense of responsibility to take up public office¹¹ were major motivating factors propelling poets and literati to the frontier.¹² From the founding of the Tang, numerous prime ministers had risen through the political ranks at court by way of victories they had acquired while serving in a military capacity on the country's frontier¹³. With martial matters having gained in importance, a significant number of poetically gifted men also sought to devote their talents to military efforts¹⁴ by casting off strict scholarly pursuits in order to have their abilities revealed before a politically relevant and influential audience who could bestow official government positions, and consequently fame, as a reward for contributing to the defence of the

8 Hong Zan, *Tangdai zhanzhenengshi yanjiu*, pp. 39-41.

9 See the opening of the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 论语): "The Master stated: Is it not a pleasure at times to put into practice what one has learned?" 子曰: 学而时习之, 不亦说乎. See Li Jie 李捷 ed., *Lunyu* 论语 (Hohhot: Yuanfang chufanshe 远方出版社, 2007), p. 1.

10 See opening of chapter 19 of the *Analects*: "The scholar, seeing danger, will sacrifice his life" 士见危致命. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

11 "After completing his learning, the student should become an officer" 学而友则仕. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

12 Many thanks to Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin for drawing my attention to the influence of Confucian thought on learned men as an impetus fuelling their desire to serve on the frontier. See also Tsung-Cheng Lin, "Knight-Errantry: Tang Frontier Poems" (Chapter 11), in Professor Zong-Qi Cai, ed. *Stories of Chinese Poetic Culture: Earliest Times through the Tang* (New York: Columbia University Press), in press.

13 As revealed by the concept "出将入相" (*chu jiang ru xiang*: be as good a general as a minister; possess military and civil abilities). See Ren Wenjing 任文京 *Tangdai biansaishi de wenhua chanshi* 唐代边塞诗的文化阐释 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 2005), p. 13.

14 As summed up by the expression "投笔从戎" (*tou bi cong rong*: cast aside the pen to join the army), *Ibid.*, p. 13

country. A forthright example of such an attitude is found in the final couplet of Yang Jiong's 杨炯 (650-692) “In the Army” (“Congjun xing” 从军行) where the poetic stance of preferring martial enterprise over scholastic study in the pursuit of establishing one's credentials is made quite plain:

宁为百夫长	I'd rather be the commander of a hundred-soldier troop;
胜作一书生 ¹⁵	It surpasses a lifetime as a scholar. ¹⁶

(lines 7-8)

Gao Shi's 高适 (706-765) “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” 塞下曲)¹⁷ adopts a more acerbic voice to demean complete adherence to scholarly pursuits while praising military feats as a preferred means of establishing one's merits:

结束浮云骏	Fitting the saddle and bridle of the nimble ¹⁸ steeds,
翩翩出从戎	Light and quick they set out to join the army.
且凭王子怒	Trusting in the emperor's fury,
复依将军雄	As well as the general's power and prestige.
万鼓雷殷地	The thunder of ten thousand drums shakes the earth,
千旗火生风	The fire of a thousand scarlet flags gives rise to a wind.
日轮驻霜戈	The sun halts on spears sharp as frost,
月魄悬 ¹⁹ 璫弓	The crescent moon hangs like a carved bow.
青海阵云匝	Battlefield clouds arrayed at <i>Qing Hai</i> , ²⁰
黑山兵气冲	A martial spirit rushes at <i>Hei Shan</i> . ²¹
战酣太白高	At the battle's height, Venus ²² rises high;
战罢旄头空	As the battle ends, <i>Mao Tou</i> ²³ is gone.

15 *Quan Tang Shi* 全唐诗 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chuban 中华书局出版, 1960), 50.611. Hereafter abbreviated as *QTS*

16 Unless otherwise stated, translations of poems, in full or as excerpts, are my own.

17 Written around 753 when Gao Shi served as Chief Secretary (Zhangshu ji 掌书记) in the field office (Mufu 幕府) of Military Commissioner (Jiedushi 节度使) Gesu Han (哥舒翰).

18 Lit. “floating cloud” in the original.

19 Sun Qinshan 孙钦善 ed., *Gaoshi ji jiaozhu* 高适集校注 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 古籍出版社, 1979) (hereafter abbreviated as *GSJZ*) has 丝 (si, silk) as opposed to 悬. I'm following the *QTS* reading of 悬 (xuan, to hang) in order to have a verb parallel with the preceding line's “halt” (zhu, 驻). See *QTS* 221.2189.

20 Name of a lake in the northeastern Qinghai 青海 province. During the Tang period, the area was at the northeastern border of Tu Bo 吐蕃 kingdom.

21 Lit. “Black Mountain”. The mountain lies southeast of Hohhot 呼和浩特 in Inner Mongolia. During the Tang, “Black Mountain”, among other places, stood for the northern frontier.

22 Venus (Jinxing 金星, Taibaixing 太白星) was an omen portending war. When the star was in ascension, fortune in battle was more assured than misfortune; when in declension, the star prognosticated the opposite ([太白] 出高, 用兵深吉, 浅凶; 廓, 浅吉, 深凶. See *Shiji . Tianguan shu* 史记.天官书 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), p. 1324.

23 The Pleiades. Here their disappearance indicates defeat for the enemy.

万里不惜死	Ten thousand <i>li</i> , no concern for death;
一朝得成功	In a single morning he achieved success.
画图麒麟阁	Portrait hung in the Unicorn Pavilion ²⁴
入朝明光宫	The emperor met in <i>Ming Guang</i> palace ²⁵
大笑向文士	Laughing heartily at the scholars
一经何足穷	What use is it to spend a life time poring over one single classic ²⁶ ?
古人昧此道	The ancients were in the dark regarding this truth
往往成老翁 ²⁷	And more often than not they only amounted to old, grey men

In the poem, committing oneself to study as a route to official recognition is forthrightly repudiated, even mocked; eternal acclaim (so long as the portraits' paint does not peel nor pavilions within which they hang crumble) is derived from battle and not books.

When the road to official success by becoming a scholar was blocked, an opportunity remained through employment in a military related role. For those Tang poets ostensibly pursuing the military (wu 武) path to imperial service as opposed to the scholastic (wen 文), the borderlands presented themselves as not only a new world of opportunity but also a realm of the geographically and culturally unfamiliar.²⁸ These places beyond the environs of central China exerted no small amount of creative influence upon the poets' aesthetic and ideological visions while they devoted their intellectual powers to martial causes. The mountainous snowy wilds and endlessly meandering deserts of these territories often infused those works later to be classified as frontier poems with an intensity of imagery and complexity of heroic spirit.²⁹

24 Built during the rule of Han Xuandi 汉宣帝. Noteworthy officials had their portraits painted on the pavilion's walls.

25 A palace which stood during the Han dynasty. Here it refers to the imperial court.

26 "Classic" here referring to scholarly texts studied by Confucian academics.

27 *GSJJZ*, pp. 242-244.

28 See Krzysztof Gawlikowski's "The Origins of the Martial Principle (Wu) Concept", *Cina* No. 22 (1988): 105-122 for a comprehensive explanation of 武 in its relation to 文, a dichotomy which "constituted a backbone of social archetypes[:] scholars and warriors". James Liu's *Chinese Theories of Literature* also cites numerous sources in the Chinese tradition of the semantics constituting 文 over the centuries, including its Confucian association with "scholarship [and] learning". See James Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 7.

29 Ren Wenjing, *Tangdai biansaishi de wenhua chanshi*, p. 21.

In short, general historical factors contributing to what would be regarded as a burgeoning of Chinese frontier poetry during the Tang can be grouped in two categories.³⁰ The first was the frequency of border conflicts with non-Chinese peoples along the northern frontier. The effects of insecure national boundaries engendered numerous poems about the sufferings resulting from constantly having to defend the country's expansive territory as well as the glory which could be found if one's contributions to safeguarding these regions proved significant. Secondly, the Tang period witnessed a number of poets, more so than in other dynastic period, participating in military campaigns (most often in administrative positions) on the frontier. This phenomenon allowed frontier poetry to develop beyond a mere rehashing³¹ of previous themes repeated by poets without first-hand knowledge of China's border regions. These personal encounters with the frontier also encouraged the emergence of novel insights and alluring, peculiar imagery unseen in earlier works referring to the fringes of Chinese civilization.

1.2. Etymological Explanation of “Frontier” (Biansai 边塞)

Kam-lung Ng presents a thorough overview³² of the evolution of the term “biansai” 边塞 (frontier) which details the semantic roots of the individual characters forming the word as well as the concepts signified by the two-character compound as it pertained to the Tang period.

The first character, 边 (bian), means “side” and “border” in modern Chinese. Its earliest incarnation referred to “walking” and “place of great heights” which then came to be extrapolated into

30 He Jipeng 何寄澎 *Luo Ri Zhao Da Qi: Zhongguo gudian shige zhong de biansai* 落日照大旗: 中国古典诗歌中的边塞 (Taipei: Guxiang chubanshe 故乡出版社, 1981), p. 11

31 As was often the case in the Northern and Southern dynasty period when stock imagery of Tang frontier poetry began to crystallize but, unlike the during the Tang, failed to evolve in its application. See He Jipeng, *Luo Ri Zhao Da Qi*, p. 9. By the High Tang, frontier poetry had distinguished itself from previous eras', mainly through voices which shifted between condemnation and approval of martial activity as well as a see-sawing between delight and distaste for the frontier. See Marie Chan, *Kao Shih* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), p. 95.

32 My brief explanation of the term derives mainly from Kam-lung Ng 吴锦龙 “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu 唐代边塞诗研究” M.Phil thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1995. pp. 2-5.

“a far away place”; 边 also refers to the perimeter where neighbouring lands geographically connect with one another.³³ The second character, 塞 (sai), made reference initially to walls built to repel attacks from northern peoples against the disparate kingdoms of the Eastern Zhou period. These architectural feats would eventually link up to form the Chang Cheng 长城, the Great Wall, during the Qin 秦 dynasty. The semantics of the individual “塞” character is poignant in poems with titles such as “On the Frontier” (“Saishang qu” 塞上曲) and “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” 塞下曲) which use the vast tracts of lands bordering the Great Wall as their setting.

By the Tang dynasty, the combination of “biansai” 边塞 into a single term had already become quite common. In its poetic usage, “biansai” tended to refer to China's northwestern border region, a rather general term pointing to the geographic point of separation between Chinese lands and those just outside or tentatively under its control. However, no one particular location was the “frontier”; rather, the designated topography behind “biansai” was mutable, subject to the vicissitudes of imperial expansion and contraction. Though in the majority of linguistic situations where “biansai” was prominent in Tang poems, it was the west, north and northeastern areas where the world immediately external to China and China touched that was designated as “biansai” or “the frontier”.

1.3. Key Locales Forming the Poetic Tang Frontier

Despite the vagueness inherent in such a general term, the Tang frontier did have a number of specific geographic coordinates and place names which particularized a spacial expanse of otherness qualified by yellow sands (huangsha 黄沙), snowy mountains (xueshan 雪山) and grasses which turned

33 Chen Xiuduan 陈秀端 “Cen Shen biansaishi yanjiu 岑参边塞诗研究” M.A. thesis, National Taiwan Normal University 国立台湾师范大学国文研究所国文教学硕士论文, 2004, p. 13

white in hot climates (baicao 白草). The following outline³⁴ derives particulars from frontier themed poems of the High Tang³⁵ (shengtang 盛唐) period which include specific place names pertinent in delineating the northern frontier. The aim of such a sketch is to familiarize the reader with physically and temporarily distant locales common in frontier poetry as they relate to contemporary geographical realities, and is by no means an exhaustive list of every town, region or topographical feature of the Tang frontier.

The northeastern region of the Tang frontier can be visualized as having encompassed the Liao river basin (辽河流域) of modern Liaoning province, Yingzhou³⁶ 营州 (west of Jinzhou in Liaoning province), Jimen 蓟门 (modern Jixian county 蓟县 north of Tianjin 天津), and Youzhou 幽州 (near Beijing's Daxing county 大兴县), the latter having been both an important transportation junction in the northeast and an area often alluded to in frontier poetry as having produced an great number of martial talents. Gao Shi's "Song of Yingzhou" ("Yingzhou ge" 营州歌) presents a captivating vignette of Yingzhou's residents and their seemingly superhuman skills in both imbibing and equestrianism³⁷:

营州少年厌原野	The young men of Yingzhou are content with the wild plains,
皮裘蒙茸猎城下	In fuzzy fur garments they hunt below the citadel.
虏酒千钟不醉人	<i>Lu</i> ³⁸ wine, a thousand goblets, does not intoxicate,

34 The following is a condensed lesson in frontier geography adapted from Ren Wenjing's *Tangdai biansaishi de wenhua chanshi*, pp. 132-139.

35 In this instance, poems authored by Wang Changling 王昌龄 (690-756), Gao Shi (706-765) and Cen Shen 岑参 (715-770).

36 A footnote to Gao Shi's "Song of Yingzhou" ("Yingzhou ge" 营州歌) remarks that Yingzhou had both Han and Qidan 契丹 (a non-Chinese ethnic group of the northeast) inhabitants, and that the people of Yingzhou were especially gallant and embodied a strong martial spirit. See *GSJJZ*, p. 37.

37 The poem is also a powerful example of one variant of frontier poetry: poems detailing the customs and culture of non-Chinese peoples living in frontier regions. This and other features of frontier poetry will be discussed in the following two chapters.

38 Term for northern, non-Chinese peoples.

胡儿十岁能骑马³⁹ *Hu*⁴⁰ lads, ten years old, can ride a horse.⁴¹

The northern flank of the frontier incorporated areas such as Yanmen Pass 雁门 (Dai county 代县 in northeast Shanxi 山西 province), the Yin mountains 阴山 (a range of mountains stretching from central Inner Mongolia to the northwest of Hebei 河北 province and long regarded as the natural boundary between the Hu 胡 [non-Chinese peoples] and Han [Chinese peoples] in many Tang poems), and Xiao Pass 萧关 (roughly the area of Guyuan county 固原县 in Ningxia 宁夏 province). Poetic references of these locales can be found, for example, in Wang Changling's⁴² 王昌龄 “On the Frontier” (“Saishang qu” 塞上曲):

秋风夜渡河	Last night the autumn wind blew across the river,
吹却雁门桑 ⁴³	And stripped bare the mulberry trees around Yanmen Pass. ⁴⁴

(lines 1-2)

The first of Wang's “Beyond the Frontier” (“Chusai ershou” 出塞二首) refers to the boundary formed by the Yin mountains:

但使龙城飞将在	If only the Dragon City's Winged General ⁴⁵ were here,
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39 *GSJZ*, p. 37

40 I've replaced “Tartar” with “Hu”, a term for north and northwestern non-Chinese, in order to balance the head of the line with the Chinese “Lu” in the preceding line; a transference to pinyin from the Wade-Giles also occurred for “Yingzhou” in order to maintain a consistency of phonetic representation throughout the thesis. Such shifts occur throughout when citing sources written in Wade-Giles.

41 Modified version of Chan's translation; see Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 131.

42 “Wang Changling [698-756], with his interest in military life and the defence of borders...belong[s] to the group [of High Tang poets]...consist[ing] of Gao Shi [and] Cen Shen...[poets] who excelled in depicting scenes from the far frontiers and the life of the garrison soldiers” See Joseph J. Lee, *Wang Ch'ang-ling* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), p 90. In order to avoid spreading examples too thinly, citations will be restricted, for the most part, to the frontier works of Cen Shen, Gao Shi and Wang Changling, poets whose frontier-themed verse have long been cited as the apogee of Tang frontier poetry.

43 *QTS* 140.1421.

44 Joseph J. Lee, tr., *Wang Ch'ang-ling*, p. 97.

45 Refers to the famous Han general Li Guang (李广, d. 119 BC) who dealt a decisive blow to the Xiongnu (匈奴, a nomadic people of the north) after which border incursions into north China ceased. In the poem, “胡” is used in its generic sense to refer to non-Chinese peoples of the frontier.

不教胡马度阴山⁴⁶ No [Hu] horses would be allowed to pass the Yin Mountains.⁴⁷

(lines 2-3)

The first of four poems comprising “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu sishou” 塞下曲四首) uses Xiao Pass as a point of reference for the frontier:

蝉鸣空桑林 Cicadas chirp within the empty mulberry grove,
八月萧关道⁴⁸ The eighth month of the year, the road to Xiao Pass.

(lines 1-2)

Moving west, two regional features often alluded to in Tang frontier poetry include Liangzhou 凉州 and Yumen⁴⁹ Pass (Yumen guan 玉门关). The former, equivalent to modern day Wuwei 武威 in northwest Gansu 甘肃 province, was the site of a large population and stood at the crossroads of Chinese and non-Chinese peoples⁵⁰. The third and fourth lines of Cen Shen's “Night Time Gathering With Administrative Assistants at Lodgings in Liangzhou” (“Liangzhou guanzhong yu zhupangguan yeji 凉州馆中与诸判官夜集)⁵¹ relate these demographic and cultural features:

凉州七里十万家 Liangzhou is seven *li*⁵² in area and has one-hundred thousand homes,⁵³

46 QTS 143.1444.

47 Joseph J. Lee, tr., *Wang Ch'angling*, p. 94.

48 QTS 140 juan, 1420.

49 Literally “Jade Gate”

50 Ren Wenjing, *Tangdai biansaishi de wenhua chanshi*, p. 138.

51 Composed in 754 when Cen Shen was on his way to Beiting 北庭, a city north of today's Jimusa'er county 吉木萨尔县, Xinjiang 新疆 province.

52 One *li* being around 320 meters during the Tang dynasty

53 The implication being that “the city of Liangzhou is huge and densely populated” See Zhang Hui 张辉, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishi xuan* 岑参边塞诗选 (Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1981), p. 47.

胡人半解弹琵琶⁵⁴ The majority of Hu people there know how to play the *pipa*.⁵⁵
(lines 3-4)

Yumen Pass is located near today's Anxi county 安西县 in Gansu province. Both Cen Shen's "Song of General Gai at Yumen Pass" ("Yumen guan Gai Jiangjun ge" 玉门关盖将军歌) and the seventh of Wang Changling's "In the Army" ("Congjun xing qishou" 从军行七首) derive from Yumen Pass a thick sense of isolation, darkness and desolation. The first excerpt is from Cen Shen's poem:

玉门关城迥且孤 The walls of Yumen Pass are far away and isolated,
黄沙万里白草枯⁵⁶ Yellow sands for miles, withered white grass.

(lines 4-5)

And Wang's text:

玉门山嶂几千重 Encircling Jade-gate Pass a range of a thousand mountains,
山北山南总是烽⁵⁷ On the mountains north and south are beacon mounds.⁵⁸

(lines 25-26)

Some of the furthest western stretches of the Tang frontier fall under the poetic purview of Cen Shen as it was his poetry – more so than any other writer's – which brought the most extreme periphery of the empire into the popular imagination.⁵⁹ Through official appointments to the staff of military governors in the northwest, Cen Shen was able to describe a Central Asian landscape alien to the familiar scenes of Chinese poetry. His first assignment (749-752) was a secretarial position on the staff of Gao Xianzhi 高仙芝 (d. 756), the regional commander of Anxi (Anxi Duhu fu 安西都护府) whose

54 Chen Tiemin 陈铁民 Hou Zhongyi 侯忠义 ed. *Cen Shen ji jiaozhu* 岑参集校注 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 古籍出版社 1979), p. 144. Here after abbreviated as *CSJZ*

55 A pear-shaped stringed instrument sometimes referred to as a Chinese lute.

56 *QTS* 197.2058.

57 *QTS* 143.1444.

58 Joseph J. Lee, tr., *Wang Ch'ang-ling*, p. 100.

59 Ren Wenjing, *Tangdai biansaishi de wenhua chanshi*, p. 139.

seat was centred at modern day Kuche 库车 in Xinjiang province.⁶⁰ With only the first two lines of Cen Shen's “Sending Off Administrative Assistant Li at the Western Desert on His Return to the Capital (“Jixitou song lipanguan rujing” 碛西头送李判官入京), the distance to Anxi is overwhelmingly felt through qualifications made to both the clerical position Cen Shen had taken as well as the journey itself before arriving at Anxi where he would conduct his work:

一身从远使	I've come far to take up my post,
万里向安西 ⁶¹	Ten thousand <i>li</i> to Anxi.

(lines 1-2)

Cen Shen's second appointment (754-756) was under Gao Xianzhi's successor Feng Changqing 封常清 (d. 756), commander of the Protectorate of Beiting⁶² (Beiting Duhu fu 北庭都护府). During the course of his second assignment to the Tang frontier, Cen Shen was made Assistant Commissioner of Expenses (Zhidufushi 支都副使) for Beiting and spent much of his time at Luntai 轮台 (modern Miquan county 米泉县 in Xinjiang province)⁶³. When visited through Cen Shen's “Impromptu Poem about Luntai” (“Luntai jishi” 轮台即事), this far western frontier region seems even more foreign and strange than other remote territories:

轮台风物异	The scenery of Luntai is different ,
地是古单于	The <i>Xiongnu</i> ⁶⁴ once lived on this land.
三月无青草	There is no green grass in the third month,
千家尽白榆	White elms ⁶⁵ grow around all the thousands of homes.

60 Marie Chan, *Cen Shen* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), p. 8

61 *CSJZ*, p. 83.

62 Beiting roughly equating to modern day Jimusa'er county, Xinjiang province.

63 Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 7.

64 Literally *chanyu* but I have translated it as Xiongnu following a note in the *CSJZ* indicating that *chanyu* here refers to Xiongnu, a term for non-Chinese peoples of the frontier.

65 A tree common on the frontier. An arboreal variant where the same colour qualifies frontier trees can be found in Bao Zhao's 鲍照 (415-466) “Imitation: Song of Frontier Life” (“Dai Bianjuxing” 代边居行): “There are no tall trees on the frontier/The swishing is of many white poplars” 边地无高木, 萧萧多白杨. See *Gushi ji* 古诗记 69.12 in *Complete Books of the Four Imperial Repositories* (Sikuquanshu 四库全书), hereafter abbreviated as *SKQS*.

蕃书文字别	<i>Fan</i> ⁶⁶ documents and characters are different, ⁶⁷
胡俗语音殊	<i>Hu</i> customs and pronunciations are unfamiliar.
愁见流沙北	Sorrowfully I see to the north the flowing sands,
天西海一隅 ⁶⁸	A corner at the end of the earth.

This extreme western area diverges from the recognizable not merely through its terrain but also the linguistic and cultural nuances of its inhabitants, creating the impression of a land and people describable only as a matter of negation (“no green grass”, “unfamiliar pronunciations”) and adjectives suggestive of conditions clashing with one's expectations (a landscape that is “bizarre”, orthographies and customs which are “different”).

Although the Tang frontier included other towns and settlements left unmentioned in the preceding short introduction, it is hoped that a sense of the Tang northern borderlands, their topography and human presence, has nonetheless been awakened in the reader's imagination. What follows in the next chapter is an outline of the more salient themes of the poetry associated with the frontier, qualities that may possess a certain poignancy for the reader after having imaginatively travelled, if only briefly, through China's northern hinterlands.

66 Nomadic people of the north.

67 As in not the same as the Chinese language.

68 *CSJZ*, p. 156.

Part One: Overview of High Tang Frontier Poetry

Chapter Two: Basic Anatomy of a Subgenre : Key Traits of Frontier Poetry

Before endeavouring to acquaint the reader with the core defining features of frontier poetry and how the High Tang period further enhanced them, an introduction will be made to a selection of pre-Tang poetic works often credited with having influenced the imagery and ideas found throughout the evolution of frontier poetry up to and including the High Tang period. The purpose behind such a digression is to provide the reader with an impression of how, prior to the Tang, elements of the frontier poetry subgenre¹ gradually cohered and developed². In order to reduce the likelihood of disorganization from arising and infecting what is a series of temporally diverse poems, a general outline delimiting the thematic boundaries of frontier poetry will be given through which the poems' relevance in the formation of frontier poetry can be derived. This broad framework for identifying the sub-generic standards of frontier poems can be found in the following tripartite system of frontier poetry characteristics:³

The first, and most frequently employed, aspect of frontier poetry is reflections and responses to war on the frontier and facets of military life in such regions. This general theme includes statements of parting where a person is leaving his home or hometown to serve in the army while his family and/or

1 Here borrowing Owen's use of the term where subgenre "designate[s] classification by subject matter...[whereas] the term genre [is a] formal, metrical classification." See Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 445.

2 Though the Tang period continues into subsequent decades, I will be limiting discussion up until, though not completely through, this temporal station as the poems which are the main focus of the latter portion of this thesis – Cen Shen's frontier poetry – are of the High Tang years (713-765).

3 Adapted from Xiao Chengyu 肖澄宇 “Guanyu Tangdai biansaishi pingjia de jige wenti 关于唐代边塞诗评价的几个问题” in Department of Chinese Studies of Northwest Normal University (Xibei shifan xueyuan zhongwenxi 西北师范学院中文系) and the Academic Journal of Northwest Normal University (Xibei shifan xueyuan xuebao 西北师大学报), ed., *Tangdai biansashi yanjiu lunwen xuancui 唐代边塞诗研究论文选粹* (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 甘肃教育出版社 1988), pp. 19-35.

friends remain far from the front lines; commentaries, both in laudatory and critical terms, on relations between soldiers and commanders as well as commanders and the government; expressions of longing for home and the familiar by those serving on the frontier; descriptions of battle; and complaints over one's lot as well as exhortations to endure the harsh realities of the country's border regions.

The second subset of frontier poem themes within the framework are those which discuss the non-Chinese peoples living near or along the border, their customs, and interactions with people from China's interior. In terms of volume, frontier works of this type are relatively few and tend to appear in the later stages of frontier poetry's thematic expansion from poems primarily concerned with warfare and its consequent, if not always dwelt upon, misery.

The final component in the physiology of frontier poems are works which feature, to varying degrees with respect to other characteristics, the borderland environment itself. Though numerically occupying a significant portion of the frontier corpus, these poems with an interest in the geography and meteorology of China's north and northwestern areas are emotively weaker than that of the other two pillars of Xiao's tripartite structure⁴. But from an aesthetic perspective, one which draws perceptual attention to the extreme climates of China's periphery, frontier poems in which the landscape itself is not merely the passive setting for war or responses to the sorrow it causes but is instead foregrounded and made an object of rumination, even if the other aspects of frontier are found in the same work as well, are actually the most representative and recognizable variation of frontier poetry within the tripartite classification.⁵

4 This third type of frontier poetry tends to foreground the frontier landscape, delivering it from serving as the background to martial actions or as a correlatives for intellectual and emotional musings. Prior to Cen Shen's frontier poems, these types of foregrounded frontier landscapes are exceedingly rare. Thus, for the purposes of this chapter of the thesis, illustrations of how the frontier landscape participates in the identification of the subgenre will be restricted to displaying how the frontier landscape cooperates with other facets of the subgenre in generating frontier poetry.

5 It should be noted that such a defining framework is not without its opponents. Tan Youxue's 谭优学 “Biansai shi fanlun 边塞诗泛论”, while agreeing with the aforementioned scheme of delineating key qualities of frontier poetry into separate subsets, does demand that authorially, the writer of a frontier poem must have had personal experience on the frontier; poems whose frontier elements were devised from mere convention and tradition are not, according to Tan, frontier poetry. See Tan Youxue 谭优学 “Biansaishi fanlun 边塞诗泛论” in *Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu lunwen xuancui 唐代边塞诗研究论文选粹*. Although his reference is specific to Tang frontier poems and their division into thematic subtypes, Ren Wenjing's delineation of the subgenre admits poems composed by those without Tan's prerequisite frontier

Before continuing, it should be noted that these three facets do not mutually exclude one another: a single frontier poem may be woven together from threads of representatives from two or three classificatory headings, or its content may very well be derived from a single facet. In order to better understand the spool from which these threads are drawn, a selection of pre-Tang poems have been chosen which herald the frontier school of poetry that was to come. The three subsections are intended to function as headwaters for frontier poetry's main thematic streams, and is intended to clarify how these early works influenced the gradual accretion of the frontier poetry subgenre.

2.1. The First Facet: Frontier War

The *Book of Songs*⁶ (Shijing 诗经) hosts a selection of poems whose themes include many nascent characteristics of later frontier poetry.⁷ Those aspects most relevant to the current discussion – thematic origins of frontier poetry – are descriptions of battle and military life which include both negative and positive attitudes towards martial activities; the pangs of homesickness experienced by those drafted to serve in a military capacity far from their loved ones; and the distressed feelings of wives separated from husbands serving in the army far from home.⁸ Although the settings of some of the following poems used to illustrate the importance of the *Book of Songs* in the development of frontier poetry are not all identified as the border where “China” (in this case the northern extent of the Zhou 周 dynasty) meets the non-Chinese world, meaning that the poems cannot be called “frontier

experience into the frontier poetry classificatory scheme by assigning frontier poems to one of two categories: works written by those who spent time on the frontier, either serving in a military capacity or travelling, and who had intimate, first-hand knowledge of the frontier's geography and culture, such as Cen Shen and Gao Shi, and works authored by those who did not have experience on the frontier and who composed frontier poems using pre-established imagery and place names which minimized the author's relationship with the realities of frontier life as portrayed in his poetry. See Ren Wenjing, *Tandai biansaishi de wen hua chanshi*, p. 132.

6 *The Book of Songs* is the oldest preserved collection of Chinese poetry. It consists of 305 poems dating from roughly 1000 BC to 600 BC. Their subject matter is extremely varied, touching every aspect of contemporary life. See Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft, *A Guide to Chinese Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997), p. 94.

7 This is not to say that the themes of the following poems are only found in frontier poetry nor are any claims being made that the excerpted poems from the *Book of Songs* are themselves frontier poems – the absence of an easily definable, and non-controversial, “frontier” in the poems precludes such a supposition. What is instead being suggested is that the martial themes of the poems can be regarded as precipitating important characteristics of frontier poetry even while the poems themselves are not examples of “frontier poetry”.

8 Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 27

poems” on the basis of geography, the emotions expressed and actions described are nonetheless fundamental thematic sources of frontier poetry even if the locations where the actions and thoughts might have occurred, be it in reality or imagined, are not necessarily the equivalent of what would become the Tang, or other dynasties', frontier.⁹

The first to be discussed, “Beating Drums” (“Jigu” 击鼓), contains an important sentiment which would come to echo throughout frontier poetry: the forced separation from home while engaged in military service and the despair such separation creates. The following is a short excerpt summarizing this sentiment:

从孙子仲	We are led by Sun Zizhong ¹⁰
平陈与宋	To subdue <i>Chen</i> and <i>Song</i> . ¹¹
不我以归	He does not bring us home,
忧心有忡 ¹²	My heart is sad within. ¹³
	(lines 5-8)

This theme of conscription as forcing a rupture in domestic stability by throwing husbands and sons into churning political machinations played out far from one's home is a frequent feature of frontier poetry. One example of its utilization is found over a thousand years later in Gao Shi's “Song of Yan” (“Yange xing” 燕歌行). When describing the emotional state of a soldier stationed in *Ji* 薊 as he turns his head longingly back in a southward direction towards his distant and dejected wife, a woman barely able to endure the long pause in their marriage, the simple tearing felt in “Beating Drums” is not only repeated but aesthetically amplified:

铁衣远戍辛勤久	Coats of armour stationed far off toiling on and on
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9 Ibid., p. 21

10 A general of Bei Guo 邶国 (a vassal state of Zhou)

11 *Chen* and *Song* were vassal states of the Zhou.

12 Li Jie 李捷 ed., *Shijing* 诗经 (Hohhot: Yuanfang chufanshe 远方出版社, 2009), p. 16. Hereafter abbreviated as *Shijing*

13 Arthur Waley, tr., *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1960), p. 112.

玉箸应啼别离后	Jade chopsticks ¹⁴ answer sobs after departing
少妇城南欲断肠	Young wife south of the city walls is about to breakdown
征人蓟北空回首 ¹⁵	The soldiering husband on campaign north of <i>Ji</i> vainly turns back his head
	(lines 17-20)

Both soldiers of the two poems have no recourse but to endure the expanse of space between themselves and those with whom they long to reunite. The wife in “Beating Drums”, however, does not wait for her husband to return, instead giving him up for dead and remarrying:¹⁶

于嗟阔兮	Oh, what distance between us,
不我活兮	It simply won't allow us to live.
于嗟洵兮	Oh, to be so far away,
不我信兮 ¹⁷	You lost faith in me.
	(lines 17-20)

“My Lord is in Service” (“Junzi yuyi” 君子于役) anticipates those frontier poems whose martially motivated theme rests on a perspectival shift from the soldier stationed far from home and pining for loved ones to that of the lonely wife managing her days independently while wondering how her spouse is fairing in his military role. Although “My Lord is in Service” may not necessarily refer to a soldier dispatched to the frontier, the theme at its core is nonetheless a precursor to frontier poems of and prior to the Tang about despairing wives whose husbands are enlisted to serve in distant border regions:

14 “Chopsticks” used not for eating but for styling one's hair. Read as a parallel structure working in relationship with the previous line's “armour coats”, a metaphor for husband -soldiers away at the frontier, “jade chopsticks” can be understood as a nominal compound referring to soldiers' wives left behind at home alone. See Yuan Jiaxiu 袁嘉秀 “Yan Ge Xing” 'Yuzhu' biejie' 《燕歌行》'玉箸' 别解” *Yuwenyuekan* 语文月刊 2000.10, p. 39. For another more common interpretation of “jade chopsticks” see chapter three of this thesis.

15 *GSJJZ*, p.81

16 Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 113.

17 *Shijing*, p.16

君子于役	My lord is in service,
不知其期	I don't know for how long.
曷至哉?	When will he come back home?
鸡栖于埘	The chickens are lodged in their coops,
日之夕矣	The sun is already setting,
羊牛下来	The sheep and cows come down [from the hills].
君子于役	My lord is in service,
如之何勿思!	How can I not miss him!
.....
君子于役	My lord is in service,
苟无饥渴! ¹⁸	May he not be hungry or thirsty!
	(lines 1-8; 15-16)

An echo of the preceding poem, in which because of the demands exacted by territorial defence a husband had to leave his wife, can be heard in Wang Changling's "Boudoir Lament" ("Guiyuan" 闺怨¹⁹). In this quatrain, a wife begins another spring morning in joyful oblivion, unaware of the sorrow of separation percolating in her heart. Direct solicitude for the absent husband of the kind seen in "My Lord is in Service" is conspicuously unstated. However, at the moment the wife suddenly apprehends the colour of willow trees, despair over having allowed, perhaps even encouraging,²⁰ her husband to leave and seek a government position on the frontier emerges in a complex of regret and longing. The grief is rather beautiful with its subtle and pregnant suggestiveness.²¹

18 *Shijing*, p.36

19 Ren Wenjing provides a substantial background to the figuring of the "boudoir lament" (guiyuan 闺怨) poem as it relates to Tang frontier poetry by subdividing frontier "boudoir laments" into those where the male voice of the poet adopts a female perspective to emphasize the steadfast love and loyalty of wives for their distant husbands (zhongzhenxing 忠贞型), expressions of feelings of grief in response to years of separation and the torturous effects of not knowing whether one's husband was alive (aiyuanxing 哀怨型), and investigations of a wife's bitterness in knowing that her husband had died while serving on the frontier (beicanxing 悲惨型). See Ren Wenjing, *Tangdai biansaishi de wenhua chanshi*, pp. 186-204.

20 As hypothesized by Xu Fangming. See Xu Fangming 许芳铭 ed. *Wang Changling* 王昌龄 (Beijing: Wuzhouchuanbo chubanshe 五洲传播出版社, 2008), p. 97.

21 See pp. 51-55 of Jing Huey Yang "The Study of Wang Chanling's Seven Character Quatrain" MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1993, for a discussion of Wang Changling's use of implication in the conveyance of meaning. Yang also provides a detailed explication of "Boudoir Lament" (translated as "A Young Wife's Sorrow"). Regarding Wang Changling's powers of implication see pp. 76-78 where Yang discusses how the "regret" of the final line in Wang's poem

闺中少妇不曾愁	The young wife in her boudoir does not know the sorrow of parting,
春日凝妆上翠楼	A spring day and resplendently dressed she ascends the steps of her green coloured home.
忽见陌头杨柳色	Suddenly she sees the image of willow trees ²² beside the road,
悔教夫婿觅封侯 ²³	and regrets allowing her husband to go and seek an official noble title. ²⁴

The aforementioned poems from *The Book of Songs* contain the primitive genes common to frontier poetry of the theme of separation caused by the demands of a husband serving in a distant army and the resultant misery felt by both parties of the marriage. “Gathering Ferns” (“Cai Wei” 采薇), another work from the same ancient collection, is noted for both deepening the emotional impact of the seemingly endless life of soldiering while also introducing and invigorating the description of frontier life and battle scenes, details whose enrichment would expand over the centuries but whose source is found in these early texts.²⁵ In accounting for the genesis of the defining thematic characteristics of Tang frontier poetry, the importance of “Gathering Ferns” rests in its descriptions of martial activities and frontier life. However, in the opinion of some writers, the poem is also germane by being a contender for the first Chinese frontier poem.²⁶ Ng's support for this second hypothesis derives from the

is indicative of the wife's longing for her husband as well as her dismay for having allowed him to depart.

22 Willow trees, in addition to their arboreal being, were a symbol of departure.

23 *QTS* 143.1446.

24 See Daniel Hsieh, *The Evolution of Jueju Verse* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 44-47, on the structure of the quatrain in which the four lines are traditionally divided into an opening (qi 起), continuation (cheng 承), turn (zhuan 转) and resolution (he 合).

25 Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 25; Robert Shanmu Chen, “A Study of Bao Zhao and his Poetry” PhD. diss, University of British Columbia, 1989, p. 174.

26 An earlier footnote registered my own reservations towards such an assessment; I am presenting these opposing opinions for the reader's contemplation.

probable setting of the poetic text as being along the Zhou border²⁷ where the Xianyun²⁸ (獫狁) made incursions into Zhou territory:

曰归曰归	To go back, to go back home,
岁亦莫止	The year is already ending.
靡屋靡家	No home, no home.
獫狁之故	All because of the Xianyun.
不遑启居	No rest or stable living,
獫狁之故 ²⁹	All because of the Xianyun

(lines 3-8)

The laconic misery of “Gathering Ferns”, a sadness produced by a frontier whose soldiers were forced to accept and endure a callous separation from their families, is given a fuller voice centuries later in the third of the Early Tang poet Chen Zi'ang's 陈子昂 thirty-eight poem cycle “Stirred By My Experiences” (“Ganyu” 感遇³⁰). The sense of being left in a state of perpetual familial isolation in “Gathering Ferns” is magnified by Chen into a scene of desolation in which the frontier is a place of

27 The concept of a “Zhou border” is fraught with problems given how “in the later centuries central authority had all but vanished [in the Zhou] and China became a congeries of states of varying number, size and strength” See Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The Chinese: Their History and Culture* 4th. ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 33. Without a strong, centralized government uniformly ruling a coherent political entity, a Zhou “border” is instead the “borders” of several smaller states comprising Zhou China, some of whom did about northern nomadic tribes while others did not. In fact, Hu Dajun objects to the existence of frontier poetry prior to the Qin dynasty on these grounds. In his view, “ethnic conflict” (minzu maodun douzheng 民族矛盾斗争) is the foundation of frontier poetry; however, without a centralized government representing a “Chinese” people, there is no Chinese frontier along which clashes can erupt with distinctly non-Chinese entities. See Hu Dajun 胡大浚, “Biansai shi zhi hanyi yu tangdai biansai shi de fanrong 边塞诗之含义与唐代边塞诗的繁荣” in *Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu lunwen xuancui* 唐代边塞诗研究论文选粹, p. 48. He Jipeng, on the other hand, allows for the presence of frontier poetry prior to the Qin dynasty by defining the frontier as a place on the edge of a defined territory where violent encounters erupt with an alien adversary. Even though said “defined territory” may not necessarily be a unified China, and instead be one kingdom among many comprising Zhou China, its presence in a poem may nonetheless permit the text to be regarded as a frontier-themed work. See He Jipeng, *Luo Ri Zhao Da Qi*, p.5.

28 Nomadic peoples north of China referred to as Xiongnu 匈奴 from the Qin dynasty onwards.

29 *Shijing*, p. 87

30 Chen Zi'ang 陈子昂 (661-702). The majority of the *Ganyu* group of poems are “rich in cosmic and social themes [and] haunted by the poet's wonder at the rapid passage of time which threatens to nullify all temporal achievements” See Richard M.W. Ho, *Ch'en Tzu-Ang: Innovator in T'ang Poetry* (Hong Kong: China University Press, 1993), p. 83. Accompanying the majority of poems of the *Ganyu*, poems in which “the virtuous man contemplates and renounces...the corruption of the world and its impermanence”, are five frontier poems which portray borderland scenes through a vision revealing the varied forms of suffering endured by frontier soldiers. See Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, pp. 187, 219 and Hong Zan, *Tangdai zhanzhengshi yanjiu*, p.61.

both the dead and those left alone who may “literally [be] orphans... or the survivors of battles³¹:

苍苍丁零塞	A blue sky over the passes to Ding-ling, ³²
今古緬荒途	Past and present, roads stretching far into wilderness.
亭堠何摧兀	How the battlements of frontier forts have crumbled,
暴骨无全躯	Bones bleaching in the sun, no bodies whole.
黄沙漠南起	Yellow sands rise south of the Gobi
白日隐西隅	As the bright sun sinks under the western horizon.
汉甲三十万	Three hundred thousand Chinese troops
曾以事匈奴	Have indeed done service against the Xiongnu.
但见沙场死	One sees only the dead of the battlefields
谁怜塞上孤 ³³	No one pities those left alone on the frontiers. ³⁴

Unlike the preceding poems from the *Book of Songs* which only indicate military conflict by naming the actions undertaken by the speaker or absent husband without providing specific details of those events themselves,³⁵ “Gathering Ferns” relays information about the battle transpiring in its lines without relying solely on subtle suggestion³⁶ but by drawing attention to the instruments required for carrying out armed conflict. Granted, this is still synecdoche; however, the relationship between the part (the tools of war) and whole (the battle) is quite intimate and more direct in revealing the existence of combat than the techniques used in the previously cited poems. The following two excerpts are

31 Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p.220

32 The Ding-ling were an ancient tribe from which the Xiongnu descended. See Richard M. W. Ho, *Ch'en Tzu-Ang: Innovator in T'ang Poetry*, p.90.

33 Original text cited from Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p.220

34 Slight modification of Stephen Owen, tr., *ibid*, p. 220.

35 Such as simply being “in service” (yi 役, military service or forced labour) or “subduing” (ping 平, *ping*) another group of people who or may not be of the same ethnicity (ie not Xianyun) as a means of indicating that war is occurring.

36 This is not to say that the poem is a cacophony of crashing swords or a sanguine flood of bleeding soldiers. Chinese poetry is rarely graphic in its depictions of military conflict, and in fact usually maintains an “ellipsis of battle” even when armies clash. See C. H. Wang, “Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* Vol. 95 No. 1 (Jan. to March 1975), pp.25-35, especially part three of the essay. Marie Chan makes a similar observation about the tendency to elide battle in Chinese verse in her comparison between later poetic renderings of the story of Jing Ke's 荆轲 attempted assassination of the King of Qin (see chapter 86 of the *Records of the Grand Historian* (Shiji 史记)) and its presentation in the *Shiji* noting that “the large number of poems written on this historical episode...never dwell upon the fierce and gory feats which are so prominent in the original history...Instead the poet's mind is stirred by [the brief] scene of pathos of grief [when Jing Ke parts company with Prince Dan of Yan (燕太子丹) at the Yi 易 river on his way to assassinate the king of Qin]” See Marie Chan, “Chinese Heroic Poems and European Epic” *Comparative Literature* Vol. 26 No. 2 (1974), pp.142-168, especially p. 145.

particularly fitting in illustrating the way “Gathering Ferns” forecasts how battle itself can be conveyed in frontier poetry beyond intellectual inference, namely through the vehicles (chariots) and weapons (bow and quiver) required in conducting warfare:

彼路斯何	Whose great chariot is that?
君子之车	It's our commander's chariot.
戎车既驾	The horses are already harnessed to the war chariot,
四牡业业	Four great stallions tall and huge.
.....
四牡翼翼	Four great stallions in splendid array,
象弭鱼服	Ivory inlaid bow and fish skin quiver.
岂不日戒	Not a day goes by when we are not vigilant,
玃狁孔棘 ³⁷	The problem with the Xianyun is very urgent.

(lines 27-30; 37-40)

The verisimilitude of military confrontation is further developed in “Sending Out the Chariots” (“Chuju” 出车) with the addition of battle flags to the collection of steeds and weapons:

我出我车	We send out our chariots
于彼郊矣	At the distant outskirts.
设此旃矣	Attach these tortoise-snake flags,
建彼旄矣	Raise the ox-tail banners.
彼旃旄斯	Those hawk and tortoise-snake banners,
胡不旆旆 ³⁸	How could they not hang down below the sky?

(lines 9-14)

Before moving on to briefly examine works relevant to the evolution frontier poetry up to the Tang which postdate *The Book of Songs*, evidence of an early positive stance towards war, one which balances the sorrowful expression of lives wrenched apart by military conflict, should be noted given

37 *Shijing*, p.88

38 *Shijing*, p.89

how this supportive attitude persists alongside its opposite into the Tang period. An appropriate example for explaining this alternate view is found in the following lines from “The Sixth Month” (“Liu yue” 六月), a poem in which war is depicted not through its subsequent angst but instead as a proud duty willingly taken up by those defending the cohesion of their country against outsiders. The following excerpts from “The Sixth Month” exemplify this position:

猘狁孔炽	The Xianyan's strength is flourishing,
我是用急	Because of this I am gravely concerned.
王于出征	The king orders us to war,
以匡王国	And we assist the kingdom.
.....
我服既成	My military clothes are already made,
于三十里	Travelling thirty <i>li</i> in a day.
王于出征	The king orders us to war,
以佐天子	And we assist our lord
.....
薄伐猘狁	Successes noted against the Xianyun,
以奏肤公	And meritorious deeds established.
有严有翼	Both solemn and in tight formation,
共武之服	Engaging together in the duties of war
共武之服	Engaging together in the duties of war
以定王国 ³⁹	Making the kingdom secure. ⁴⁰

(lines 5-8; 13-16; 19-24)

So far as its effect on the evolution of frontier poetry is concerned, *The Book of Songs* establishes the elementary attributes of war as a tragedy for the men directly engaged in conflict as well

³⁹ *Shijing*, p.94

⁴⁰ “The Sixth Month” is pertinent in that it contains the poetic rumblings of highly complex responses towards frontier warfare found especially in High Tang frontier poetry. The thesis will expound upon these aspects later when addressing the distinctive characteristics of High Tang frontier poetry. The inclusion above of “The Sixth Month” is intended to demonstrate a possible precedent from which an array of attitudes towards military conflict on the frontier would slowly emerge.

as for their relatives far from the front lines wondering whether their loved ones were even still alive. Characteristics which would come to define later frontier poetry were already emerging in *The Book of Songs*, in particular how sentiments of those affected by war often overpowered the events of battles themselves and how the details of military campaigns were often de-emphasized to accommodate expressions of homesickness and the pain resulting from an absence of both the geographically and socially familiar.

However, two areas in which the *Book of Songs* does not anticipate later trends in frontier poetry are in descriptions of the frontier environment itself and a rising vividness, if never overpoweringly sanguine, in describing battlefields.⁴¹ The latter of these two movements is announced by the “Hymn of the Fallen” (“Guo Shang” 国殇) from the Nine Songs (“Jiu ge” 九歌) section of the *Chu Ci*⁴² 楚辞. Although not a frontier poem *per se*, the importance of the “Hymn of the Fallen” in this discussion lies in how the work presages a gradual progression towards distinct battlefield imagery; its minutiae of shields clashing and chariot wheels grinding lays the foundation for frontier poetry that included the specifics of battle,⁴³ details which in the *Book of Songs* were generally excluded:⁴⁴

操吴戈兮被犀甲	Grasping our great shields and wearing our hide armour,
车错毂兮短兵接	Wheel-hub to wheel-hub locked, we battle hand to hand.
旗蔽日兮敌若云	Our banners darken the sky, the enemy teem like clouds;
矢交坠兮士争先	Through the hail of arrows the warriors press forward.
.....	
出不入兮往不反	They went out never more to return,
平原忽兮路超远	Far, far away they lie, on the level plain.

41 Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yan jiu”, pp.27-28.

42 Whereas the *Book of Songs* is a born of northern Chinese culture, the *Chu Ci* (楚辞), whose earliest works date from the fourth century B.C., represents early southern Chinese literary production (the title of the collection literally being “Words of Chu”, a large state located in the south of China). Compared to the *Book of Songs*, the *Chu Ci* is more rhapsodic in tone, richer and more fantastic in imagery. See Burton Watson, *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 45.

43 Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yan jiu”, p.28.

44 In his “Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism”, C.H. Wang notes that “[Hymn of the Fallen] happens to be the only early Chinese poem that ever represents a recognizable passage involving the actual clash of arms in a battle scene”. See C.H. Wang, “Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism”, p. 33.

带长剑兮挟秦弓
首身离兮心不怨⁴⁶

Their long swords at their belts, clasping their *Qin*⁴⁵ bows,
Heads from body sundered: but their hearts could
not be vanquished.⁴⁷
(lines 1-4; 11-14)

C.H. Wang notes that Cen Shen had occasion to “depart from the classical tradition in the treatment of war [by writing] bloody scenes [written] from imagination”⁴⁸. Though no concrete poetic evidence is offered to support this claim in Wang's essay, the fifth of “Six Paeans Presented to Military Commissioner Feng On His Victory at Boxian⁴⁹” (“Xian Fengdafu pofanxian kaige liushou 献封大夫破播仙凯歌六首”) may have been the visceral ocean Wang had in mind which flooded the usual decorum in treating scenes of military violence. Although lacking in decapitations, Cen Shen's unusually raw glimpse at war nevertheless echoes an affinity with the brutality found in “Hymn of the Fallen”:

番军遥见汉家营
满谷连山遍哭声

The barbarian⁵⁰ army spies the Han army camp from afar,
Filling valleys and up through mountains, everywhere the
sound of weeping.

万箭千刀一夜杀
平明血流浸空城⁵¹

Ten thousand arrows, a thousand swords, a night of killing,
At daybreak blood flows and soaks the empty fortress.
(lines 17-20)

Gao Shi, however, in an excerpt from “To Go With Secretary Li's Work Celebrating Military

Commissioner Geshu's Victory at Jiuqu” (“Tong liyuanwai he geshudafu pojiqu zhizuo” 同李员外贺

45 Bows from the kingdom Qin referring here to bows of high quality

46 Li Jie 李捷 ed., 楚辞 *Chu Ci* (Hohhot: Yuanfang chubanshe 远方出版社, 2007), p. 63

47 David Hawkes, tr., *The Songs of the South: An Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985), p. 117.

48 C. H. Wang, “Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism”, p. 30.

49 Located on the north bank of the Moqie river in modern day Xinjiang province. The *CSJZ* notes that the poem was written in praise of general Feng Changqing for a military victory; the success, however, does not appear in any subsequent historical accounts. See *CSJZ*, p.154.

50 Literally “Fan 番 army”

51 *CSJZ*, p.154

哥舒大夫破九曲之作) not only avoids an ellipsis of battle but also invites the ambulatory heads of the “Hymn of the Fallen” back to the scene:

奇兵邀转战	Troops in ambush engage on many battlefields,
连弩绝归奔	Arrayed crossbows exterminate retreating fugitives.
泉喷诸戎血	The springs spurt many barbarians' blood,
风驱死虏魂	The wind spurs the souls of dead <i>Lu</i> .
头飞攒万戟	Heads fly, pierced by a myriad lances,
面缚聚辕门	Hands tied behind their backs, gathered at the barrack gate.
魂哭黄埃暮	Ghosts wail, yellow dust darkens,
天愁白日昏 ⁵²	Sorrowful sky, dusk in daytime ⁵³ .

(lines 5-12)

The *Book of Songs* and *Chu Ci*⁵⁴ set the first cobble stones for what would form into the long and serpentine road into the realm of war-themed frontier poetry. Though the two collections are involved, it is the former in which attitudes towards warfare and the effects of frontier service, both on those cleaved from loved ones forced to endure military service as well as those left alone and far behind, are related and later adapted and elaborated upon innumerable times throughout the centuries leading to the Tang dynasty. And although not frontier poems themselves, the recently cited works nevertheless do emit a thematic pulse which would resonate within the complex accretion of divergent responses to what would become the very common social phenomenon of war on the frontier.

2.2. The Second Facet: Frontier Peoples and Customs

Han period *Yuefu*, or Music Bureau, poems (*Yuefu* 乐府)⁵⁵ in which the boundary between

52 *QTS* 214.2235

53 Slight modification of Marie Chan, tr., *Kao Shih*, p. 37.

54 The latter's influence, as stated already, is primarily restricted to the evolution of battlefield descriptions of frontier poetry.

55 *Yuefu* was the name of the Music Bureau established by the Han emperor Wu Di around 120 B.C. The institution was charged with collecting anonymous songs from various parts of China. After its abolition, numerous writers from the Han down to modern period composed poems in the style of anonymous *yuefu* poems which often bore the same titles as their anonymous models but were often apt to differ in content. See Hans Frankel, “Yueh-Fu Poetry” in Cyril Birch ed., *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 69-70. The collection of works and its “patterns of association with the Music Bureau reached a definitive shape in the eleventh century anthology

central China and its periphery are featured play an especially significant role in the thematic growth of frontier poetry, particularly when addressing Xiao Chengyu's second thematic pillar of frontier poetry: poems about, or frequently referring to, frontier peoples and customs. Aside from those numerous poems in which the various facets of frontier military campaigns are of particular focus, such as “Fighting South of the City” (“Zhongchengnan” 战城南), “On the Frontier” (“Saishang qu” 塞上曲), and “Beyond the Frontier” (“Chusai” 出塞), the *Yuefu* collection also contained poems which generated the images that would be later expanded in descriptions of northern non-Chinese lands, their unfamiliar customs, and the cruel sense of isolation felt by those forced to live there in both military and non-military situations. A compact example in which these three themes interact with one another is the “Song of the Wusun Princess”⁵⁶ (“Wusun gongzhu ge” 乌孙公主歌), a text whose sights of an alien land and customs forecast important frontier poetry themes of being stationed in a strange environment far from home while longing for friends and family:⁵⁷

吾家嫁我今天一方 远托异国兮乌孙王 穹庐为室兮旃为墙 以肉为食兮酪为浆 居常土思兮心内伤 愿为黄鹄兮归故乡 ⁵⁹	My family married me off; I'm now at the end of the sky, ⁵⁸ Far away and living in a strange land with a Wusun king. A yurt serves as my room, felt blankets my wall, Meat is my food, yoghurt is my drink. I miss my land most of the time; it pains my heart, I want to become a yellow swan and return home.
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Yuefushiji (乐府诗集, Collected Music Bureau Poems) by Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (1041-1099)” See Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poems* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), p. 39. Among its numerous themes, those of the emotional and physical trials of having to survive in strange foreign lands, through forced political marriages as well as military service, play an especially vital role in the development of frontier poems which stress a sense of alienation and unfamiliarity experienced in such places. The greatest concentration of frontier themed *yuefu* poems are collected under 横吹曲 (heng chui qu) of the *Yuefu shiji* (where eleven of the eighteen sub-categories of *yuefu* topics are related to the frontier). For an examination on the relation between this category of *Yuefu* poems and frontier verse, especially how Southern Dynasty (420-589) examples contributed to the development of Tang frontier verse in terms of imagery, allusions and sentiment, see Han Ning 韩宁 and Xu Wenwu 徐文武, “Hengchuiqu yu biansai shi 横吹曲与边塞诗” *Hebei daxue xuebao* 河北大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) 2006.3, pp. 42-46.

56 The title refers to Liu Xijun 刘细君, a Han princess married off to a Wusun 乌孙 chieftain in an effort by Han Wudi 汉武帝 (Emperor Wu of Han) to forge an alliance against the Xiongnu. The Wusun themselves were a nomadic people living in what is now northwest Xinjiang province.

57 Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 36.

58 Meaning “in a remote place”

59 Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 ed. *Yuefushiji* 乐府诗集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中华书局, 1979), 84.1186. Hereafter

This sense of estrangement, as expressed through imagery and subjective comments, on the frontier permeates the much later “Impromptu Poem about Luntai⁶⁰” (“Luntai jishi” 轮台即事), a work in which the weird and strange is also described at a near torrential pace. Furthermore, in this excerpt from Cen Shen's “Written After Getting Drunk at a Banquet Held By the Prefect of Jiuquan” (“Jiuquan taishou xishang zuihouzuo” 酒泉太守席上醉后作), a poem in which the immediately unfamiliar similarly dominates the text as in “Impromptu Poem About Luntai” and the *Yuefu* “Song of the Wusun Princess”, the gastronomy of the frontier also ushers the poet-narrator towards a now familiar longing for home associated with being on the frontier, a feeling which in this instance cannot even be assuaged by the thick luxuriance of a hefty and exotic repast:

浑炙犁牛烹野驼	There's also barbequed ox and steamed camel,
交河美酒归叵罗	Fine <i>Jiaohe</i> ⁶¹ wine poured into round shallow cups.
三更醉后军中寝	Late at night after getting drunk, sleeping the army camp,
无奈秦山归梦何 ⁶²	How can I not return to <i>Qin</i> mountain ⁶³ through my dreams? ⁶⁴
	(lines 3-6)

Gao Shi, on the other hand, in “Accompanying Censor Dou on a Cruise on Ling Yun Lake” (“Pei Dou shiyu fan lingyunchi” 陪窦侍御泛灵云池) exorcises the frontier of its inhospitable associations of sword-sharp winds and inscrutable temperatures, a place where in “The Song of Yan” (“Yange xing” 燕

abbreviated as *YFSJ*

60 See earlier translation in this thesis

61 Modern Tulufan 吐鲁番, Xinjiang province. “*Jiaohe* wine” is spirits produced by the especially delectable grapes of China's western region.

62 *CSJZ*, p. 188

63 Located in modern Zhejiang province. Cen Shen spent a significant portion of his pre-frontier days there.

64 Ai Lihui 艾丽辉 and Kang Yanyan 康燕燕 in “Lun censhen biansai shi de yiyu fengqing 论岑参边塞诗的异域风情” *Yuwen xuekan* 语文学刊 2010.4, pp. 93-94, segregate a short selection of Cen Shen's frontier poetry under the rubric of “Distinct Cultural Characteristics of Minority Peoples” (Xianming shaoshumingzu wenhuatesu 鲜明少数民族文化特色), poems which include scenes of frontier cuisine, as noted above; non-Chinese interior furnishings of abodes (“Beginning of Autumn at Luntai” 首秋轮台); music (“Night Time Gathering With Administrative Assistants at Lodgings in Liangzhou” 凉州馆与诸判官夜集) and dance (“Song of Prefect Tian's Lovely Lady Dances 'Like the Lotus' Northern Spear Dance” 田使君美人舞如莲花北金铤歌). The juxtapositions of Ai and Kang's arrangement exposes both a curiosity for the new as well as nostalgia for home engendered within the poet-narrator when encountering elements of frontier culture, the former response being relatively new by Cen Shen's time.

歌行)

山川萧条极边土 胡骑凭陵杂风雨 ⁶⁵	mountain and river desolation reaches the frontier extremes, and threatening <i>Hu</i> cavalry mix with wind and rain. (lines 9-10)
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and infuses the landscape with a feeling of familiarity, turning the environment into an “idyllic setting for a cheerful and civilized evening gathering”⁶⁶. Such a scene on the frontier, one seemingly transplanted from southern China, could possibly be regarded as ironically succeeding in creating strangeness out of the incredibly ordinary where the ordinary is found in extraordinary climes:

江湖仍塞上 舟楫在军中 舞换临津树 歌饶向晚风 ⁶⁷	River and lake even upon the frontier, Boat and oars within the encampment. Dancers twirl beside the trees along the ford. Songs regale us when the evening breeze blows. ⁶⁸ (lines 3-6)
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Unlike the non-Chinese people of the frontier, the Xianyun, who were portrayed in the aforementioned war-themed poems of the *Book of Songs* in a severely curtailed, one-dimensional fashion as crafty barbarian invaders responsible for causing death and marital breakdown when husbands were forced to leave home and serve in the army, the non-Chinese northerner of the *Yuefu* poem “Song of the Xiongnu” (“Xiongnu ge” 匈奴歌) is not only given a voice, one notably absent in the *Book of Songs*, but is also presented as a victim of non-Xiongnu expansion, a figure towards whom the reader could likely feel sympathy, a response certainly not encouraged in earlier works featuring northern nomads. The relevance for later frontier poetry of “Song of the Xiongnu” rests in transferring one's (Chinese) self onto the plight of non-Chinese who were also forced to endure the misery of loss

65 *GSJJZ*, p. 80

66 Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p.97

67 *GSJJZ*, p. 236

68 Marie Chan, tr., Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 97

and separation often found on the frontier. While not a major aspect of later frontier poetry, empathizing with northern non-Chinese, rather than fearing or despising them, does form a minor trope among poems of intercultural encounters on the border. “Ancient Song of the Xiongnu” is one such precursor.⁶⁹

失我焉支山	I've lost my <i>Yanzhi</i> ⁷⁰ mountain,
令我妇女无颜色	It's caused our women to become pale.
失我祁连山	I've lost my <i>Qilian</i> ⁷¹ mountain,
使我六畜不蕃息 ⁷²	It's forced our animals ⁷³ to become barren.

The middle lines of Li Qi's 李颀⁷⁴ “In the Army”⁷⁵ (“Gucongjun xing” 古从军行) includes a couplet redolent with this early, if also exceedingly rare, sympathy in which the people of the frontier are not cast merely as invaders or uncivilized barbarians but as human and emotional entities capable of responding to loss and loneliness:

野云万里无城郭	The clouds on the plain stretch for ten-thousand <i>li</i> , there are no city walls in sight,
雨雪纷纷连大漠	Rain and snow continuously fall and meet up with the desert.
胡雁哀鸣夜夜飞	Frontier geese ⁷⁶ cry plaintively and fly throughout the night,

69 Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 37.

70 Refers to Yanzhishan 燕支山 in modern Gansu province.

71 Mountain range which straddles Qinghai and Gansu provinces.

72 *YFSJ* 84.1186.

73 Literally “six domestic animals”: horse, ox, sheep, pig, dog and chicken

74 Along with Gao Shi, Cen Shen and Wang Changling, Li Qi (690-751) is also often regarded as a frontier poet, though one whose output in the subgenre is substantially less than that of Gao, Cen and Wang. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 75.

75 “In the Army” is a *yuefu* theme whose content refers generally to situations on the frontier and the life of soldiers serving in such regions. See Sun Quanmin 孙全民 ed., *Tangdai biansaishi xuanzhu* 唐代边塞诗选注 (Hefei: Huangshan shushe 黄山书社出版社, 1992), p. 1.

76 Literally “*Hu*” geese. “As a migratory bird, the wild goose...can be a harbinger of separation [as well as being] regarded as [a] messenger, bearer of glad tidings from a spouse far away in northern lands” See Wolfram Eberhard, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols: Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 132. In this instance, the former implication seems to have far greater potential than the latter.

胡儿眼泪双双落⁷⁷

The *Hu* man's tears fall in pairs one after the other.
(lines 5-8)

When weighed against works in which frontier war or landscape are the engine driving the poem's thematic content, this second facet of frontier poetry, one whose focus pivots towards frontier peoples and customs, is in a definite minority. Its infrequency prior to the Tang, however, can be attested to the rarity of poetically inclined individuals venturing to the northern border regions and reflecting on the experience through verse, a situation which underwent a severe transformation during the Tang dynasty⁷⁸ once the importance of the frontier for both the nation's defence and economy rose to an unprecedented degree in tandem with the expansion of both the territory and wealth of the empire.⁷⁹ But attention to the frontier alone does not suffice when framing poetic windows encompassing its denizens' lives: a well-rounded intimacy with the region is also a prerequisite for such compositions in this vein of frontier poetry. Aside from Gao Shi and Cen Shen, writers who did not merely travel briefly throughout the northern periphery of Tang China but who spent years of their lives in the employment of military officers on the frontier, the number of poets able to portray the peoples and customs of the frontier were relatively few. That being said, the High Tang did have many exceptional samplings of this theme; some of them will be discussed when the thesis addresses the distinct traits of High Tang frontier poetry through Xiao Chengyu's thematic framework.

2.3. The Third Facet: The Frontier Landscape

It was not until the High Tang and Cen Shen's frontier poems, compositions in which the frontier landscape itself had instances of being foregrounded against the emotional concerns familiar to many frontier poems, that Xiao's third foundational facet in the classification of frontier poetry could be seen in its least adulterated state. Many frontier works preceding Cen Shen did in fact evince an

⁷⁷ *QTS* 133.1348.

⁷⁸ That is until the An Lushan rebellion when many frontier military units were recalled to quell the uprising.

⁷⁹ Chen Xiuduan, "Censhen biansaishi yanjiu", pp. 37-38. For a sustained analysis of extra-literary reasons behind the meteoric rise of frontier poetry during the Tang dynasty, especially the martial, political and social reasons, see chapter three of Kam-lung Ng's "Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu".

interest in describing the frontier environment, be it perceptually or through its effects on those within its geographic confines, but frontier topography had still yet to receive the degree of attention attained in Cen Shen's frontier poetry. Even with this being the case, there are still examples from pre-Tang frontier-themed poetry that anticipate how the frontier landscape would be constructed as a linguistic entity which could move between foreground and background roles as a poem unfolded. .

The landscape itself of the extreme and inclement frontier regions began to gain poignant perceptual precision and emotional resonance in Cao Cao's 曹操⁸⁰ “Song of Enduring Cold”⁸¹ (“Kuhan xing” 苦寒行). The poem's use of scene to convey emotion through exquisite details of the frontier environment made it especially distinct from previous works of a similar nature in which the actual setting had hitherto received a less sustained treatment of thermal, meteorological and animal detail.⁸² Quoted below is the first half of the poem within which sharp mountain heights, cold moaning winds⁸³ and claw wielding predators conspire to test the mettle of the campaigning soldiers:

80 Cao Cao (155-220), a powerful military leader in northern China during the turbulent years of the Han dynasty's decline, “seems to have possessed considerable learning and a fine literary sense, and is noted for his poems in the *yuefu* style”. See Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism*, pp. 37-38.

81 “The Han period *yuefu*, as well as folk songs of the *Book of Songs*, often described the hardships of military service, usually from the point of view of the disgruntled common soldier. Cao Cao here takes up the same theme. But he writes neither as the leader of the campaign nor as a member of the rank and file; rather he seems to give voice to the complaints of the entire army as it stumbles over the bleak mountain trails”. See Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism*, p. 38.

82 Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 42.

83 When it came to representing the frontier landscape, Cao Cao's “Song of Enduring Cold” was to become the touchstone in describing the inclement northern climes found in frontier poetry, “regions [which] were defined almost exclusively by cold and aridity...[from] early Chinese concept[s] of the world”. See Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voices of Others*, p. 89. But this dominant trope of thermally cold landscape imagery in the subgenre was also derivative of Han dynasty *yuefu* poems depicting the northern frontier, the geographic realities of the region itself, and historical texts denoting a northern territory as uncomfortably chilly. Such an environment could also act as a correlative for emotions engendered by the trials of frontier service, its accompanying isolation, and the pains of separation frequently expressed in the poetry prior to the Tang dynasty, and still present in Tang frontier poetry while also having to compete with feelings of optimism and resolution towards martial activities at the frontier. See Yan Fuling 阎福玲, “Han-Tang biansaishi zhuti yanjiu 汉唐边塞诗主题研究” PhD. Diss., Nanjing Normal University 南京师范大学博士学位论文, 2004, *passim*. An example of these divergent Tang responses to the frontier cold can be found when reading the first of Gao Shi's “Dispatching the Qingyi troops to Juyong” (“Shi qingyijun ru juyong sanshou” 使青夷军入居庸三首) against Cen Shen's “Ballad of Running Horse River: Presented When Sending Off Lord Feng Leading His Troops on a Western Campaign” (“Zoumachuanxing fengsong fengdafu chushi xizheng” 走马川行奉送封大夫出师西征). In Gao Shi's poem, a bone chilling frontier environment manifests the soldiers war weariness and pessimistic vision of martial service in the borderlands: “The horses' travels linger on and on/The campaign road, a leave-taking of twists and toils/Not knowing that frontier lands are different/Only shocked that our clothes are thin/Streams cold, spring sounds bitter/Mountain empty, tree leaves desiccated/Do not say at the far reaches of the frontier pass/that clouds and snow are still boundless 匹马行将久, 征途去转难. 不知边地别, 只讶客一单. 溪冷泉声苦, 山空木叶干. 莫言关塞极, 云雪尚

北上太行山	North we climb the Tai-hang Mountains,
艰哉何巍巍	The going's hard on these steep heights.
羊肠坂诘屈	Sheep Gut Slope dips and doubles,
车轮为之摧	Enough to make the cart wheels crack.
树木何萧瑟	Stark and stiff the forest trees,
北风声正悲	The voice of the north wind sad.
熊罴对我蹲	Crouching bears, black and brown, watch us pass,
虎豹夹路啼	Tigers and leopards howl beside the trail.
溪谷少人民	Few men live in these valleys and ravines,
雪落何霏霏	Where snow falls thick and blinding.
延颈长叹息	With a long sigh I stretch my neck,
远行多所怀 ⁸⁴	A distant campaign gives you much to think of. ⁸⁵
	(lines 1-12)

In examining pre-Tang frontier poetry from the angle of the frontier landscape, the period between the Han dynasty and Northern-Southern dynasty, the Jin 晋, was relatively uneventful.⁸⁶ It was not until Bao Zhao's 鲍照 (414-466) frontier themed poems that the environment of China's peripheral regions would be presented with a vividness hitherto unseen⁸⁷, one which would come to exert incredible influence on later poets' construction of frontier scenes. Bao Zhao's "Imitation: Song of Departing from the North Gate of Ji" ("Dai chuzi jibeimen xing" 代出自蓟北门行) evolves the thermal theme of freezing temperatures to a degree only vaguely suggested in Cao Cao's "Song of

漫漫 See *GSJJZ*, pp. 185-186. Counterbalancing this environmentally influenced, or environmentally manifested, gloom is Cen Shen's freezing landscape, a place that seems to stimulate, and not wither, aspirations for achieving military success. As the poem will be discussed at greater length in the second half of the thesis, the following is but an excerpt selected to display the high-spirited attitude emerging from cold and piercing inclement winds: "The general does not take off his armour at night/At midnight the army marches out, lances crash together/Wind like a dagger, faces seem to be cut...When hearing of this the Lu cavalry must be disheartened and full of fear/I would guess that their short-swords dare not meet yours;/At the west gate of *Jushi* awaiting the presentation of the spoils of war 将军金甲夜不脱, 半夜军行戈相拔, 风头如刀面如割...虏骑闻之应胆慑, 料知短兵不敢接, 车师西门伫献捷. See *CSJJZ*, pp. 148.

84 *YFSJ* 33.496.

85 Burton Watson, tr., *Chinese Lyricism*, pp. 38.

86 Robert Shanmu Chen, "A Study of Bao Zhao and His Poetry", pp. 178-180.

87 *Ibid.*, p.184

Enduring Cold”. In Bao Zhao's poem, the snow and cold attacks the frontier landscape while also overwhelming those soldiers forced to endure the subzero assault. From Cao Cao to Bao Zhao, the hibernal havoc wrought by China's north increases in ferocity, intensifying its presence from a near static picture to one which inhibits martial activities through kinetic force:

箫鼓流汉思	The memory of the Han prevails with drum and flute
旌甲被胡霜	While banners and armour are covered by <i>Hu</i> ⁸⁸ frost.
疾风冲塞起	A strong gale sweeps up and over the borderland,
沙砾自飘扬	And blows about in the air gravel and sand.
马毛缩如猬	Horse hairs stiff as hedgehog spines.
角弓不可张 ⁸⁹	And horn-tipped bows cannot be drawn. ⁹⁰

(lines 11-16)

This six line excerpt from Bao Zhao's poem reveals a highly kinetic frontier landscape, a place where meteorological elements cover (bei 被) the soldiers' armour while preventing the completion of bows from being drawn (bu ke zhang 不可张) while strong winds actively rush and sweep up the land (chong...qi 冲...起) followed quickly by sands blowing about wildly (piaoyang 飘扬). These snapshots of ferociously freezing, inclement lands were an alien inversion of China's central and southern regions; they were also the base from which the poetic frontier landscape began to develop in earnest.

Cen Shen's own frontier landscapes of a cold disposition, poetic places often times distinguished as sustained aesthetic observations of geological and meteorological phenomenon that are not necessarily mere background for the expression of a particular emotional condition⁹¹, can be

88 Meaning “frontier”.

89 *YFSJ* 61.891.

90 Slightly modified from Robert Shanmu Chen, tr., “A Study of Bao Zhao and His Poetry”, p. 300.

91 This is usually the case with other High Tang period frontier poems, texts whose frontier landscape descriptions are often the background against which the sacrifices of generals and soldiers in service of their country, longings for home, and the weariness of frontier life are reflected. However, in Cen Shen's frontier poetry the landscape has a tendency to act as a foregrounded entity occupying the entirety of creative consciousness without commentary on trans-textual circumstances. This prominence afforded the frontier landscape was unprecedented by the Tang dynasty. See Tao Wenpeng 陶文鹏 and Lu Ping 陆平, “Lun Cen Shen shige chuanguo qixiang qijing de yishu 论岑参诗歌创造奇象奇境的艺术” *Qi Li xuekan* 齐鲁学刊 2009.2, pp.109-115.

seen to have a direct intertextual⁹² relationship with Bao Zhao's frontier.⁹³ For instance, Cen Shen's "Song of White Snow: Sending Off Administrative Officer Wu on His Return to the Capital" ("Baixuege song Wupanguan guijing" 白雪歌送武判官归京) encompasses a frontier which treats its guest in a similarly discourteous manner as Bao Zhao's:

将军角弓不得控	The general's horn bow cannot be pulled
都护铁衣冷难着 ⁹⁴	The protector-general's ⁹⁵ armour is freezing, difficult to don
	(lines 7-8)

Although Bao Zhao's line "角弓不可张" (jiao gong bu ke zhang) is pentasyllabic and Cen Shen's is heptasyllabic through the addition of an overt subject (jianjun 将军), an obvious parallel of uncooperative military weaponry affected by frontier conditions exists nonetheless. The second line of Cen Shen's poem also echoes Bao Zhao's: the armour covered in frost (and hence cold) returns in Cen Shen's poem with the comment, absent in the earlier text, on its difficulty to be worn (nan zhuo 难着), a further instance of exemplifying how the frontier landscape can be realized through a characteristic chill hampering ordinary military actions, one slightly expanded by Cen Shen three hundred years later after Bao Zhao, and how the environment of the frontier itself can suddenly capture the focus of the poem.

The effects of northern frontier temperatures on equine hair in Bao Zhao's piece is revisited by

Cen Shen in his "Song of General Zhao" ("Zhaojiangjun ge" 赵将军歌). The original line from Bao

92 Intertextuality meaning the relationships a particular text has with another regardless of temporal distances between their times of composition. When these relations are adumbrated through the act of reading the texts against one another, new significance emerges which would otherwise remain hidden were the texts read in isolation. See Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others*, p. 8. Given the glaring similarity between Cen Shen and Bao Zhao's quoted lines, a coordinated intertextual reading is able to reveal how the same aspect of the frontier's effects on animate and inanimate objects occupying its space can be treated with a gradient of variations retaining certain core qualities.

93 Chen Xin 陈忻, "Jianlun Cen Shen biansai shi de fengge" 简论岑参边塞诗的风格 *Tangdai wenxue yanjiu* 唐代文学研究 2004, pp. 330-335, especially p. 334.

94 *CSJJZ*, p. 163

95 Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 540. Translations of official titles in this thesis follow Hucker.

Zhao's work intersects with the second line of Cen Shen's quatrain:

九月天山风似刀	In the ninth month the wind on Tian mountain is like a knife,
城南猎马缩寒毛	Hunting horses ⁹⁶ south of the city wall have stiff cold coats.
将军纵博场场胜	The general's fervent bets ⁹⁷ are winners every round,
赌得单于貂鼠袍 ⁹⁸	Getting him a Xiongnu chief's marten skin coat.

Three central characters⁹⁹ from Cen Shen and Bao Zhao's aforementioned poems form a nexus where the thermal quality of the frontier, as it affects horses, is expressed: 缩 (*suo*, constrict), 马 (*ma*, horse) and 毛 (*mao*, hair). However, this intertextual instance is not a slavish imitation by Cen Shen. Bao Zhao's cold-constricted horse hair (mao 毛) is described through simile, “like a hedgehog's spine”, a potent visual image¹⁰⁰ not adopted by Cen Shen who instead activates the thermal quality of the cold-constricted hair with the modifier 寒 (*han*, cold). However, the temperature of the frontier landscape had already been indicated in Bao Zhao's poem with the “frost” (shuang 霜) on the soldiers' armour, meaning the thermal quality was already echoing when the density of the horse's coat was focused upon in Bao Zhao's line. This constant presence of snow and frost allows for the tactility of both horses' hairs to include a quality of coldness.

Another area of imagistic modification centres on the utilization of the horses themselves. Both poems' animals are on the frontier but their overt human designated purposes do not match: Bao Zhao's horse has a martial association, but it lacks preceding nouns or adjectives which could emphasize the

96 As in horses ridden for hunting and not the objects of the hunt.

97 The “bet” here is a competition to determine whose mounted archery skills are superior. See Zhang Hui 张辉, ed., *Censhen biansaishixuan*, p. 76.

98 *CSJJZ*, p. 173

99 Chinese characters (hanzi 汉字)

100 The term is here being used to denote “a mental event peculiarly connected with sensations”. See I.A. Richards, quoted in Ronald Miao, “T'ang Frontier Poetry: An Exercise in Archetypal Criticism” *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* Vol. 10 No. 2 (1974), pp. 114-140, especially p. 128. Such a usage releases “image” from visual limitations and allows aural, thermal, static and kinetic qualities of nouns (i.e. things) to be discussed under the “image” rubric.

use of the horse in a war-related role. The galloping mount in Cen Shen's poem, however, is not presented merely as “horse” (ma 马) but is explicitly a “hunting horse” (lie ma 猎马), an equine identity enhanced by the kinetic potential of the horse, one which also incarnates the martial quality of Bao Zhao's earlier steed should Xiongnu horses used for the purposes of hunting also lead military advances when required.

Even with such a brief and narrowly focused intertextual reading between Bao Zhao and Cen Shen's lines, the early structure of the frontier landscape in terms of how subzero temperatures affect the inanimate (armour) and living (horses), and how such a representation was treated by writers from one era (Southern dynasty) to another (Tang), is revealed. However, Bao Zhao's influence on the evolution of frontier poetry is not limited to bows and filamentous bio-matter. In Luo Chunlan's discussion¹⁰¹ of the impact Bao Zhao's frontier poems had on High Tang treatment of the frontier subgenre, the fourteen poems, of an oeuvre of over two-hundred, frontier works attributed to Bao Zhao are read as having established the ideological, imagistic and stylistic parameters of later frontier poetry. Previous poetic works on frontier themes are considered in Luo's essay as having been streamlined by Bao Zhao's frontier poetry into a nascent frontier subgenre, a subgenre of poetry which would burgeon under the brushes of the High Tang's most notable poets. These traces of Bao Zhao's works, however, are not restricted to frontier landscape descriptions: frontier poems in the High Tang praising heroic deeds having taken place on China's northern borders, expressions of frustrated aspirations in serving one's country, the hardship of military service and encounters with non-Chinese peoples have their stylistic roots in Bao Zhao's frontier poems even if the themes themselves have earlier pedigrees.

The aesthetic figuration of the frontier landscape continued throughout the Southern Dynasty period after Bao Zhao's pioneering works were composed; in fact, it had already become a literary custom to write frontier-themed works despite very few poets of the era possessing any personal

101 Luo Chunlan 罗春兰, “Tui zhe mo yun, dai mo ming yuan zhi lei: shengtang biansai shi dui Bao Zhao de Jieshou” 推折默云, 殆摩明远之垒: 盛唐边塞诗对鲍照的接受 Lanzhou xuekan 兰州学刊 2006.1, pp. 92-97.

experience of having joined military campaigns in the far north-west.¹⁰² Initially derided by later critics as mere imitations of late Han *Yuefu* topics since the writers themselves lacked the credentials of having served on the frontier, many Southern dynasty frontier poems have now come to be regarded as having made an important contribution to the shape of High Tang frontier poetry by introducing fresh characteristics into the subgenre.¹⁰³

During the Southern dynasty period, the poetic frontier landscape was very much the product of the writer's imagination, an aesthetic world rarely derived from direct frontier experience yet still a rendering of China's periphery which would later be regarded as having heavily influenced the images and allusions used by writers of proceeding ages in creating the environmental terrain and atmosphere of frontier poetry.¹⁰⁴ As “one of the most popular *yuefu* topics...the frontier...could be credibly evoked by poets who would have fainted at the sight of a hostile Tartar¹⁰⁵ in the flesh. Border [frontier] poetry was very much a literary experience, but it taught later poets who went on campaigns or into exile how to 'see' that stark world”.¹⁰⁶ The perceptual content and ideological themes of frontier poetry were constructed by many Southern dynasty poets' treatment of frontier related *Yuefu* topics where borderland warfare, life and imagery, despite existing geographically well beyond the northern horizon of the poets themselves, became established and woven into a network of desolate imagery and Han dynasty historical allusions.¹⁰⁷

102 Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 51.

103 Wang Yiyuan 王宜瑗, “Liang Chen: Zhengzhan tical de xinbian 梁陈: 征战题材的新变” *Wenxue yichan* 文学遗产 No. 3 (2010), 34-41, especially pp. 34 and 37. Wang devotes the majority of her essay to discussing innovations made during the Southern dynasty period to frontier poetry, in particular the fusion of poems on complaints of frontier service (*zhengyuan* 征怨) and boudoir laments (*guiyuan* 闺怨) which generated poetic texts of homesickness in which the sorrow of separation was simultaneously viewed from both the campaigning soldier's and the lonely wife's perspectives. Wang also emphasizes how the Southern dynasty period established the use of allusions to historical events of the Han dynasty as a filter for poems depicting frontier war. This immersion of Southern dynasty frontier poems in an atmosphere of Han place names and personalities was a stylistic practice maintained into and throughout the High Tang.

104 Chen Bin 陈斌, “Hengchui qu yu nanchao biansai yuefu 横吹曲与南朝边塞乐府” *Gudian wenxue zhishi* 古典文学知识 2003.1, pp. 42-46, especially p. 42 and Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 143.

105 胡人 (*hu ren*, non-Chinese person)

106 Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, pp.49-50

107 Hu Dajun 胡大浚, “Biansai shi zhi hanyi yu tangdai biansai shi de fanrong 边塞诗之涵义与唐代边塞诗的繁荣 in *Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu lunwen xuancui* 唐代边塞诗研究论文选粹, p. 49.

Liu Jun's 刘峻 (462-521) *Yuefu* topic poem “Beyond the Frontier” (“Chu sai” 出塞) is illustrative of how frontier landscape imagery, place names and Han dynasty allusions common in Tang frontier poetry had congealed in Southern dynasty works of the same subgenre:

蓟门秋汽清	<i>Jimen</i> , the autumn air clear, ¹⁰⁸
飞将出长城	The Flying General ¹⁰⁹ embarks from the Great Wall.
绝漠冲风急	Endless desert, a rushing violent wind;
交河夜月明	<i>Jiaohe</i> , the night's bright moon.
陷敌搥金鼓	Breaching the enemy lines, striking cymbals and drums,
摧锋扬旆旌	Destroying their morale, waving battle flags.
去去无终极	Campaigning on and on, no end in sight,
日暮动边声 ¹¹⁰	At dusk the rumblings of frontier sounds.

Liu's poem satisfies many of the content requirements of a frontier poem of his era. Lines one and four include north and northwestern frontier place names (*Jimen* and *Jiaohe*); line two incorporates an allusion to an important Han dynasty figure, Li Guang, one whose identity is intimately linked with the northern frontier; and the final two lines indirectly express a depressed, doleful attitude towards the endless fighting and fatigue which seems to echo even after nightfall.

The seven separate quatrains of Wang Changling's “In the Army” (“Congjunxing qishou” 从军行七首) compactly reflect the aforementioned essence of the standard frontier poem as delineated in Liu Jun's poem and other generically similar pieces of the Southern dynasty era. Liu's association of the frontier landscape with autumnal death (martial conflict) and dissolution, a time of darkness (night),

108 During the Han dynasty when the autumn grasses had withered and horses were strong, battles would often erupt between the Xiongnu and Han. Here “autumn air” is used to exaggerate this atmosphere of war. See Wang Shupan 王叔磐 and Sun Yuqin 孙玉溱, ed., *Lidai bianwai shixuan* 历代边外诗选 (Hohhot: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1986), p. 31.

109 General Li Guang 李广 of the Han dynasty. A general whose men were always eager to fight for him, Li Guang's fame, as it relates to the frontier, was a result of his instrumental role in repelling several Xiongnu attacks on Han territory despite once having been captured but later escaping. The moniker “Flying General” was bestowed upon Li Guang by the Xiongnu out of fear and awe of the general's horsemanship and archery skills. For the biography of Li Guang see *Shiji*, chapter 109.

110 *YFSJ* 21.318.

historical displacement (Han allusion) and frontier place names separated, in the world outside of the poem, by hundreds of miles are also represented in Wang's series of poems; Liu's ghostly presence testifies not only to the powerful motivation behind Xiao Chengyu's third facet of frontier poetry (poems in which the frontier environment receives sustained treatment) but also to the reach of Southern dynasty works and their influence over how the frontier landscape was created in language.

For instance, the summarizing scene in the final line of the second of Wang's "In the Army" (从军行七首) quatrains is replete with an evolved autumnal background of astral cold and synesthetic darkness, a night not of darkness visible but one infused with a feeling of astronomical distance sitting motionless between the Great Wall and the moon shining high above. The architectural behemoth's own being answers the hanging moon on the terrestrial plane by reinforcing notions of distance accompanying the bifurcation of interiority and exteriority, home and abroad, along its equally boundless design. The interminable endlessness of the frontier landscape in Liu's poem is limited to the geographic horizontal plane; Wang's century later piece infuses the frontier's open, non-delineated space with vertical and emotional aspects of separation:

琵琶起舞换新声	The <i>pipa</i> starts a dance changing to a new tune,
总是关山旧别情	Always the mountain pass invoking feelings of separation.
撩乱边愁听不尽	Cacophony of frontier sadness heard on and on,
高高秋月照长城 ¹¹¹	At great height the autumn moon shines on the Great Wall.

The third work in the seven poem set marries the frontier again to the images of distance, decay and dreariness, characteristics of the physical frontier which in Liu's text had yet to reach Wang's rich condensation:

关城榆叶早疏黄	Elm leaves at the frontier pass yellow and scatter early,
日暮云沙古战场	Sunset, clouds of sand, ancient battlefield.

111 QTS 143.1444

表请回军淹尘骨	Memorials sent to enquire about returning troops while dust covers bones,
莫教兵士哭龙荒 ¹¹²	Don't allow the soldiers to sob in the wilds at Dragon wall wastes. ¹¹³

Wang's withered, fallen leaves and late evening sands seem to share an aesthetic relation with an earlier imaginative, and in retrospect very prototypical, frontier landscape devised by Chen Shubao¹¹⁴ 陈叔宝 in the first of two “Waters of *Long Mountain*” (“Longtou shui” 陇头水):

塞外飞蓬征	Beyond the Great Wall flying tumbleweeds roam far,
陇头流水鸣	The flowing waters of <i>Long Mountain</i> gurgle.
漠处扬沙暗	In desert lands the rising sands are dark,
波中燥叶轻	In ripples dry leaves are light.
地风冰易厚	Winds across the ground, ice easily grows thick,
寒深溜转清	The cold is deep, currents and bends are clear.
登山一回顾	Climbing the mountain, taking a look back,
幽咽动边情 ¹¹⁵	A lonely moan moves frontier feelings.

The antecedent frontier landscape of the Southern dynasty was a kernel of developmental possibilities that germinated in the Tang period when the thematic body of frontier poetry matured from abstract and suggestive frontier sounds (*biansheng* 边声) and frontier feelings (*bianqing* 边情) into sensually more precise images and intellectually complex responses to borderland realities. These well-rehearsed and practised ways of representing a physical and emotive frontier in poetry would undergo a transformation once the subgenre reached its apotheosis and greatest splendour during the High Tang.¹¹⁶

112 Ibid.

113 “Dragon Wall” (Longcheng 龙城) was where Xiongnu would gather to offer sacrifices to ancestors, heaven and ghosts

114 Chen Shubao (553-604) served as last emperor of the Southern dynasty state of Chen 陈. The statement above about a relation between the two frontier landscapes is not a claim of direct influence emanating from Chen Shubao to Wang Changling, but rather how the frontier landscapes of Southern dynasty frontier poetry had established the language of future frontier landscape descriptions, a language reverberating centuries later throughout the Tang.

115 *YFSJ* 21.313

116 Jiang Yuexia 蒋月侠, “Tangdai biansai shi fazhan qiantan 唐代边塞诗发展浅探” *Suzhou xueyuan xuebao* 宿州学院学报 2007.4, pp. 55-58, especially p. 56.

To conclude, the preceding chapter had two main objectives. The first was to introduce one of many possible frameworks for understanding the core characteristics of frontier poetry, namely Xiao Chenyu's tripartite structure. There are other schemes for conceptualizing frontier poetry: Xiao's has been adopted in this thesis because its scope does not exert undue prejudice in its admission policy while at the same time not degrading its standards by taking any old poem which mentions any old "frontier". The second goal of the chapter was to read a selection of poems prior to the Tang period through Xiao's framework in order to reveal thematic origins of the frontier subgenre. While doing so, several examples of High Tang frontier poems were juxtaposed against these earlier texts to display both thematic affinities while suggesting that many vital features of frontier poetry underwent significant development during the Tang, especially the period prior to the An Lushan rebellion. The next chapter will devote itself to discussing some of these major enhancements while hopefully presenting solid reasons for considering the High Tang period as having raised Chinese frontier poetry to its zenith.

Part One: Overview of Tang Frontier Poetry

Chapter Three: High Tang Accomplishments in Frontier Poetry

3.1. Frontier Poetry: A Subgenre Challenged

The thematic streams flowing through Tang frontier poetry as traced by Xiao Chengyu¹ were shown to have their origins in a disparate array of literature which individually may not always be classified as frontier poetry – a select number of war-themed poems from *The Book of Songs* being but one example – but which nonetheless exerted an influence on the formation of the subgenre. Having already presented a brief overview of a selected number of pre-Tang works that anticipate defining traits found in Tang frontier poetry, what will now follow is an introduction to the distinguishing features of Tang frontier poetry, particularly that of the High Tang as that is the period where the following chapters of this thesis will mainly focus. However, before expounding upon those characteristics, a short pause will be made to acknowledge the problematic nature of the very term “frontier poetry” as it pertains to the Tang period, a categorical designation that is not without its own critics. Thus, before reengaging High Tang frontier poetic texts, a summation of two key critical works discussing certain insecurities surrounding the stability of the subgenre itself will be made as evidence of the subgenre's own relativity and openness to mutability.

Hu Dajun's “The Meaning of Frontier Poetry and The Flourishing of Tang Frontier Poetry”² is one such essay. In answering the question “what is frontier poetry”, Hu begins with what he regards as

¹ For whom responses to the phenomenon of frontier war, encounters and observations of non-Chinese frontier peoples and customs, and depictions of northern borderland environments form the tripartite body within which the thematic blood of frontier poetry flows.

² Hu Dajun 胡大浚, “Biansaishi zhi hanyi yu tangdaibiansaishi de fanrong” 边塞诗之涵义与唐代边塞诗的繁荣.

the accepted definition of frontier poetry of the Tang dynasty as poetry reflecting experiences of war on the country's borders, conflict between ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese, and poetry composed by those at the frontier or after having returned.³ However, Hu finds certain weaknesses with such a conception, especially when having to reconcile “frontier poetry” as written by those possessing frontier experience with *Yuefu* 乐府 topic poems related to themes of frontier war and environment written neither at the frontier nor by people with even a modicum of personal familiarity with such regions. Such terminological conflict leads Hu to doubt the integrity of any general definition of “frontier poetry”, especially those which demand certain experiential requirements of its poets. The early tentative conclusion reached by Hu is to regard the term “frontier poetry” itself as mere academic convenience for classifying a large body of poetry that in reality exhibits a great number of discrepancies in its compositional motivation, authorial experience and content.⁴

Hu also has reservations concerning the tendency exhibited by some critics who view Tang frontier poetry exclusively as a literary response to military confrontations erupting between Tang China and its smaller neighbours. A critical practice which limits discussion to questions surrounding the historical background to the wars themselves and a poet's own support or criticism of military actions forces “frontier” poetry into a deep, even self-effacing, alliance with “war” poetry. Hu argues that should a category of “frontier poetry” need to exist, it cannot simply be equated to poems about war as that would preclude the inclusion of poems where attitudes towards policies of defence or territorial expansion are a poem's focal point as well as works in which descriptions of frontier

³ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴ Compositional motivation in this context can be divided between frontier poems written as literary exercise (*wenhuaxing* 文化型) and poems intended to reflect the multitude of effects frontier conflicts had on society (*xieshixing* 写实型). See Kam-lung Ng, “Tang dai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 126. As for content, Hu Dajun's greatest concern is with how certain salient, subgenre defining features of frontier poetry are also frequently found in other schools (*pai* 派) of poetry, such as landscape poetry (*shanshui shi* 山水诗) and poems on history (*yongshi shi* 咏史诗). If an independent school of “frontier poetry” is to be delineated, its essence (*zhi* 质), as distinct from other types of poetry, needs to be derived from the varied content already found in works considered “frontier poetry” which, if viewed from the perspective of a landscape or boudoir lament (*guiyuan* 闺怨) poem, can also be construed as categorically relevant in defining the poem under review as something other than a frontier poem.

geography and cultures supplant those of battle. In addition, the Tang frontier, while often a violent and confrontational region, did experience periods of peace and beneficial economic exchange, neither of which are characteristic settings for poems about combat and war. Confining “frontier poetry” to “poems about frontier war” becomes even less tenable when confronted with poems whose ideological fulcrum balances the complexities inherent in the hankerings of political advancement through frontier service with the pain of parting from loved ones when such a course to success was charted.

According to Hu, frontier poetry as a stable subgenre evinces further fissures when declarations of dedication to the country (baoguo 报国) are cited as a generic pillar.⁵ Two major variants of attitude emerge when such bold announcements are probed for their generic value: expressions of serving one's country which are steeped in self concern, and expressions which include reflections upon the effects such patriotic sacrifices demand of those militarily involved in the country's well-being. Hu cites the latter half of Gao Shi's “Upon the Frontier” (“Sai Shang” 塞上) as a prototypical example of the former stance, that of a self-serving dedication to one's country:

惟昔李将军	Longing for the former days of General Li,
按节临此都	Holding tallies in his hand when leaving this capital.
总戎扫大漠	He oversaw the army sweeping the enemy from the desert,
一战擒单于	In one battle capturing the Xiongnu chief.
常怀感激心	I often embraced feelings of gratitude,
愿效纵横谟	I desire to emulate all manner of tactics.
倚剑欲谁语	Leaning on my sword, to whom will I speak?
关河空郁纒 ⁶	Mountain pass and river meander off empty.

(lines 9-16)

The poet-narrator filters concern for the country's security through his own need for recognition, to have his Li Guang inspired military strategies heard by another, perhaps even someone with the ability

⁵ Although this thesis does not consider the theme to be generically vital in conceiving of a broad understanding of frontier poetry, its inclusion does have relevance nonetheless in the context of other categorical paradigms.

⁶ *GSJZ*, p. 34.

to implement his vision of national defence. Unheeded, the poet-narrator drifts down canyons and riverbeds of self-pity, turning a desire to fortify the country's frontier into an indulgence of his own grievances. Yet in another poem by Gao Shi, the second of “Jimen (Five Poems)” (“Jimen wushou” 蓟门五首), the poet-narrator shifts from a selfish paradigm to a selfless censuring of the poor care taken of the country's own soldiers while prisoners of war are well nourished and clothed:

汉家能用武	The house of <i>Han</i> ⁷ is able to use martial power,
开拓穷异域	Open up lands and exhaust unknown regions.
戍卒厌糟糠	Common soldiers tire of husks and chaff,
降胡饱衣食	Surrendered <i>Hu</i> are satisfied with their food and clothing.
关亭试一望	Taking a look from the frontier post,
吾欲涕沾臆 ⁸	Tears about to wet my chest. ⁹

Should “serving one's country” be a core element of frontier poetry,¹⁰ the very fact of there being a kaleidoscope of treatments of this facet introduces a lack of uniformity into the characteristic, a possibility which leads Hu to refute undue importance being ascribed to patriotism and yearnings for the exertion of grand efforts made on behalf of the nation as defining the frontier poetry subgenre.

This potential of multitudinous variations of genre-defining themes is also considered troublesome by Hu when facing what he presents as another common determining factor constituting “frontier poetry” as an independent school: whether or not a poem is a direct descendent of frontier experience. Hu states that several levels of society were affected by the situation on the frontier, from political leaders to wives whose husbands were absent for years on end, thus indicating that the effects of frontier activities and policies, as well as the experiences of men serving in such regions, far

⁷ A reference to the Tang government.

⁸ *GSJZ*, p. 35.

⁹ Translation follows Marie Chan's with some modifications. See Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 92.

¹⁰ It is instances such as these in which Hu's essay itself is problematic. In critiquing that which constitutes the “frontier poetry” subgenre, as well as exposing pitfalls in the notion itself of exclusive schools of poetry, Hu is required *a priori* to decide upon qualities which define the frontier poetry subgenre, the very entity criticized in the essay. The qualities chosen are not themselves absolute but are decided by Hu as well as gleaned from previous writings on the topic, writings which in turn have their own basis in, and bias towards, preexisting texts addressing the same issue.

surpassed the frontier proper. Ignoring the diversity of responses to the frontier phenomenon, even if only as voices appropriated by poets, neglects the heterogeneous and expansive influence the Tang frontier had on the entirety of its people, effects that overwhelmed the perimeter of the frontier and spilled into China proper.

Hu concludes that a certain quantity of indefiniteness disturbs the promise of devising a precise and inviolate definition of “frontier poetry”. So as not to preclude attention to aspects of poetry which through a “frontier poetry” paradigm illuminate what might otherwise remain obscured, Hu suggests that so long as a poem relates in some way, directly or indirectly, to the frontier, be it politically, militarily, culturally, geographically or personally, such a poem has the right to be read as a “frontier poem” through a frontier poetry paradigm. The consequence is a muddy conceptualization of the subgenre; the benefit, however, is that frontier poetry cannot be overpowered by any one particular aspect contributing to its realization.

The reader may recall that Xiao Chengyu's tripartite framework of frontier poetry was utilized earlier in the thesis in order to assist in elucidating characteristics of such poetry when juxtapositions with pre-Tang poems were presented and read as precursors to the subgenre as it came to develop during the Tang. In the same essay¹¹ from which Xiao's schema was borrowed, an element missing from Hu's wrestling with key “frontier poetry” characteristics can be inserted into the subgenre debate: the writers themselves, poets whose names have come to be inscribed with the “frontier” modifier. Before discussing the classificatory apparatus used to describe frontier poetry's key features as proposed in his essay, Xiao addresses a number of inherent problems with such a system, one of the greatest being the misunderstandings and confusion aroused by the moniker “frontier poets”.

Xiao contends that frontier-themed poems can be found in a huge swathe of High Tang poets' oeuvres, giving the impression that writing such works was *de rigueur*. Questions then arise as to why a

¹¹ Xiao Chengyu 肖澄宇, “Guan yu Tangdai biansaishi de pingjia ji ge wenti 关于唐代边塞诗的评价几个问题” .

selection of High Tang poets must be shackled to the “frontier poet” yoke, particularly the names most equated with the subgenre, Gao Shi and Cen Shen, when only a small portion of their total poetic output is acknowledged as being “frontier poetry”.¹² One reasonable response, though not explicitly proposed by Xiao, is the lingering influence of poetic commentary following the Tang. One of the earliest candidates for forging Cen Shen's adamant association with frontier poetry can be found in the Song dynasty text *Yanzhou Shihua* 彦周诗话 by Xu Yi 许顛:

“岑参诗，亦自成一家。盖尝从封常清军，其记西域异事甚多，如《优钵罗花歌》，《热海行》，古今传记 所不载者也¹³。”

Cen Shen's poetry is of its own kind. When serving under General Feng Changqing, he recorded the many strange things of the western region; [they can be found in] such [poems] as “Song of the Youbenluo¹⁴ Flower” and “Ballad of Hot Lake”, things which since ancient times had not been passed down and recorded.

Statements such as Xu's can have the deleterious effect of guiding readers into prejudiced and presumptive approaches to certain poets, compartmentalizing expansive literary output into narrow categories that dismiss the whole spectrum of a poet's multifaceted voice by only summarizing and emphasizing select dimensions. While doing so can certainly be useful for analyzing specific tendencies of a poet's literary efforts, Xiao does still warn readers not to gloss over poets as members of mutually exclusive subgenres – such as frontier poetry (边塞诗) and landscape poetry (山水诗) – when the writers themselves were not necessarily composing texts with such categorical entities in mind, and in many instances produced works for multiple schools which, postmortem, would be embossed with generic seals.

¹² Less than one-sixth for Gao Shi and Cen Shen according to Xiao.

¹³ Xu Yi 许顛 (fl. 1111), *Yanzhou shihua* 彦周诗话, cited from Hu Yuanren 胡元任, *Tiaoxiyuyin conghua* 笱溪渔隐丛话 (Taipei: Shijie 世界, 1976), 9.75. The term 诗话 (shihua, talks on poetry) refers to “a form of literary criticism that consists of a critic's comments on various aspects of poetry”. See Adele Rickett's entry in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 695.

¹⁴ “The plant is probably the flower of the Persian variety of the fig...This blossom [had] never entered Chinese poetry” until its introduction in Cen Shen's poem. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 94.

The other major danger raised by Xiao relates to stylistic blurring caused by forced mutual membership into a single school of poetry. Xiao refers the reader to a line from Yan Yu's *Canglang shihua* 沧浪诗话 frequently cited in discussions of frontier poetry which for centuries has been the gravitational pull forcing Gao Shi and Cen Shen into an uneasy stylistic relationship:

“高岑之诗悲壮，读之使人感慨。”¹⁵

Gao [Shi] and Cen [Shen]'s poetry is solemn and stirring;¹⁶ when read they cause people to sigh with emotion.

By the Ming dynasty, commentaries on poetry were refuting the intimate mingling of Gao Shi and Cen Shen initiated by Yan Yu. Hu Zhenheng's 胡震亨 *Tangyinguqian* 唐音癸签, while still matching Gao Shi and Cen Shen for discussion, endeavours to significantly weaken the stylistic bonds between the two:

“高适诗尚质，主理，岑参诗尚巧，主景。”¹⁷

Gao Shi's poetry excels in its unaffectedness and stresses meaning; Cen Shen's poetry excels at technique and stresses scene.

Finally, Lang Tinghuai 郎廷槐 of the Qing dynasty acknowledges Yan Yu's earlier bracketing of Gao Shi and Cen Shen into one set of poets by writing explicitly of the distance between the two even while concurrently employing Yan Yu's “solemn and stirring” assessment if only more selectively:

¹⁵ Yan Yu 严羽 (*fl.* 1200), *Canglang shihua* 沧浪诗话, p. 14 in *SKQS*. The *Canglang shihua* is “one of the most important works on poetry criticism ever to appear in China. [Among its many contributions, the work] was instrumental in paving the way for later divisions of Tang poetry into Early (618-712), High (713-765), Middle (766-835) and Late (833-966)”. See Gunther Debon's entry in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, pp. 788-789.

¹⁶ Marie Chan translates Yan Yu's use of 悲壮 as “manly sorrow”. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 113. Stephen Owen has occasion to translate the term as “bold melancholy”. See Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 182.

¹⁷ Hu Zhenheng 胡震亨 (1569-1644), *Tangyinguqian* 唐音癸签, 5.8 in *SKQS*. The *Tangyinguqian* “is (or was) an enormous compendium of Tang poetry and related material. Still not printed in its entirety, it served as one of the two main sources for the imperially completed *Quan Tang Shi* 全唐诗”. See Daniel Bryant's entry in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 761.

“高岑迥别。高悲壮而厚，岑奇逸而峭。锺伯敬谓高，岑诗如出一手，大谬矣。”¹⁸

Gao Shi and Cen Shen are far apart from one another. Gao Shi is solemn and stirring while simple and direct; Cen Shen is preeminent and beyond the common while quite charming. Zhong Bojing [Zhong Xing 钟惺]¹⁹ was very much mistaken in stating that Gao Shi and Cen Shen's [poetry] seem to be composed by the same hand.

Even today, Yan Yu's pairing of Gao Shi and Cen Shen continues to exert an influence over the discussion of Cen Shen's frontier poetry in contemporary articles, a critical dialogue in which Cen Shen is often the “Cen” component of the Gao-Cen binary hermeneutic system imbued with the aforementioned stirring solemnity.²⁰ Symmetries and asymmetries between Gao Shi and Cen Shen also feature heavily in recent criticism,²¹ proving how the Gao-Cen paradigm is a difficult corral to break out of. This leads Xiao to conclude that the term “frontier writers”, and by extension the twin-headed critical creation 高岑 (*Gao-Cen*), tends to obscure the individual character of poets who are herded into the “frontier poetry” pen. As for the tripartite characterization of frontier poetry reached by Xiao, a necessary evil in a world of literary categories, the system is proposed with the intent of doing the least amount of violence to its members' styles and artistic concerns. By opening the “frontier school” of poetry as broadly as Xiao does, so that the martial, cultural and geographical reality of the frontier all stand relatively equal to one another, the diverse content of frontier poetry is able to bloom without any one colour overwhelming the entire bouquet.

¹⁸ Lang Tinghuai 郎廷槐 (Qing 清 dynasty) *Shiyoushizhuan Lu* 师友诗传录, p. 16 in *SKQS*.

¹⁹ Zhong Bojing (1574-1624) was as “a poet, literary critic, and anthologist”. See Robert E. Hegel's entry in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 369.

²⁰ A recent discussion shaped by the “悲壮” mold is in Liu Yuefeng's 刘越峰 “Ye tan Cen Shen shige de beizhuang” 也谈岑参诗歌的悲壮 *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* 中国文学研究 (Changsha: Hunan Normal University 湖南师范大学) 2008, pp.74-76. In this essay, 悲壮 is analyzed as a pervasive feature in Cen Shen's poetry, one born of the contradictory yearning for an eremitic lifestyle while in pursuit of rank and official recognition. With the poet choosing the latter route, the poetry itself becomes infused with “stirring solemnity”, an effect of the clash between an ideal lifestyle and the one actually chosen. This inner conflict is also treated to an extended analysis in a subsection of Ren Wenjing's *Tangdai biansaishi de wenhua chanshi*.

²¹ Several comparative essays are available of Gao Shi and Cen Shen, one of the more recent being Gu Nong 顾农, “Gao Shi yu Cen Shen” 高适与岑参, *Gudian wenxue zhishi* 古典文学知识 2009.1, pp. 81-88.

3.2. High Tang Frontier Poetry: Elements of Distinction

Having laid the thematic bedrock of frontier poetry with Xiao Chengyu's tripartite model,²² one of many possible means of classifying frontier poetry, the aim of the following portion of the thesis is to outline how frontier poetry of the High Tang can be seen as deserving its place as the pinnacle of the subgenre. To do so, a selection of frontier poems from the High Tang period²³ that display an enhancement of the essential features of frontier poetry as arranged by Xiao will be discussed, the hope being that a robust justification will be made for the praise commonly bestowed upon these works as being the apogee of their subgenre. It should be noted that even though many examples of High Tang frontier poetry were included earlier in the thesis when demarcating streams of pre-Tang influence on the conceptualization of frontier poetry, this return here seeks to demonstrate even more clearly how the High Tang brought frontier poetry to a new plateau.

3.2.1. An Array of Martial Responses

Beginning with the first of Xiao's taxonomic categories of frontier poetry – poems responding to war on the frontier – High Tang frontier poems of this stream tend to display a degree of attitudinal maturation and piercing perspective distinguished by the incorporation of a personal understanding of the frontier situation. These responses were born of overt concerns for the defence of the nation during a time of frequent border conflicts that were neither restricted to the quaint pining found in some war themed poems of the *Book of Songs* nor indistinguishable from the imaginative frontier musings seen during the Southern dynasty period.²⁴ Moreover, the scope of reflection was not limited to a seeming

²² Selected for this thesis mainly for its ability to delineate a broad spectrum of frontier poetry aspects without colliding too often with the traffic of other subgenres.

²³ A period “correspond[ing] largely to the reign of the famous Emperor Xuan Zong 玄宗 (713-755)”. See Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism*, p. 110.

²⁴ Ng, Kam-lung, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 187. The implication being that the High Tang period balanced a realistic rendering of the frontier (xieshixing 写实型) with earlier established practices of portraying the frontier in poetry (wenhuaxing 文化型) by poets with little, or any, personal investment in the circumstances of China's border regions yet who nonetheless had established the aesthetic vocabulary of the frontier subgenre upon which later poets would expand.

desire to dedicate oneself to the nation through frontier service regardless of any and all personal costs, a stance frequently made in Early Tang frontier poems in which a strong emphasis on the desire for success and fame attained through martial efforts was rarely balanced with the broader implications of such yearnings addressed in High Tang frontier poetry.²⁵

Despite their temporal nearness, Early and High Tang views of frontier war were not always harmonized; the former, when juxtaposed against the latter, veered more exclusively towards positive and optimistic sentiments.²⁶ This attitude towards war on the frontier found in Early Tang frontier poetry can be distilled into a common emotion of patriotic self-sacrifice in serving one's country²⁷ tinged at times with the selfish dream of personal advancement and recognition. An example of this peculiar “selfless self-serving” is the final couplet of Yang Jiong's “Beyond the Frontier” (“Chusai” 出塞) where a single-minded confidence voices the hopes of those serving the country on the frontier that their efforts and hard work will be recognized:

丈夫皆有志	We men of ambition all have aspirations,
会见立功勋 ²⁸	We will see our merits and success established.
	(lines 7-8)

Luo Binwang's 骆宾王 (619-687) “In the Army” (“Congjun xing” 从军行) also ends on a note of grandiloquent bravado in which the speaker's own life is ostensibly subverted in service of his lord;²⁹

²⁵ Zhang Fuqing 张福庆, “Chutang sijie de biansaishi yu shengtang biansaishi zhi bijiao 初唐四杰的边塞诗与盛唐边塞诗之比较”, *Waijiao xueyuan xuebao* 外交学院学报 2001.2, pp. 87-90. The article explains this passion as a reflection of Tang China's growing strength and confidence during the Early Tang era as well as pride in repelling non-Chinese tribes harassing the Tang border. Poetic statements of seeking to serve the state, however, were usually indirect expressions of an urgent hope by scholars to climb the political ladder, a longing displayed through the articulation of one's patriotic fervour.

²⁶ Cen Shen, on the other hand, tends to revel where his contemporaries critiqued the effects of war in general, making his particular “High Tang” angle less aligned with others'. One graphic example of Cen Shen's seeming fascination with war's sanguine tendencies is the previously cited fifth of “Six Paeans Presented to Military Commissioner Feng On His Victory at Boxian” 献封大夫破播仙凯歌六首.

²⁷ Hong Zang, *Tangdai zhanzhengshi yanjiu*, p. 40.

²⁸ *QTS* 50.613.

²⁹ Hong Zan, *Tangdai zhanzhengshi yanjiu*, p. 52. Hong also notes on pp. 42-43 that although many Early Tang frontier poems with a focus on frontier war did detail the suffering incurred by war and the bitter desolation found in frontier territories, the era distinguished itself in the subgenre through vigorous and spirited statements of loyalty to those in authority. This support of righteous war (yizhan 义战) in defence of the country and recognition of one's efforts while

the subtext, however, is more complex than what was seen in Yang Jiong's final couplet:

不求生入塞	Not seeking to stay alive when entering the frontier,
唯当死报君 ³⁰	Only wishing to die to pay a debt of gratitude to you, my lord. ³¹

(lines 7-8)

On the one hand, it could be argued that the self-sacrifice willingly chosen by the poet-narrator shuns any desire for self-aggrandizement and official recognition as it is only through death, and thus the inability to enjoy recognition, that one is able to truly serve one's lord.³² However, even with the cessation of the poet-narrator's life, glorious acknowledgement of services rendered on the frontier by the deceased could still be made by those among the living. Should sheer recognition of one's efforts eclipse any need for personal awareness of such recognition, and if only through life-extinguishing service could such efforts possibly be made, a craving for third-party affirmation of one's military service cannot be entirely dismissed as the main motivating factor for assisting in the defence of the nation at its periphery since such acknowledgement is still capable of being made even without the acknowledgement of the deceased.

The artificial division of poetry into eras does not create homogenous lumps of predictability; exceptions always exist. Though often classified as Early Tang poetry, Chen Zi'ang's "Stirred By My Experiences, No. 35" ("Ganyu 35 shou" 感遇三十八首之三十五) is actually divested of the self interest found in many Early Tang frontier poems which espoused a longing to serve the nation in a military capacity. Even with a tone of fatalistic resignation towards the impossibility of achieving glory

serving one's lord in a militaristic capacity was the hallmark of Early Tang frontier poetry.

³⁰ *QTS* 78.840.

³¹ The impression from such a short excerpt may be that the sentiments expressed in Luo Binwang's frontier poetry are narrow and limited to a desire to serve the nation. This certainly is not the case. In possessing the comparatively rare experience of having spent extended and extensive time on the frontier, many of Luo's frontier poetry works include a degree of realism which would become more frequent in later frontier poetry of the High Tang. In addition to a forthright declaration of dedication to the country's territorial integrity, Luo Binwang's frontier poetry also steps into the despair and toil of frontier service, brief sketches of frontier environment, scenes of army barracks and a thick longing for home only possible through extended absence. In short, Luo's frontier poetry was able to escape from the frontier fantasies of the Southern dynasty and incorporate both historical and personal knowledge of the frontier into its compositions. See Ren Wenjing 任文京, "Luo Binwang de biansaishi 骆宾王的边塞诗" *Wenshi zhishi* 文史知识 2007.12, pp. 10-17.

³² Kam-lung Ng, "Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu", p. 136.

and forever pacifying the borders³³ pervading the foundation of the poem, the poet-narrator here nonetheless welcomes becoming “a patriot willing to leave behind a life of ease and wealth to serve his country”.³⁴ The plain, almost natural, patriotism of the poet-narrator supersedes all traces of selfish desire; in fact, any possibility of the fervour so common in statements of taking up arms to fortify the frontier drowns in the poem's final sigh over the futility of all human ventures:

本为贵公子	I am the child of a noble family,
平生实爱才	All my life I've admired talent.
感时思报国	Stirred by the times, I longed to serve the state,
拔剑起蒿莱	Grasped my sword and rose up from the wilds.
西驰丁零塞	To the west I galloped to Ding Ling's passes,
北上单于台	To the north I climbed the terrace of the Xiongnu chief.
登山见千里	Went up a mountain, gazed a thousand miles,
怀古心悠哉	Meditating on the past ³⁵ , my heart was grieved.
谁言未忘祸	No one can claim that we have forgotten our disasters,
磨灭成尘埃 ³⁶	To be ground into grains of dust. ³⁷

While “Stirred By My Experiences, No. 35” demonstrates an absence of fear and hesitation in defending Tang territory against external existential threats, the verve in doing so, a spirit common in the aforementioned Early Tang examples of attitudes towards serving on the frontier, is destroyed in a collision between “the undaunted courage of the border poem”³⁸ and the reality of the situation, a clash of ideal and actuality that presages many High Tang treatments of war on the frontier.

Li Qi's “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” 塞下曲) is also an instance in which the bravado and

³³ Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 222.

³⁴ Richard M Ho, *Ch'en Tzu-Ang: Innovator in T'ang Poetry*, p. 125.

³⁵ The final four lines of the poem have a potent *huai gu* 怀古 quality, “a distinct genre [translated as] 'thinking of antiquity', longing for the past [as well as 'meditating on the past]. It is not surprising that Chinese poets, living in a land of great antiquity which had witnessed the rise and fall of countless rulers and ruling houses, should often have dwelt on this theme”. See Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism*, 88. This amalgamation of “frontier poetry” and “*huai gu*” is further testament to the complication of poetic stances towards frontier war already at an incipient stage in Chen Zi'ang's examples of the subgenre.

³⁶ *QTS* 83.894.

³⁷ A slightly modified version of Stephen Owen, tr., *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 221.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

enthusiasm for serving one's nation of Early Tang frontier poetry collapses into resignation once the biological inevitability of ageing, as well as the vicissitudinous attitudes of those in power, are factored into frontier service:

少年学骑射	When young he learned to shoot a bow on horseback,
勇冠并州儿	A brave young man, native son of <i>Bingzhou</i> . ³⁹
直爱出身早	Only yearning to set off early,
边功沙漠垂	To find success on the frontier, at the desert border. ⁴⁰
戎鞭腰下插	Horse whip at his waist,
羌笛雪中吹	<i>Qiang</i> ⁴¹ flute blowing in the snow.
膂力今应尽	His strength of body now soon exhausted,
将军犹未知 ⁴²	Generals still do not know of him.

The final couplet shudders with the realization that indefatigable self-sacrifice in the service of the nation is not only affected by one's flagging health and inescapable fatigue but that dedication to the country's territorial integrity, an honourable and worthy act, can actually be ignored and left scuttling about the boots of grand martial figures. In only two lines, Li Qi blasts asunder the certainty stretching from Cao Zhi's⁴³ "The White Horse" ("Baima pian" 白马篇) up through many Early Tang war-themed frontier poems that the northern borderlands were a venue where military skills and patriotic fire could open a road to success and recognition when the traditional scholarly route to such glory was obstructed. A realistic (*xieshixing* 写实型) portrayal of being stationed on a war-ravaged frontier is

³⁹ *Bing* was a province of northern China reputed for producing strong and vigorous warriors.

⁴⁰ These first four lines run parallel to the opening six lines of Cao Zhi's 曹植 "The White Horse" ("Baima pian" 白马篇): "On a white horse with gilded bridle/He gallops swiftly towards the north-west/May I ask who is this man?/ He's the son of a knight from *You* or *Bing*/When still small he left his homeland/To make his name on the desert frontiers" See Terrence C. Russell, tr., "The Poetry of Ts'ao Chih: A Critical Introduction", MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1979, p. 183. 白马饰金羁, 连翩西北驰, 借问谁家子, 幽并游侠儿. 少小去乡邑, 扬声沙漠陲. See *YFSJ* 63. 914. It should be added, however, that where the militarily gifted young man of Cao's poem valiantly devotes his seemingly eternal youthfulness to the defence of the nation, Li Qi's warrior more realistically ages and endures the ignominy of living past his usefulness without even a modicum of recognition for services long rendered.

⁴¹ Nomadic people of ancient western China.

⁴² *QTS* 134.1359.

⁴³ Cao Zhi, the son of Cao Cao, was "the first major figure in the new *shi* [lyric] tradition and one of the two or three greatest poets of the pre-Tang period". See Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism*, p. 39. For a brief overview of the transformations and characteristics of the *shi* (诗) form see Watson's *Chinese Lyricism*, especially pp. 15-18.

clearly encroaching upon the literary-cultural construct (wenhuaxing 文化型) of the frontier in Li Qi's poem.⁴⁴

A gritty and depressing aspect of war on the frontier, a frontier which though framed by a militarized conceptualization does not even offer a remote chance to prove one's mettle or to have one's efforts acknowledged, commands the nadir atmosphere of Gao Shi's "Tribal Song" ("Buluo qu" 部落曲), a poem which acts as a poignant contrast to the firm resolution which once frequently accompanied young brave men portrayed as valiantly galloping towards the frontier to repel invading forces:⁴⁵

藩军傍塞游	Barbarian ⁴⁶ troops roam along the frontier,
代马喷秋风	<i>Dai</i> ⁴⁷ horses neigh in the autumn wind.
老将垂金甲	Armour hanging off old generals,
闲支着锦裘	The wife of the <i>Xiongnu</i> chief wears brocaded furs.
雕戈蒙豹尾	Engraved lances covered by leopard tails, ⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ng, Kam-lung, "Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu", p. 155. Hong Zan summarizes war-themed poetry of the Early Tang as an idealistically driven subgenre in which patriotism, a desire to serve those who could offer significant acknowledgement of one's efforts, and a yearning for honour and fame through frontier service characterizes many works of martial inclination. See Hong Zan, *Tangdai zhanzhengshi yanjiu*, pp. 72-74. This attitude can be equated to the way in which during the early years of the dynasty, "when humiliating defeats and the horror of barbarian sway during the period of disunity [of the Northern and Southern dynasties] were still vivid memories; patriotic sentiments [would] naturally [be] strong and the response to frontier levies enthusiastic". See Marie Chan, "Kao Shih's 'Yen Ko-Hsing': A Critical Exegesis" in Ronald Miao ed., *Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1978), p. 228. Even while often following such treatments as noted by Zong, the marked difference in High Tang frontier poetry of a strong war theme is that it often enlarges the range of responses to war on the frontier without making a clear and decisive break from literary precedent. Marie Chan again finds a correlation between the historical situation as it had developed since the early days of the Tang dynasty and the maturation of sentiment in High Tang frontier poetry. It was in this later period that frontier "campaigns were expanded [into] a hitherto unknown scale. Their motives, too, ceased to be purely defensive...[and] by the time of An Lu-shan...the consensus of opinion was that the majority of the frontier expeditions were unnecessary and were conducted mostly for the personal aggrandizement of the commanders". Chan further speculates that the "movement from optimism to despair [in attitudes towards frontier war in many High Tang works] may reflect a historical reality [captured in the poetry, one that] savour[s] both...early enthusiasm [for frontier war] and...later disillusionment [with it]".

⁴⁵ Cao Zhi's "The White Horse" again illustrates the former fervency for frontier service which is called into question in the High Tang: "To the frontier walls come many alarms/ The nomad horseman are always on the move/Urgent commands come down from the north/He will urge his horse up the high ridge/To the west he tramples the *Xiongnu*/To the east he turns to hold back the *Xianbei*/He throws himself amid swords and lances/Surely he can't value his life". Modified version of Terrence C. Russell, tr., "The Poetry of Ts'ao Chih", 183. 边城多警急, 胡虏数迁移. 羽檄从北来, 厉马登高堤. 右驱蹂匈奴, 左顾降鲜卑. 寄身锋刃端, 性命安可怀. *YFSJ* 63.915.

⁴⁶ Literally *Fan* (藩), non-Chinese peoples of the frontier.

⁴⁷ Name of an ancient kingdom noted for producing fine horses.

⁴⁸ Not actual leopard tails but rather leopard pattern pennons tied to the lances.

红旆插狼头	Red banners pierced by wolf heads. ⁴⁹
日暮天山下	The sun sets below <i>Tian</i> mountain, ⁵⁰
鸣笳汉使愁 ⁵¹	A flute sounds; the <i>Han</i> envoy ⁵² is saddened. ⁵³

“Tribal Song” illustrates further the deflation of pride-pumped chests beating their way to the frontier. Juxtaposed against an enemy who is able to dress his wife in resplendent garb and adorn his weapons with carvings and pennants is a Chinese general and court envoy, the former barely capable of carrying his aged frame and the latter only able to make a weak and dispirited emotional response to the musical sounds of the frontier. From this comparison, two movements seem to rise from the poem: a downward, haggard motion found in the old general, setting sun and depressed envoy, and an upward, vital gesture of the Xiongnu whose flags and pennons one might imagine are confidently billowing in the autumnal wind⁵⁴ as their bearers threaten to harass the Tang border.⁵⁵

Unlike many earlier works in which attitudes towards frontier war were often rigidly confined to one particular alignment or another, such as support for or questioning of frontier war, High Tang frontier poems with a focus on war were attuned to, and poignantly expressed, a dichotomy of sentiment towards frontier service. Gao Shi, for example, could unleash a flood of enthusiasm for martial adventure and its concomitant success and fame in one poem, such as the earlier cited “Below

⁴⁹ The wolf head banners and leopard pennons indicated different houses among the *Xiongnu*. See *GSJJZ*, p. 244.

⁵⁰ Located in modern Xinjiang province, and often called “T’ien-shan” in English.

⁵¹ *GSJJZ*, p. 244.

⁵² Reference is to an envoy of the Tang court.

⁵³ An amalgam of my own translation and Marie Chan's in Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 57.

⁵⁴ The image of recession often connected with autumn on the frontier appears in “Tribal Song” as only affecting those of Chinese background on the frontier: they are the ones withering and weeping as the season, archetypal or otherwise, nears death. The *Xiongnu*, however, seem impervious to the season of decline. Wrapped in warm furs and strutting strong along the frontier, they are somehow immune to the effects of what Miao, using Northrop Frye's terminology, characterizes as “[t]he dominant imagery of the frontier...the death and dissolution phases of the seasonal cycle”. See Ronald Miao, “T’ang Frontier Poetry”, p. 135

⁵⁵ Cen Shen's “Song of Hu” (“Hu ge” 胡歌) operates within an uncannily corresponding juxtaposition, one which highlights the pathetic circumstances of men continuously engaged in martial services by contrasting their long, silent suffering with the material riches of non-Chinese royalty: “The *Fan* king of the *Heixing* tribe wears marten furs/and a royal headscarf embroidered with grapevine patterns/The old general at the western pass endures bitter wars/and at seventy commands his troops still without any rest” 黑姓蕃王貂鼠裘，葡萄宫锦醉缠头。关西老将能苦战，七十行兵仍未休。 *CSJJZ*, p. 172.

the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” “塞下曲), while in another work emphasizing the despair creeping out of the ashes of extinguished bravado (such as in “Tribal Song”). But Gao Shi was not an oddity among High Tang poets in his expressed feelings about frontier war. Cen Shen as well displayed a range of reactions towards the phenomenon, even if the extent was limited vis-a-vis Gao Shi's exclamations.⁵⁶

One extreme of Cen Shen's relatively narrow gamut of responses to frontier war is found in the first of the panegyric quatrains comprising “Six Paeans Presented to Military Commissioner Feng On His Victory at Boxian” (“Xian Fengdafa po fanxian kaige liuzhang” 献封大夫破播仙凯歌六章). Cen Shen frames borderland confrontation through a victorious general, allusively portrayed with *Han* dynasty flavours, being graciously received by the emperor at the Unicorn pavilion. With patriotic allusions⁵⁷ and imperial accolades used to honour the general without any hint of hesitation, Cen Shen's poet-narrator proffers a proud, gilded assessment of frontier war:

汉将承恩西破戎

The *Han* general receives generous treatment destroying
the *Rong*⁵⁸ in the West,

⁵⁶ Cen Shen's position, at least through the poet-narrator of his frontier poetry, on military affairs of the Tang borderlands tends towards admiration for strong and powerful generals and the eulogization of the grandeur of war 岑参...羡慕壮武的将军...常赞颂战争的伟大. See Lu Kanru 陆侃如 Feng Yuanjun 冯沅君 *Zhongguo shishi (zhong juan)* 中国诗史 [中卷] (Hong Kong: *Guwen shuju* 古文书局, 1961), p. 437. Cen Shen also wrote poems which included windows into frontier battles themselves, among which the most notable are “The Song of Luntai: Presented When Escorting Military Commissioner Feng Leaving With His Troops on a Western Campaign” (“Luntai ge song fengdafa chushixizheng” 轮台歌奉送封大夫出师西征) and “The Ballad of Running Horse River: Presented Upon Escorting My Lord Feng Leaving With His Troops on a Western Campaign” (“Zoumachuanxing song fengdafa chushixizheng” 走马川行奉送封大夫出师西征). As this section of the thesis is a discussion of High Tang attitudes towards, and not depictions of, frontier war, I've chosen at this time not to include any analysis of these works. However, important characteristics involved in the rendering of frontier environments found in these poems will be addressed later in the thesis.

⁵⁷ Ren Wenjing suggests that although Han dynasty allusions were frequent in Early and High Tang frontier poetry, employed as a means by which an atmosphere of heroism, prosperity, martial spirit and grandiosity could be conveyed, the connotations of such allusions differed between the two times. In the Early Tang, the insertion of admired Han generals often reflected a poet-narrator's desire to toss aside the pen and seek fame and fortune through military service. But by the High Tang, use of such allusions had become more complex and intimately woven into specific frontier circumstances in which reference to a Han general could signal disappointment with contemporary frontier policies, implying that wise council and heroic deeds could only be found during a (somewhat) distant golden age. See Ren Wenjing, *Tangdai biansaishi de wenhua chanshi*, p. 33 and Ren Wenjing “Luo Binwang de biansaishi”, pp. 13-14. However, the variegated use of Han dynasty martial allusions in the High Tang could also insinuate that current military feats actually outshone their Han cousins' deeds; an example of this positive reinforcement of the present is seen through Cen Shen's hyperbolic praise of Feng Changqing, a general against whom the Han dynasty Er Shi (Li Guangli) cannot measure.

⁵⁸ Non-Chinese people of ancient western China.

捷书先傍未央宫	A swift dispatch first reaches Weiyang palace. ⁵⁹
天子预开麟阁待	The emperor prepares to open the Unicorn pavilion ⁶⁰ to receive him,
只今谁数贰师功 ⁶¹	These days who counts the successes of Ershi. ⁶²

Aside from coupling loyalty and patriotic fervour with support for resisting enemy incursions into the Tang frontier region, the poet-narrator in Cen Shen's verse was also apt to follow the well-worn path of associating frontier military service with the attainment of success and recognition otherwise thwarted through traditional scholarly pursuits. While en route to Anxi for his initial frontier assignment,⁶³ the poet-narrator of Cen Shen's "West Inn of *Yin* Mountain" ("Yinshanji xiguan" 银山碛西馆) first presents the common trope of a doleful response to being far from home and facing a harsh and unfamiliar frontier landscape before penning the familiar perturbation of having yet attained an official name for oneself. The questioning in the final couplet of clerical activities suggests a resolve to put down the writing brush and establish one's credentials by confronting the hostile north-west region with action not necessarily compatible with scholarly activities:

银山峡 ⁶⁴ 口风似刀	The wind at the narrows of <i>Yin</i> mountain ⁶⁵ is like a dagger
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⁵⁹ Name of a Han dynasty palace; in the poem's context it stands for a palace in Tang dynasty Chang'an.

⁶⁰ See footnote to same entity in Gao Shi's "Below the Frontier" ("Saixia qu" 塞下曲).

⁶¹ *CSJJZ*, p. 153.

⁶² "Ershi" was the name bestowed upon Han dynasty general Li Guangli 李广利 by Emperor Wu Di. Li was famous for having successfully attacked Dawan 大宛, a country west of Han China, and capturing several thousand of their fine steeds. One example of an earlier implementation of the allusion begins Xiao Gang's 萧纲 (Emperor Jian Wendi of Liang, 南朝梁简文帝 (503-551)) "In the Army" ("Congjun xing" 从军行): "Ershi loves fine horses/Loulan [country west of Han China] hankers for Han riches" 贰师惜善马, 楼兰贪汉财. *YFSJ* 32.478. See the final two lines of Cen Shen's "Song of Luntai: Presented When Sending Off General Feng With His Troops on a Western Campaign" ("Luntaige fengsong Fengdafuchushixizheng" 轮台歌奉送封大夫出师西征) for another instance of delicately belittling the past to emphasize the greatness of the present. Here an allusion is made not to a specific historical figure, such as Li Guangli, but instead to the past in general in order to show how the successes and concomitant fame of Feng Changqing are so great that they exceed the recorded deeds of history's noted figures: "Who has not seen the annals of history [lit. Bamboo slips on which history is recorded]/The fame and success seen today [ie Feng Changqing's merits] exceeds the ancients" 古来青史谁不见, 今见功名胜古人. *CSJJZ*, p. 146.

⁶³ *CSJJZ*, p. 80.

⁶⁴ The *QTS* has 碛 for 峡. See *QTS* 198.2056.

⁶⁵ Mountain near Turpan 吐鲁番 in modern day Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

铁门关西月如练	West of Iron Gate Pass ⁶⁶ the moon is like white silk
双双愁泪沾马毛	Pair after pair of sorrowful tears wet the horse's coat
飒飒胡沙迸人面	<i>Hu</i> desert sands whoosh and blast one's face
丈夫三十未富贵	A man of thirty yet to have fortune or rank
安能终日守笔砚 ⁶⁷	How can he spend his days keeping himself to brush and ink slab ⁶⁸

But in keeping with the diverse stances towards the frontier prevalent during the High Tang period, Cen Shen's poems did have occasion to doubt the allure of fame and recognition embedded within the motivation for serving on the frontier, a waning of enthusiasm possibly born of the long length of time Cen Shen spent in the northwestern regions.⁶⁹ A pithy instance of this wavering support for the dream of officially acknowledged success is found in the stark and monotonous⁷⁰ quatrain

“Composed at Sunset in *Heyan Desert*”⁷¹ (“Rimoheyanji zuo” 日没贺延碛作):

⁶⁶ The pass is to the mountain's north-west.

⁶⁷ *CSJJZ*, pp. 79-80.

⁶⁸ An urgency behind attaining rank and status by establishing one's credentials through frontier service, and the impossibility of such a reality coming to fruition when one is fully occupied by clerical duties, is reinforced through Cen Shen's allusion in the poem's final two lines to the biography of Ban Chao in *The Latter History of the Han* (后汉书·班超传): “Ban Chao's family was poor, though he was often hired by local officials to copy texts for which he received remuneration to take care of his family. As time passed, the work became very toilsome so Ban Chao quit and tossed aside his brush, sighing: 'A real man lacking a strategy for his ambitions ought to follow the example of Fu Jiezi and Zhang Qian and go abroad to establish his merit and become enfeoffed. How can one spend ages at this type of clerical work?' Those around Ban Chao all laughed at him. Ban Chao replied: 'How would you people know of heroic ambitions!' 家贫，常为官佣书以供养。久劳苦，尝辍业投笔叹曰：大丈夫无它志略，犹当效傅介子，张骞立功异域，以取封侯，安能久事笔研闲乎？左右皆笑之。超曰：小子安知壮士志哉！” See Yang Jialuo 杨家骆, ed., *Houhanshu* 后汉书 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1994), p. 1571. The conclusion of the poem is somewhat ironic given how in “Western Area of Beiting: Presented to Lord Feng on His Army's Return After Receiving Enemy's Surrender” (“Beitingxijiao houfengdafu shoujianghuijun xianshang” 北庭西郊侯封大夫受降回军献上) Cen Shen seems thankful for his scholastic status; the clerical position it has afforded him on the frontier has lead to indirect military glory through association with and recognition from one of the region's great martial figures, Feng Changqing: “Two years ago you [Feng Changqing] hacked away at *Loulan*/ Last year you pacified *Yuezhi*/ With each passing day you receive the emperor's special attention/ You will be recommended by the court/I am so fortunate to be a scholar/Unexpectedly I receive recognition from a national figure” 前年斩楼兰，去岁平月支；天子日殊宠，朝廷方见推。何幸一书生，忽蒙国士知”。 See *CSJJZ*, p. 150.

⁶⁹ Hong Zan, *Tangdai zhanzhengshi yanjiu*, p. 97.

⁷⁰ The grinding sameness of the frontier is also found within the earlier composition “Setting Off Early from Yanqi and Thinking of my Villa at Zhongnan” (“Zaofa Yanqi huai Zhongnan bieye” 早发焉耆怀终南别业). Written during Cen Shen's initial posting at Anxi, battle, and not diurnal solar cycles, marks the numbing repetitiveness of being stationed on the frontier: “Alone beyond the *Lu* clouds/ Ten-thousand *li* west of the *Hu* sky/ All day I see armies set out on campaigns/ Year after year I hear battle drums” 一身虏云外，万里胡天西。终日见征战，连年闻鼓鼙。 *CSJJZ*, p. 85.

⁷¹ Heyan desert (Heyanqi 贺延碛), also known as Mohe desert (Moheqi 莫贺碛), is located north-east of present day Hami 哈密 city in Xinjiang province. The *CSJJZ* sets the time of composition at around 754 (the thirteenth year of the Tianbao reign 天宝十三载) while Cen Shen was travelling to Beiting 北庭 from Chang'an after having been appointed to the staff of Feng Changqing. Interestingly, the editor of *Cen shen biansaishi xuan* 岑参边塞诗选 claims that the

沙上见日出	Above the desert see the sun rise
沙上见日没	Above the desert see the sun set
悔向万里来	Regretting having come ten-thousand <i>li</i>
功名是何物 ⁷²	Success and fame: what are they?

The most remarkable strength of Cen Shen's frontier poems rests in descriptions of frontier environments, a facet which will be addressed shortly. As for attitudes towards frontier war, Cen Shen's works tend to be somewhat simplistic in comparison to Gao Shi whose descriptive focus on the human aspect of war is finer than Cen Shen's.⁷³ When they do manage to step back from the hortatory, laudatory or self-serving, the poet-narrators in Cen Shen's frontier verse are usually silent on issues of military policy and the broader effects of frontier warfare. This is where Gao Shi's frontier poems come to prominence. By projecting High Tang frontier poetry along an arc which incorporates an intricate assembly of responses to frontier war, Gao Shi is able to offer ample reason for assessing the era's contributions to the subgenre as being some of the most memorable. His "Song of Yan" ("Yange xing" 燕歌行) is the flagship representing such a great diversity of responses to borderland conflict.⁷⁴

Through groupings of thematically linked lines flowing in rapid and immaculate succession, Gao Shi unites an array of antipodal attitudes towards martial affairs in "Song of Yan".⁷⁵ As for

poem was written several years later while Cen Shen was returning east from the western frontier. See Zhang Hui *Censhen biansai shixuan*, p. 96. Given the poem's stated regret at having come so far into the desert, the repetitiveness of the scene, and the derision expressed for seeking success and fame, I would invest my faith in the former of the two dates.

⁷² *CSJJZ*, p. 145.

⁷³ Hong Zan, *Tangdai zhangzhengshi yanjiu*, p. 88.

⁷⁴ Gao Shi's breadth of realism and complexity of responses to frontier issues surpassed those of other poets with works in the subgenre. A frequent reason given for such distinction is Gao Shi's primary experience with martial life while serving on extensive frontier missions, an opportunity he sought early on in his life so that he could prove his prowess outside the narrow confines of the official examination system. See Ren Wenjing 任文京, *Zhongguo gudai biansaishishi* 中国古代边塞诗史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 2010), pp. 210-211.

⁷⁵ As a *yuefu* topic, "Song of Yan" (燕歌行) in its earliest textual instances focused on a husband sent to serve the state far from home, a service from which he was unable to return, and the wife's boundless grief, a sadness she had no means of relating 行役不归，妇人怨旷无所诉也。See *YFSJ* 32.469. Gao Shi briefly exploits this initial theme without making it central to his poem; Cao Pi's (曹丕) "Song of Yan", however, unfolds along the *yuefushiji* title's primeval trajectory to bring out "the latent sentimentality of the theme". See Marie Chan, "Kao Shih's Yen Ko-Hsing", p. 207. Gao Shi's "Song of Yan" is not only the poet's representative work, it is also one of the most thematically diverse of any Tang frontier poem through its incorporation of elements of the frontier landscape, frontier battle, and shifts between praise and sympathy for the average frontier soldier and condemnation of both official corruption and disastrous frontier policies

exemplifying High Tang advancements in the treatment of frontier war, the poem can be read as presenting a dualist view⁷⁶ of the peripheral, yet ineradicable, phenomenon while exemplifying the elevation of High Tang frontier poetry:

开元二十六年，客有从元戎出塞而还者，作燕歌行以示，适感征戍之事，因而和焉。

In the twenty-sixth year of Kaiyuan⁷⁷ an acquaintance who had been accompanying Lord Censor Zhang⁷⁸ returned and showed me “The Song of Yan” which he had written. I was very moved by the matters of war and garrison defence found in the poem. As a result, I wrote this response.

汉家烟尘在东北	Smoke and dust ⁷⁹ of the <i>Han</i> ⁸⁰ house is in the north-east,
汉将辞家破残贼	The <i>Han</i> general leaves home to crush the savage enemy.
男儿本自重横行	A man by nature values distant adventures,
天子非常赐颜色	The emperor presents no ordinary praise and reward.

攔金伐鼓下榆关	Striking bells and beating drums ⁸¹ , descending from
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See Dai Weihua 戴伟华 “Gaoshi yangxing xinlun 高适<燕歌行>新论 *Xueshu yanjiu* 学术研究 2010.12, pp.140-144. In a different essay, Hu Yong addresses the complexity of the work by reassessing the exegetical tradition behind the poem, one which stressed the work's anti-war and anti-corruption content. Hu Yong's interpretation suggests that the poem contains a high degree of praise for military feats on the frontier, an interpretation which augments the popular reading of the poem as a scathing exposure of inequality and decadence within the army. See Hu Yong 胡勇 “Fengci haishi gesong: shilun Gao Shi 'Yange xing' de zhuzhi 讽刺还是歌颂：试论高适〈燕歌行〉的主旨” *Mingzuo xinshang* 名作欣赏 2012.8, pp. 70-71.

⁷⁶ Marie Chan specifies this dualistic, and distinguishing, quality as “High Tang frontier poetry[’s] alternation between condemnation and condolence of the martial enterprise, and delight and distaste for the frontier”. See Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 95.

⁷⁷ The non-dynastic calendar date being 738.

⁷⁸ Reference here is to Zhang Shougui 张守圭. “Between 733 and 736, [Zhang] inflicted a series of defeats upon the *Qidan* 契丹 and *Xi* 奚 tribes which had troubled the northeast for some years...In 739, however, when Gao Shi wrote the poem Zhang's star was already on the wane [given how] three of his subordinates [had] forged an order in his name, attacked the remaining *Xi* tribes, and were soundly routed. Zhang attempted to cover up the incident without success and was demoted. Composed in the same year as this incident, the poem has [often] been interpreted as a veiled attack upon Zhang Shougui”. See Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, pp. 158-159. But to read the poem in such narrow historical terms delimits both its aesthetic and ideological effects. “From 732 to 734, Gao Shi spent a significant time on the northern frontier and became quite familiar with all facets of military life”. See *GSJJZ* pp. 81-82; ‘Song of Yan’, in addition to any historical information it might suggest, can also be approached in light of Gao Shi's own extensive frontier experience as a condensation of Gao's observations and responses to the policies and practices of frontier warfare. See Yu Shiling 俞士玲 “Gao Shi 'Yangxing 'xiaowei yushu fei hanhai, chanyu liehuo zhao langshan' kaoshi 高适《燕歌行》‘校尉羽书飞瀚海，单于猎火照狼山’考释” *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究学刊 2000.4, pp. 31-33; 39.

⁷⁹ Warnings that the *Xi* and *Qidan* are attacking (see *GSJJZ*, 82), or “a synecdoche for warfare”. See Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 374.

⁸⁰ Meaning the Tang.

⁸¹ The influence of Southern dynasty frontier poetry is still clear when elements of “Song of Yan” are read against Liu

Yu Pass,⁸²

旌旆逶迤碣石间	Pennons and flags twist and stretch between <i>Jieshi Mountain</i> . ⁸³
校尉羽书飞瀚海	The commander's feathered dispatch ⁸⁴ flies across the vast desert, ⁸⁵
单于猎获照狼山	The <i>Xiongnu</i> chief's ⁸⁶ hunting fires ⁸⁷ illuminate Wolf Mountain. ⁸⁸
山川萧条极边土	Mountains and rivers cold and desolate to the frontier's very edge,
胡骑凭陵杂风雨	<i>Hu</i> cavalry harassment fuses with wind and rain. ⁸⁹
战士军前半死生	Soldiers at the front lines between life and death,
美人帐下犹歌舞	Beautiful women within a tent still sing and dance.
大漠穷秋塞草腓	Huge desert, late autumn, frontier grasses wither,

Jun's "Beyond the Frontier" ("Chusai" 出塞), a poem cited earlier in this thesis. For instance: (Liu) "飞将出长城" (Gao) "汉将辞家破残贼" and (Liu) "...搥金鼓/...扬旌旆" (Gao) "搥金伐鼓下榆关/旌旆逶迤碣石间". Yu Shiling's essay provides a plethora of other intertextual resonances as well as short discussions of historical and geographical allusions found in "Song of Yan".

⁸² Name of an ancient pass located in modern day Qinhuangdao 秦皇岛 city, Hebei 河北 province. The "Yu" refers to Yu river (榆水) (Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, personal correspondence, February 2013).

⁸³ Mountain north-west of Changli 昌黎 county, Hebei province.

⁸⁴ The attachment of a feather to military dispatches was an indication of urgency. The opening of Bao Zhao's "Song of Departing From the North Gate of Ji" ("Dai chuzijibeimen xing" 代出自蓟北门行) uses similar imagery to convey the urgency inherent within the early stages of battle: "A feathered dispatch from the border sentry tower/beacon fires have reached [the capital] Xianyang" 羽檄起边亭,烽火入咸阳. See *YFSJ* 61.891.

⁸⁵ 瀚海 (hanhai) as meaning "vast desert" is not without its controversy. The term appears initially in the *Shiji* chapter on the *Xiongnu* (史记·匈奴列传) as a possible reference to the north-eastern area of the Mongolian plateau. Since the Tang dynasty, the term has generally referred to the desert of the Mongolian plateau, though its semantic reach, according to Fu Jinchun and Ji Si, has also come to include Lake Baikal (北海 or 贝加尔湖) in southern Siberia. Fu and Ji make this assertion through a literal reading of 瀚海 in subsequent Tang poems where waves (波) are observed in conjunction with 瀚海, the suggestion being that the referent is aquatic. It is possible, however, that the 瀚海 in Fu and Ji's examples is actually a desert being described figuratively. For details on the desert-lake debate see Fu Jindun 傅金纯 and Ji Si 纪思, "Hanhai, langshan, yinghezai? 瀚海, 狼山, 应何在? *Guyuan shizhuan xuebao* 固原师专学报 1995.1, pp. 28-29; 39. Owen's elaboration of the term also acknowledges its problematic nature: hanhai (瀚海) "can be used for the sea off the North China coast...but it is most commonly applied to the Gobi desert...It is perhaps best to take it [in "Song of Yan"] as applying generally to the wastelands of the Northeast". See Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 374.

⁸⁶ Meaning the enemy.

⁸⁷ Used metaphorically to refer to fires of military confrontation.

⁸⁸ A mountain located in central Inner Mongolia; see also Fu Jinchun and Ji Si's article for extensive speculation on the mountain's precise geographic coordinates.

⁸⁹ Describes an enemy who is swift and violent: "Xiongnu soldiers are swift, fierce and fast...they arrive like the wind and rain and depart like lightning" 匈奴者轻疾悍亟之兵也...来若风雨解若收电, See Liu Xiang 刘向 *Xinxu shanmo* 新序善谏 10.18 in *SKQS*.

孤城落日斗兵稀	Lone tower, setting sun, fighting soldiers scarce.
身当恩遇常轻敌	When graciously recognized they always look down on the enemy,
力尽关山未解围	Their strength exhausted, the siege at the mountain pass still unbroken.
铁衣远戍辛勤久	Coats of armour stationed far off toiling on and on,
玉箸应啼别离后	Jade chopsticks ⁹⁰ answer sobs after departing.
少妇城南欲断肠	Young wife south of the city walls is about to break down,
征人蓟北空回首	A soldier on campaign north of <i>Ji</i> vainly turns back his head.
边庭飘飏那可度	Drifting with the wind, how can they cross the frontier,
绝域苍茫无所有	Far remote region: vast, hazy and full of nothing.
杀气三时作阵云	Cold killing air ⁹¹ three seasons long forms into an array of cloud,
寒声一夜传刁斗	Desolate sounds all night long convey the night watch beat.
相看白刃血纷纷	Facing one another white blades drip rivulets of blood,
死节从来岂顾勋	A righteous death, how could they have ever cared for merits.
君不见沙场征战苦	Don't you know of battlefields, of the hardship of war?
至今犹忆李将军	To this day one still remembers General Li. ⁹²

⁹⁰ See earlier footnote where this portion of the poem is cited. Another more common interpretation of the “jade chopsticks” is that of a twin stream of tears. See *GSJJZ*, p. 82. One such usage of this metaphor is found in Li Bai's 李白 “Boudoir Feelings” (guiqing 闺情): “Regretful that you have left for the flowing sands/Leaving me behind in *Yuyang*/Jade chopstick tears flow down all night/twin streams down a lovely woman's face” 恨君流沙去, 弃妾渔阳间。玉箸夜垂流, 双双落朱颜。 See *QTS* 184.1880-1881.

⁹¹ Marie Chan translates 杀气 (shaqi) as “murderous air”. See Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 102. My rendering of the term as “cold killing air” is inspired by the *Cihai* 辞海 explanation of 杀气 as “寒气” (*hanqi*, cold air) and “凶恶的气氛” (malevolent atmosphere). See *Cihai* 辞海 (Zhonghua shuju xiangganfenju 中华书局香港分局, 1965), p. 571. The arctic bite of the following line's 寒声 (*hansheng*, desolate (cold) sound) seems to build upon the hibernal mood already established in the preceding parallel slot.

⁹² Speculation remains rife as to whether the final line is an allusion to Li Guang 李广 or Li Mu 李牧, a skilled general of Zhao 赵 noted for having delivered decisive attacks against the Xiongnu. The *Tangyin* 唐音, a Yuan 元 dynasty anthology of Tang poetry, leaves the question open-ended, stating in the annotation to “Song of Yan” that “General Li and the Zhao general Li Mu both defended the frontier for twenty years during which the Xiongnu did not dare attack”

On a macro-level, “Song of Yan” can be approached as a complex of responses to frontier warfare, one which embodies, to differing degrees, major themes found in Gao Shi's frontier poetry:⁹³ praise for the martial enterprise as it pertains to the nation's defence,⁹⁴ criticism of wastrel behaviour by those with military authority,⁹⁵ and sympathy for the common, and all to often suffering, soldier.⁹⁶ Following Hu Yong's exegetic division of the poem into four parts,⁹⁷ this thematic arrangement becomes quite apparent and assists in understanding the intricacies of the poem while also questioning

李将军赵将李牧也守边二十年匈奴不敢犯边。See *Tangyin* 唐音 3.31 in *SKQS*. Hundreds of years later in the Qing 清 dynasty, the choice between Guang Li/Li Mu remained unresolved: “Li Guang loved his troops, so it could be said to be him. Or it could be Li Mu; that's also possible” 李广爱惜士卒, 故云。或云李牧, 亦可。See Shen Deqian 沈德潜 *Tangshi biecaiji* 唐诗别裁集 ([上] Shanghai: Gujichubanshe 古籍出版社), p. 161. Yet when considering that there are a great number of cases in which frontier poems conclude with an allusion, for different effects, to Li Guang, such as Cen Shen's “Commissioner of Jiao He Commandery” (“Shijiaohequn” 使交河群): “General Li of the Han dynasty/[His] small successes can today be laughed at” 汉代李将军, 微功今可哈 (See *CSJJZ*, p. 152) and the first of Wang Changling's “Beyond the Frontier” (“Chusai ershou” 出塞二首): “Were only the Flying General at *Longcheng*/ The *Hu* horses would not be allowed to cross *Yin* mountain” 但使龙城飞将在, 不教胡马度阴山 (*QTS*.143.1444), interpreting the General Li of “Song of Yan” as Li Guang at least statistically seems safe. In selecting the Han dynasty “Li”, Owen also comments on the imprecision of meaning in the last line, though not in the Li Guang/Li Mu context: “Gao's closing may suggest that it is the futile desire to emulate Li Guang which has led to endless campaigns and which results in so much human suffering. And in the context of the heroic self-sacrifice of the troops, the memory of Li Guang may...serve yet a third function, a reminder of how poorly the state rewards those who serve it well: the Han general cut his throat in response to the ingratitude of his superiors. Gao's song was written in response to someone else's 'Song of Yan'...and it is possible that a reference to Li Guang in the original version, now lost, would have clarified its function here”. See Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 153. Suffice to say, the final line remains wide open.

⁹³ Hong Zan, *Tangdai zhanzhengshi yanjiu*, p. 85.

⁹⁴ “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” 塞下曲) being a strong example.

⁹⁵ Besides the previously cited second “Jimen” (“Jimen ershou” 蓟门二首), this frequent theme of Gao Shi's can be found in the last six lines of “Written in Ji” (蓟中作): “Each time I come to some site of battle/I grieve that the nomads may return/True, we have plans to still the frontiers/But our generals have rested too long in favour/I am depressed at this, Sun Wu's vocation/I will go home and alone I will lock my gate” See Stephen Owen, tr., *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 151. 一到征战处, 每愁胡虏翻。岂无安边书? 诸将已承恩。惆怅孙吴事, 归来独闭门。See *GSJJZ*, p. 188. Owen notes that “Sun Wu was an ancient military theoretician, and his 'vocation' is metonymy for warfare. Presumably the generals of the northwestern frontiers are unwilling to take vigorous action for fear of failing and thereby losing the favour they enjoy”. See Stephen Owen, tr., *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 151. However, a footnote accompanying the poem in the *GSJJZ* reads “孙吴” as the often paired military strategists Sun Wu (孙武), famed writer of *The Art of War* (Sunzi bingfa 孙子兵法), and Wu Qi 吴起, a general of the from Wei 卫 who served Wei 魏 in defeating the Qin 秦 army. The biographies of Sun Wu and Wu Qi can be found in chapter sixty-five of the *Shiji*.

⁹⁶ A wrenching example of this particular response to frontier war is the first “Dispatching the Qingyi Troops to Juyong” (“Shi qingyijun rujuyong sanshou” 使青夷军入居庸三首): “Our horses have journeyed so long/The road twists so toilsome/We do not know the frontier is different/We only gasp out that our clothing is thin/The streams are cold, sound of the springs so bitter/The mountains are empty/leaves of the forest all dried/Do not tell us that at the frontier pass's end/Rain and snow still stretch on and on”. See Marie Chan, tr., *Kao Shih*, p. 100. 匹马行将入, 征途去转难。不知边地别, 只讶客一但。溪冷泉声苦, 山空木叶干。莫言关塞极, 云雪尚漫漫。See *GSJJZ*, pp. 185-186. An earlier poem by Cui Hao 崔颢 (d.754), “Written at Liaoxi” (“Liaoxi zuo” 辽西作), and here excerpted, also makes use of ragged garments to accentuate the hardship of soldiering: “*Hu* herd their horses [ie attack south]/ The Han general dispatches troops/In layers of dew precious swords are glistening/Among desert hills metal bells ring/Winter clothes already worn thin/Spring clothes – who will make them for us?” 胡人正牧马, 汉将日征兵。露重宝刀淫, 沙虚金鼓鸣。寒衣著已尽, 春服与谁成? See *QTS* 130.1328.

⁹⁷ Hu Yong, “Fengci haishi gesong”, *passim*.

traditional hermeneutics in which the work was read within a rigid rubric of scathing criticism and condemnation of failed military policies and practices.⁹⁸

The first demarcation, lines one to eight, relays an attitude towards frontier conflict seasoned with sprigs of patriotism as soldiers set off on a righteous war of pacification in devotion to both emperor and country.⁹⁹ The promise of praise and reward from the emperor strengthens the bond between servants (military officials and soldiers) and head of state, suggesting that “personal devotion itself [is the] reason for undertaking the military expedition”¹⁰⁰ while the defence of the country is secondary, though not at all irrelevant. The mood in these first eight lines is positive and indomitable: bells and drums boom while flags and pennons extend across the land, framing frontier war within the jubilant trope running the entire gamut of Gao Shi's “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” 塞下曲). Allusions to the Han period also lend a certain grandeur to the martial actions, elevating the ordinary clash of armies to a struggle of dynastic import. Read independently, these rapid opening lines cataloguing frontier topography and military manoeuvres acknowledge, whether intentionally or not, one vein of war-themed frontier poetry: that of an excitement and zeal for military conflict as it pertains to the security of the nation.

However, “Song of Yan” marches forward and into an intellectually more contentious atmosphere. Beginning from line nine through to line sixteen (“Mountains and river cold and desolate to the frontier's very edge...Their strength exhausted, the siege at the mountain pass still unbroken”), “pageantry shifts to desolation in the external landscape [as] optimism [moves] to despair”.¹⁰¹ Reality is now rushing into the poem's earlier enthusiasm. In an atmosphere suddenly made doleful, military defeat, once inconceivable, is now a possibility. With the first theme in retreat, what has historically dominated interpretations of the poem emerges: criticism of the arrogant, lascivious lifestyle of military

⁹⁸ Hu Yong, “Fengci haishi gesong”, p. 70.

⁹⁹ Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁰ Marie Chan, “Kao Shih's 'Yen Ko-Hsing’”, p. 210.

¹⁰¹ Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 105.

commanders whose selfish behaviour ignored the sacrifices made by the common soldier. The crux of this second response to frontier warfare is lines eleven and twelve, “soldiers at the front lines between life and death/beautiful women within a tent still sing and dance”. Through a naked juxtaposition of soldiers approaching oblivion against military officials in a cozy tent surrounded by carnal titillation, a sense of raw injustice slithers in and out of the sacrifice and loyalty displayed on the battlefield.¹⁰² The frontier landscape itself seems to change in sympathy as optimism collapses into despair:¹⁰³ place names and allusions fade and yield to the devastation of a rampaging enemy who leaves in his wake beneath a setting twilight sun the exhausted bodies of soldiers who nevertheless still seek nothing for themselves. This second division of the poem, in addition to containing an indictment against higher ranked officials' lack of concern for the lowest of subordinates, also includes oblique reference to strands of the third response to frontier warfare found in the poem: an expression of sympathy for those affected by the ravages of frontier war.¹⁰⁴ It is the third division of “Song of Yan”, lines seventeen to twenty-four, which develops this response to frontier war.

Earlier, in chapter two of this thesis, “My Lord is in Service” (“Junzi yuyi” 君子于役) was cited as a poetic ancestor of one variation of responses to frontier warfare. In that poem, far distant war was rendered through a filter exposing the separation military conflict forces between husband and

¹⁰² For another scene of frontier carousel juxtaposed against the impolite realities of frontier warfare, there is Cen Shen's “At Wuwei, Sending Off Administrative Assistant Liu Dan On His Way to the Encampment at Anxi, Also to be Shown to Commander Gao” (“Wuwei song Liu Dan panguan fu anxi xingying biancheng Gao kaifu” 武威送刘单判官赴安西行营便呈高开府). Gao Shi's restrained vitriol, however, is absent in Cen Shen's poem in which the latter's movement from morbidity to excess is a shift without any ideological urgency, a mere, if beautiful, description of two diverse frontier realities: “The night is still, the sky is gloomy/Sobbing ghosts line both sides of the road/Skulls litter the ground/Ancient battlefields are everywhere/Setting out wine in the tall guest quarters at sunset/The moon over the frontier town is a deep blue/In the army camp they slaughter plump cows/In the hall they array wine goblets/The red tears are candles dripping in their holders/The mellow, moving songs are sung by girls in dazzling fresh make-up” 夜静天萧条, 鬼哭夹道旁。地上多髑髅, 皆是古战场。置酒高馆夕, 边城月苍苍。军中宰肥牛, 堂上罗羽觞。红泪金烛盘, 娇歌艳新妆” See *CSJZ*, p. 91. Cen Shen's repast and revelry seems more reflective of the frontier barrack life of high-ranking military officials where the poetic reproduction of dancing and fine dining is not necessarily a clarion call for criticism of effete authority figures.

¹⁰³ Marie Chan, “Kao Shih's 'Yen Ko-Hsing’”, p. 214.

¹⁰⁴ The final two lines of the second thematic division, “when graciously recognized they always look down on the enemy/their strength exhausted, the siege at the mountain pass still unbroken” 身当恩遇常轻敌, 力尽关山未解围, signals a shift to the sympathetic treatment of those abused, be it emotionally or physically, by the realities of frontier warfare. These lines seem to suggest that the uplifting support of the emperor in line four is but a memory; now only a depletion of verve and enthusiasm surrounds the martial enterprise.

wife, a domestic tearing caused by the exigencies of defending a nation's territory. After casting frontier war as part of a historical continuum since Han times, and then stepping into the corruption and hollow optimism of the phenomenon itself, the third thematic demarcation of “Song of Yan” conceives of conflict through another juxtaposition, one also of lovers ripped asunder:

铁衣远戍辛勤久	Coats of armour stationed far off toiling on and on
玉箸应啼别离后	Jade chopsticks answer sobs after departing
少妇城南欲断肠	Young wife ¹⁰⁵ south of the city walls is about to breakdown
征人蓟北空回首	A soldier on campaign north of <i>Ji</i> vainly turns back
	his head
	(lines 17-20)

This matrimonial dissevering acknowledges earlier *Yuefu* treatments of the “Song of Yan” (“Yange xing” 燕歌行) topic¹⁰⁶ while compounding the pain of the average frontier soldier, a misery of battlefield fatigue affecting the emotional health of both the distant husband and lonely wife. The following two lines, “drifting with the wind, how can they cross the frontier/far remote region: vast, hazy and full of nothing”, seems to seal the alienation wreaked upon those unable to gamble among cups of *Jiaohe* wine and roasted camel humps, men forbidden from attending frontier conviviality so that they could wither into the wilderness and become “frontier soldiers like straw dogs¹⁰⁷/battle-bones

¹⁰⁵ The two types of women in the poem are affected by frontier war in different ways, yet both “offer two the most devastating indictments against military activities: the dancer reveals the corruption of the heroic code [as well as a lack of solicitude offered common soldiers by commanding officers]...[and] the wife represents the disruption of normal life” See Marie Chan, “Kao Shih's 'Yen Ko-Hsing’”, p. 216. Gao Shi's “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” 塞下曲) also directs attention to the domestic effects of frontier war: “The wanderer goes with the army to fight in the wars/the moth-browed lady, so alluring, retires to her empty boudoir”. See Marie Chan, tr., *Kao Shih*, p. 101. 荡子从军事征战, 蛾眉婵娟守空闺. See *GSJJZ*, p. 276.

¹⁰⁶ Such as Cao Pi's “Song of Yan”, the nearest correspondence with Gao Shi's being the lines “grievous are his thoughts of return, so he yearns for home/why do you linger so long, sojourning in other lands?/ forlorn, your wife keeps to her empty chamber/cares come with thoughts of you whom I cannot forget”. See Marie Chan tr., “Kao-Shih's 'Yen Ko-Hsing’”, p. 207. 慊慊思归恋故乡, 君何淹留寄他方. 贱妾莹莹守空房, 忧来思君不敢忘. See *YFSJ* 32.469.

¹⁰⁷ Ceremonial artifacts used in ancient times which once used were tossed away. See chapter five of the *Lao Zi* 老子: “Heaven and earth do not act out of benevolence; they regard all things as straw dogs. The sage does not act out of benevolence; he regards the people as straw dogs” 天地不仁, 以万物为刍狗; 圣人不仁, 以百姓为刍狗. See Li Jie 李捷 ed., *Laozi* 老子 (Hohhot: Yuanfang chufanshe 远方出版社, 2009), p. 9.

transformed into dust”.¹⁰⁸

When read as responses to frontier war, lines twenty-five to twenty-eight, the fourth and final division of the poem, conclude “Song of Yan” not on a note but with a resounding chord. The first two lines of the final tetrastich, “facing one another white blades drip rivulets of blood/ a righteous death, how could they have ever cared for merits”, reflects a deep resolve to keep the martial fires burning in the nation's defence despite any mortal consequences, a stance seen earlier at the conclusion of Luo Binwang's “In the Army”. “Cold killing air” and “desolate sounds” are here balanced by an invulnerable strength in the face of certain death,¹⁰⁹ a selfless last stand against unfavourable odds. The futility of war and the soldiers' own inevitable doom do not shake their steadfast resolution to defend the nation; in fact, their deaths might even suggest a great spiritual strength,¹¹⁰ a mirroring of the opening elation which after undergoing the crush of reality returns to fortitude.¹¹¹ Such an understanding distills two traits often associated with Gao Shi:¹¹² “bold melancholy” (beizhuang 悲壮) and “courage under adversity” (kangkai 慷慨¹¹³).

However, “Song of Yan” seems compelled to complicate what could be a fairly elementary ending espousing a selfless determination in protecting the nation's territorial integrity. Compounding the heroics of such a declaration is an obtuse criticism of the absence of solicitude for the human sacrifice involved in buttressing the border; the rhetorical question “don't you know of battlefields, of the hardship of war?” conveys this indirect complaint. There is also the suggestion that contemporary military tactics lag far behind the stellar strategies of the Han¹¹⁴ in the reference to general Li Guang

¹⁰⁸ 边兵若刍狗, 战骨成埃尘. See Gao Shi's “Response to District Defender Hou” (“Da Hou shaofu” 答侯少府) *GSJJZ*, p. 190.

¹⁰⁹ Marie Chan, “Kao Shih's 'Yen Ko-Hsing’”, p. 220.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹¹¹ Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 110.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 100

¹¹³ “[T]he term describes a sense of fortitude, of strength in adversity...” (*Ibid.*, p. 61). For a discussion of the term in its earliest context, see Terrence C. Russel, “The Poetry of Ts'ao Chih”, especially pp. 51-54. Although Russel elucidates the subtleties of the term in a late Han frame of reference, his conclusions are of great benefit for readers interested in the “kang kai” quality of Gao Shi's poetry.

¹¹⁴ Hu Yong, “Fengci haishi gesong”, p. 71.

and his enduring memory. When read against the text in its entirety, these concluding lines add an extra thematic knoll to the modulating ridges of responses to frontier war pervading the entirety of the poem, further enlarging the attitudinal aggregate of “elation to despair to noble forbearance”¹¹⁵ with a return to frontier war cast through a less than laudatory prism where the ignorance and incompetence of those who initiate and command campaigns is suggested by rhetorical question and allusion.

As noted earlier, the exegetical tradition of Gao Shi's “Song of Yan” has been fairly restrictive, often choosing the least militaristic divisions of the poem where sympathy for those exposed to painful realities of frontier war is most prominent, as representing the work's totality. Liu Kaiyang, for example, summarizes the poem as a damning criticism of frontier war's calamitous effects on ordinary men and women and the disinterest displayed by those too distracted by the benefits of their position to care for the welfare of others.¹¹⁶ But by approaching the poem as a relentless shift of short scenes, each of which sounds a divergent impression of frontier warfare from the panegyric to the pessimistic, the “well deserved fame”¹¹⁷ of Gao Shi's “Song of Yan” emerges. Accompanying this realization is a rationale for regarding the variations of responses to borderland conflict in High Tang poetry as representing the pinnacle of the subgenre, especially Gao Shi's “Song of Yan” in which optimism and despair, enthusiasm and disillusionment, coalesce in a single work.

3.2.2. Forays into Frontier Responses: The Landscape

The previous section demonstrated that the frontier of the Tang was the scene of not infrequent military confrontations, conflict towards which poets of the time, be they working in frontier regions or dwelling within less extreme climes, expressed a myriad of responses both supportive and critical in content. As briefly mentioned in chapter one of this thesis, serving on the frontier, even when the

¹¹⁵ Marie Chan, “Kao Shih's 'Yen Ko-Hsing’”, p. 225

¹¹⁶ Originally noted by Marie Chan in “Kao Shih's 'Yen Ko-Hsing’”; for the primary source, see page p. 60 of Liu Kaiyang 刘开扬, “Lun Gao Shi de shi 论高适的诗” in *Tangshilunwenji* 唐诗论文集 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 古籍出版社, 1979).

¹¹⁷ Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 153.

position was clerical and relatively humble, opened potential avenues of personal success and recognition when traditional routes to officialdom were otherwise closed. Gao Shi, in “Sending off Attendant Censor Li on His Way to Anxi” (“Song Li shiyu fu Anxi” 送李侍御赴安西), validates this significant aspect of the frontier as a distant land brimming with enticing potential for those seeking a venue to display their capabilities:

行子对飞蓬	A traveller facing fleabane, ¹¹⁸
金鞭指铁骢	Golden whip driving an iron piebald horse. ¹¹⁹
功名万里外	Success and fame are ten-thousand <i>li</i> beyond,
心事一杯中	Concerns and worries are in a single cup.
虏障燕支北	<i>Lu</i> fortress ¹²⁰ is north of Mount <i>Yanzhi</i> , ¹²¹
秦城太白东	<i>Qincheng</i> ¹²² is east of <i>Taibai</i> . ¹²³
离魂莫惆怅	Do not be inconsolable as you head off,
看取宝刀雄 ¹²⁴	Look upon the strength of your precious dagger!

In a work dated one year prior to Gao Shi's poem¹²⁵, Cen Shen made a similar assertion about successful service on the frontier as a conduit to public acclaim, even adding a tone of envy for how in his times eminence was often achieved through martial, and not scholastic, excellence:

火山六月应更热 Fire mountain¹²⁶ in the sixth month is even more scorching,

¹¹⁸ Literally “flying grass” in Chinese. Being easily stirred in all directions by gusts of wind, the grass referred metaphorically to wandering travellers.

¹¹⁹ A horse whose coat is bluish-black.

¹²⁰ A fortress built in the Han dynasty in what is now Inner Mongolia. Here the term is used to refer to the northwestern frontier, Attendant Censor Li's destination.

¹²¹ Name of a mountain in today's Gansu province.

¹²² Chang'an 长安.

¹²³ A peak of the Qinling 秦岭 mountain range running from Gansu through Shaanxi and down to western Henan. The position referred to here is that of Gao Shi at Chang'an.

¹²⁴ *GSJJZ*, p. 206.

¹²⁵ The *GSJJZ* posits “Sending Off Attendant Censor Li on His Way to Anxi” to be composed in 752. See *GSJJZ*, p. 206 the *CSJJZ* states that “Sending Off Vice Commissioner Li to the Government Army Quarters in the Western Desert” (“Song Lifushi fuqixiguanjun” 送李副使赴碛西官军) was written in 751. See *CSJJZ*, p. 95.

¹²⁶ Modern day *Huoyan* mountain (火焰山) located east of Turpan 吐鲁番 in Xinjiang province. The mountain's name derives from red coloured sandstone on its slopes as well as the incredible dry heat of the area.

赤亭道口行人绝	The junction at Vermilion pavilion ¹²⁷ cuts off travellers.
知君惯度祁连城	I know that you often travel across to <i>Qilian</i> , ¹²⁸
岂能愁见轮台月?	Do you not look sorrowfully upon the moon at Luntai? ¹²⁹
脱鞍暂入酒家垆	Unsaddle your horse and enter this inn a short while,
送君万里西击胡	I will send you off west ten thousand <i>li</i> to attack the <i>Hu</i> .
功名只向马上取	Success and fame is only attained on horseback,
真是英雄一丈夫! ¹³⁰	You are indeed a brave, heroic man!

While still a place of intense military conflict which also held promise for official advancement, the frontier of the Tang dynasty, particularly the northwestern portion, with its vibrant trades routes flooded with all manner of luxury goods and exotica stretching to the Middle East, “ceased to be just [a] barren and unappealing battleground depicted in earlier poetry. [Even while] Tang poetry repeats [this] traditional view...it is often conjoined with lively descriptions of the vigorous frontier life, heady Central Asian wine, and spirited music... [which] by the Tang, [especially that of Cen Shen's time], [had become] humanized...and an enriched ingredient for the alembic of the poetic imagination”¹³¹. In the writing of frontier poetry, practised conventionality would now have to contend with personal experiences on China's borderlands as an ever growing number of poetically talented individuals employed in secretarial positions on the staff of frontier military governors¹³² were beginning to blend customary renditions of the frontier with their own immediate encounters to portray an alien spatial expanse infused with unfamiliar peoples and customs.¹³³

¹²⁷ *Shengjin* pass (胜金口) of *Huoyan* mountain; the pass is part of a transportation route between modern day Shanshan county 鄯善县 and Turpan.

¹²⁸ South west of Zhangye county 张掖县, Gansu province.

¹²⁹ The implication being that with the extended time Vice Commissioner Li must spend travelling about the northwestern region, gazing upon the frontier moon would certainly have caused him to feel homesick. See *CSJJZ*, p. 95.

¹³⁰ *CSJJZ*, p. 95.

¹³¹ Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 73.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹³³ By the High Tang, the frontier landscape would no longer exclusively serve as a background prop for scenes of battles nor as an objective correlative for the pains of homesickness, those bitter feelings of separation which were difficult to avoid while away campaigning. Geographic entities were instead becoming independent foci, objects of poetic attention whose characteristics were unravelled by writers directly perceiving the frontier. The environs of many Tang frontier poems were an admixture of tradition and experience, impressions gleaned not only from history, literature or geographic texts but also from personal encounters tempered by the frontier subgenre's tradition of portraying such

Until the Tang, frontier poetry tended to typify presentations of the geography and peoples beyond China's heartland; renderings of the region were often a mix of limited first-hand experience and conjecture or simply just fantastic speculation adhering to established protocol.¹³⁴ The previous chapter of this thesis suggested how Six Dynasty frontier poetry was foundational in establishing many core environmental images of the subgenre, especially in how it laid the imagistic foundation that Tang frontier poetry would both imitate and enhance.¹³⁵ Wu Jun's 吴均 (469-520) “No One in the Land of *Hu*” (“Huwuren xing” 胡无人行), for example, contains a germane example of the prototypical poetic frontier season and its thermal reality, one of interminable autumn and pervasive frost, common to the subgenre:

高秋八九月	Deep autumn in the eighth and ninth months,
胡地早风霜 ¹³⁶	<i>Hu</i> lands, early winds and frost.
	(lines 5-6)

The frontier landscape of Chen Shubao's “Song of Rain and Snow” (“Yuxue qu” 雨雪曲) is also pertinent meteorologically. Chen's borderland is one weighed down by a heavy gloom that imposes a degree of absolute zero onto a stark and still environment; as the poem's lines progress, this characteristic disequilibrium, darkness and dissolution of the typical frontier environment¹³⁷ is

extreme, foreign places. See Yan Fuling, ““Han-Tang Biansaishi zhuti yanjiu”, pp. 129-130.

¹³⁴ Li Mei 李梅 “Shilun Luo Binwang, Cen Shen biansaishi de wenhua guanzhao 试论骆宾王, 岑参边塞诗的文化观照” *Xinjiangshifandaxue xuebao (zhexueshehuikexueban)* 新疆师范大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) 2006.1, pp.158-162, especially p. 159.

¹³⁵ The most salient influence of Six Dynasties frontier poetry lies within High Tang expansion and development of frontier-themed *yuefushiji* topic poems written by Southern dynasty writers. Even though a refinement of frontier landscape imagery, attention to local customs, and frequent proud, confident sentiments reflective of a flourishing and secure age significantly differentiate pre-An Lushan rebellion Tang frontier poetry from the common, though not singular, melancholic despair of Southern Dynasty examples of the subgenre, Tang frontier poetry did have many moments in which the preceding era's atmosphere wafted into these later compositions, especially through the use of Han dynasty allusions, inclement and foreboding frontier geographic features, and non-Chinese military foes who were also often found in Southern dynasty frontier poems. See Wang Wenjin 王文进 *Nanchao biansaishi xinlun* 南朝边塞诗新论 (Taipei: Liren shuju 里仁书局, 2000), pp. 186-187; 196-197.

¹³⁶ *YFSJ* 40.597

¹³⁷ Ronald Miao, “T'ang Frontier Poetry: An Exercise in Archetypal Criticism”, *passim*. Although Miao is addressing Tang frontier poetry, Chen's poem is relevant in how it subscribes to the dominant frontier landscape depiction while also presaging later renditions found in the Tang, portrayals, as will be shown shortly, which had instances of being bent and reshaped by Cen Shen.

reinforced through a stacking of visual, thermal and auditory desolation:

长城飞雪下	High above the Great Wall snow falls,
边关地籁吟	At the frontier pass, the earth groans and moans. ¹³⁸
蒙蒙九天暗	The entire sky ¹³⁹ full of haziness,
霏霏千里深	Thickened snow stretches for a thousand <i>li</i> .
树冷月恒少	Trees cold, the moon rarely seen,
山雾日偏沉	Mountain fog, the sun just sinks.
况听南归雁	All the more when hearing the geese returning south,
切思胡笳音 ¹⁴⁰	Dreary and sad the sounds of the <i>Hu</i> pipe.

Such emotionally charged inhospitable frontiers, be they experienced or imagined, are legion; commonplace variations include desert sands, aimless ambulations, and yellow hued grasses¹⁴¹ even when such motifs themselves “do not necessarily conform to any topographical reality”.¹⁴² Cen Shen also made direct descriptions of the frontier landscape; but unlike many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Cen Shen could extricate himself at times from the frequent “literary” frontier environment topics to “record fresh and original [perceptual] experiences”.¹⁴³ The most arresting example of where Cen Shen enumerates the frontier's unwelcoming geographic aspects without capitulating to convention is his often anthologized poem relating the alien heat of the Turpan basin,

¹³⁸ The earth which moans are the “pipes of earth” groaning (dilaiyin 地籁吟). The “pipes of earth” appear in “On the Levelling of All Things” (Qiwulun 齐物论) of the Zhuangzi 庄子: “That hugest of clumps of soil blows out breath, by the name 'wind'...The recesses in mountain forests, the hollows that pit great trees a hundred spans round, are like nostrils, like mouths, like ears...Hooting and hissing, sniffing, sucking, mumbling, moaning...The pipes of earth... are the various hollows...”. See Burton Watson, tr., “The Sorting Which Even Things Out” in John Minford and Joseph S.M. Lau, eds., *Classical Chinese Literature: Volume I: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 220. 夫大块噫气, 其名为风...山林之畏佳, 大木百围之窍穴, 似鼻, 似口, 似耳...激者, 謫者, 叱者, 吸者, 叫者, 譟者...地籁则众窍是已. See Cao Chuji 曹础基 ed., *Zhuangzi qianzhu* 庄子浅注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中华书局, 1982), pp. 16-17.

¹³⁹ Literally the ninth, and highest, level of Heaven (jiutian 九天), which here refers to the entirety of the sky.

¹⁴⁰ *YFSJ* 24.357.

¹⁴¹ Such as the first of Wang Changling's “Below the Frontier” (“Saixiaqu sishou” 塞下曲四首): “Cicadas chirp within the mulberry trees/The eighth month of the year, the road to Xiao Pass/Leaving the frontier, entering the frontier, is cold/Everywhere the yellow reeds and grasses/Without interruption the young knights of *You* and *Bing*/ All grow old with the dust of battlefields/Do not imitate those knight-errants/Boasting of their fine dark steeds” 蝉鸣空桑林, 八月萧关道. 出塞入塞寒, 处处黄芦草. 从来幽并客, 皆共尘沙老. 莫学游侠儿, 矜夸紫骝好. See *QTS*, juan 140, 1420.

¹⁴² Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1978): 420-437, especially, p. 423

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 428.

“Passing Fire Mountain” (“Jinghuoshan” 经火山):¹⁴⁴

火山今始见	Fire Mountain ¹⁴⁵ , today seen for the first time,
突兀蒲昌东	Towers to the east of <i>Puchang</i> . ¹⁴⁶
赤焰烧虏云	Red smoke scorches the <i>Lu</i> ¹⁴⁷ clouds,
炎气蒸塞空	Blistering vapours steam the frontier emptiness.
不知阴阳炭	How do the coals of <i>Yin</i> and <i>Yang</i>
何独燃此中	Burn alone in the midst of this place?
我来严冬时	I arrived when the year was at its coldest,
山下多炎风	Below the mountain many scorching winds.
人马尽汗流	Men and horses drenched in flowing sweat,
熟知造化功 ¹⁴⁸	Who knows of the exploits of nature's invention ¹⁴⁹ ?

“Passing Fire Mountain” discards accustomed and contrived imagery found in many frontier poems to instead “describe [a] strange landscape...[and] original experience [which hitherto had received little notice] in simple and unelaborate language”¹⁵⁰. The effect is that of lingering awe, an intimate and unfiltered encounter with a place whose poetic realization resists mediation through traditional lexical

¹⁴⁴ The poem will be revisited in a later chapter when a deeper reading will be made.

¹⁴⁵ “The mountains lie on a major fault line dividing the Turpan [basin], which is itself a fault trough north of the Qurug Tag Mountain. At its lowest point, the trough descends to some 505 feet below sea level while surrounding areas bordering the Tarim River and Lop-nor Lake are between 2,000 and 3,000 feet above sea level. The area has great climatic extremes”. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 81.

¹⁴⁶ County whose borders are equivalent to today's Shanshan county 鄯善县 Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

¹⁴⁷ Referring to the northwestern frontier.

¹⁴⁸ *CSJJZ*, p. 79.

¹⁴⁹ This final line resonates with two previous exclamations of near ineffable amazement over the ability of nature's creative forces to rattle the senses and confound the mind. Lines nine and ten of Li Bai's “Gazing Upon the Waterfall at Lu Mountain” (“Wang Lushan pubushui sanshou” 望庐山瀑布水二首), “Look up and observe the strength of its shifting power/So strong, the exploits of nature's invention” 仰观势转雄, 壮哉造化功 (*QTS* 180.1837), are a near verbatim precedent to Cen Shen's call to the power of creation itself in his description of Fire Mountain. In the final couplet of an even earlier work by Zhang Jiuling 张九龄, “Zhenyang Gorge” (Zhenyangxia” 贞阳峡), the interrogative aspect of Cen Shen's statement can be found: “Saddened that such things arise far away and remote/Who knows the mind of nature's invention?” 惜此生遐远, 谁知造化心?. See *QTS* 48.590.

¹⁵⁰ Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 428. The high temperatures of the poem also melt the convention of frontier poetry as portraying China's northern regions as a blasted, desolate place of ice and snow enshrouded by gloom. See Ronald Miao's “T'ang Frontier Poetry: An Exercise in Archetypal Criticism” for discussions of the sensual aspects of the prototypical frontier climate and its relationship with the poet-narrator as an agent affected by the environment and as an agent involved in the presentation of said environment. Chapter six of this thesis will devote a few pages to discussing this latter aspect, namely how the mindset of Cen Shen's poet-narrators, as read through the frontier landscape he conveys in the poem, is involved in the presentation of the frontier landscape.

habits in creating the literary frontier. The poem further differentiates itself against frequent contributions to the frontier subgenre by being a work in which a vision of the northwest environs is made not merely to convey emotion, such as homesickness or the painful pangs of separation, but to show something which simply *is*. What Cen Shen offers is a topographical phenomenon explicitly at odds with familiar geography by generating a mountain for a mountain's sake¹⁵¹ while refusing to relegate the rocks and heat of that mountain to a background position crouched behind the elucidation of “frontier feelings” (bianqing 边情). Rather than contort the frontier landscape into an emotional expression, Cen Shen instead writes in order to indulge his curiosity and “interest in exotic scenery for its own sake”.¹⁵²

Besides the direct description just seen, two other common techniques for illustrating the

¹⁵¹ Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, pp. 174, 176. Exposition of a topographical phenomenon that does not kneel in service to the promulgation of a political, philosophical or emotional agenda is rare throughout the history of Chinese poetry; the natural feature of a landscape, for the most part, was “not treated for itself as an aesthetic experience worthy of expression in its own right”. See Donald Holzman, “Landscape Appreciation in Ancient and Early Medieval China: The Birth of Landscape Poetry” in *Chinese Literature in Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1998), p. 25. Holzman discusses how the gradual evolution of the natural landscape in poetry was a movement beginning with nature generally being restricted to symbolic import in Han and pre-Han poetry which then led to such a class of imagery being indicative of the inhospitable and uncivilized until Daoism inspired poetry of the fourth century (xuanianshi 玄言诗) regarded the landscape both as an aesthetically beautiful entity worth admiring for itself while simultaneously being capable of evoking a mystical feeling of oneness with the universe by functioning as a stepping stone to a higher state of being.

¹⁵² Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 153. By juxtaposing the two “Golden Forts” (Jincheng 金城) of Gao Shi’s “The North Tower of Golden Fort” (“Jinchengbeilou” 金城北楼) and Cen Shen’s “From Yi Tower Looking Out Over the Yellow River at Golden Fort” (题金城临河驿楼), this fascination of Cen Shen’s for unusual sights for their own sake becomes quite evident. Where Gao Shi devotes only four of eight lines of the poem to the scenery at Golden Fort (“From the North Tower my westward gaze is filled with clear sky/Massed waters and linked mountain lovelier than a painting/A swift current over the rapids, its sound like an arrow’s/The waning moon over the fort – form of bent bow” 北楼西望满晴空, 积水连山胜画中. 湍上急流声若箭, 城头残月势如弓. See Stephen Owen, tr., *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 155; original poem also cited in Owen), Cen Shen assigns every line but the concluding couplet to an incisive and penetrating description of the immediate environs, lines which compared to Gao Shi’s offer a wider array of focal depth and particular detail suggestive of the poet’s interest in the frontier landscape as a worthy, standalone object of poetic interest which only in the poem’s final lines produce, almost out of an adherence to convention, gentle pangs of homesickness: “The ancient fort rests at a major barrier/From its high tower I see out over *Wu Liang*/A postal route winds its way along the base of the mountain/River waters soak the walls of the fort/Parrots nest in the courtyard trees/Garden flowers hide fragrant musk/I’m suddenly back on the *Changjiang* shores/remembering a man catching fish 古戍依重险, 高楼见五凉. 山根盘驿道, 河水浸城墙. 庭树巢鹦鹉, 园花隐麝香. 忽如江浦上, 忆作捕鱼郎. See *CSJZ*, p. 143. Cen Shen’s “Song of Hot Lake: Sending Off Censor Cui On His Return to the Capital” (热海行送崔侍御还京) further evinces Cen Shen’s attraction to unconventional frontier sights in and of themselves.

frontier are the use of negation of familiar imagery in Chinese poetry¹⁵³ and contrasting¹⁵⁴ the frontier environment with the familiar world of home. The former of these two techniques “permits [the poet] to introduce... stock images into frontier poetry [which are]... not primarily dictated by visual immediacy or realistic representation”,¹⁵⁵ thus allowing a means of producing works in the subgenre for those who could only imagine China's outer climes through the poetic manifestations of other writers. The result of such a practice is an exclusion of “the startling and strange aspects of the frontier landscape [as the readers themselves are] seldom...taken...beyond the confines of the familiar”.¹⁵⁶ The opening of Zhang Jingzhong's 张敬忠 (*fl.* 707) “Frontier Song” (“Bianci” 边词) follows this procedure of describing a place in terms of what it is not:

五原春色旧来迟

二月垂杨未挂丝¹⁵⁸

Spring scenes are always late in *Wuyuan*,¹⁵⁷

In the second month no budding leaves hang from weeping willows.

(lines 1-2)

Orthodox images of “Spring”¹⁵⁹ and “willows”¹⁶⁰ are here only illusory wisps, present through their conspicuous absence and signalling a frontier identified in terms of how it lacks expected vegetative burgeoning. Li Bai's “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” 塞下曲) employs a similar mechanism of negation in the opening four lines of its frontier illustration:

五月天山雪

Snow on *Tian* mountain in the fifth month,

¹⁵³ See the collation of nature imagery on pp. 127-137 of Burton Watson's *Chinese Lyricism* for how such elements pertain to Tang poetry. Marie Chan undertakes a similar exercise with a selection of frontier poetry and discovers that with “the possible exception of the ubiquitous desert and such objects associated with martial life as beacon fires, feathered dispatches and kettledrums, the frontier poem seldom introduces any image that is totally alien to the Chinese reader; animal, flora and fauna are taken from the stock imagery”. See Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 425. What will be demonstrated shortly, and later in this thesis, is the exception to such a rule represented by Cen Shen's cultural and geographic frontier landscape.

¹⁵⁴ Li Mei, “Shilun Luo Binwang, Cen Shen biansaishi de wenhua guanzhao”, p. 161.

¹⁵⁵ Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 424.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

¹⁵⁷ Wuyuan county 五原县 in today's Inner Mongolia

¹⁵⁸ *QTS* 75.819.

¹⁵⁹ The most frequent season mentioned in Tang poetry. See Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism*, p. 135.

¹⁶⁰ After generic “grasses” (cao 草) and “reeds”, Marie Chan lists “willow” third in her frequency list of plants found in Tang frontier poetry. See Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 425.

无花只有寒	No flowers, only cold.
笛中闻折柳	Within the sounds of the flute one hears the tune “Snapping the Willow”, ¹⁶¹
春色未曾看 ¹⁶²	Spring scenes have yet to be seen. (lines 1-4)

As with Zhang's work, the frontier in Li Bai's poem is also an area of antithesis, a Spring aligned with Winter and refusing to behave as a vernal season ought to act: instead of blossoms there is snow and cold; where copulatory buzzing should be tickling the atmosphere there is only the music of separation. In short, the peculiar is relayed through the ordinary, and a landscape intended to convey a sense of the non-commonplace appears out of the absence of the everyday.

Cen Shen, while still at times “continu[ing] to define the frontier in formulaic terms”,¹⁶³ attempts in many of his frontier poems to “integrate...new experience[s] into [the poetic] tradition”,¹⁶⁴ to “take...existing patterns [of the frontier subgenre] and stretch...[them] dangerously close to the limits that the pattern [would] permit without ceasing to be a pattern”¹⁶⁵. As with the previously cited works, Cen Shen's poet-narrator also relies on negation in the anatomy of his frontier landscape, as in “Seventh

¹⁶¹ “Snapping the Willow” (“Zheyangliu” 折杨柳) is a *yuefu* title. The snapping and presentation of a willow branch was a gesture made at parting. There are numerous examples of this title from the Six Dynasty period as well as the Tang. The first line of the Six Dynasty poet Wang Cuo's 王琚 “Snapping the Willow” – Beyond the frontier no Spring scenes/the willows in *Shanglin* are already yellow” 塞外无春色, 上林柳已黄 (YFSJ 22.330) – harmonizes with the opening of Li Bai's “Below the Frontier” until the latter pounds its way off to battle.

¹⁶² QTS 164.1700.

¹⁶³ Marie Chan, “Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 430.

¹⁶⁴ Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 77. Chan further writes that it would have been impossible for Cen Shen to “completely repudiate his poetic lineage” by distancing himself from recognized tropes and write entirely of the weird and wonderful; to do so would cause his frontier poems to “fail as an instrument of communication”. The natural imagery of China's far northwestern regions did not possess the associative power of flora and fauna native to central and southern China, objects which in their poetic environment resonated with certain expectations between writers and readers. Were Cen Shen to completely indulge in the “unknown Central Asian landscape”, the “social and cultural” aspects of his poems would become vacuous. However, “simply submit[ting]...to the demands of tradition would [have] produce[d] mere... stereotypes” (Marie Chan, *ibid.*, pp. 76-77). Instead, Cen Shen's frontier poetry orbits a binary system of the familiar and unfamiliar in which the known and unknown, both in image and sentiment, fuse together to produce poetic worlds which are ruled neither by the fantastic nor the prosaic.

¹⁶⁵ Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 434.

Month at Luntai¹⁶⁶ (“Shouqiuluntai” 首秋轮台):

异域阴山外	In other lands ¹⁶⁷ beyond <i>Yin</i> mountain,
孤城雪海边	Isolated town by Snow Lake. ¹⁶⁸
秋来唯有雁	Autumn arrives with only the geese,
夏尽不闻蝉 ¹⁶⁹	Summer's end and one does not hear the cicada.

(lines 1-4)

Silenced cicada, which otherwise should be chirping, characterize the frontier through an act of negation; the autumnal geese further signal the familiar poetic taxonomy of depression and separation. Were Cen Shen's poem to cease at the fourth line, it would sink into a symphony of so many similar-sounding sighs. However, the delicately unusual and discordant lurks inside the poem. In this instance it is not startling geography but the stench of local furnishings made wet by the rain which injects the poem with an element of the non-conventional in portraying the frontier region:

雨拂毡墙湿	A slight brush of rain and the felt walls dampen,
风摇毳幕膻	A stirring of wind and the fine fur curtains stink of mutton. ¹⁷⁰
轮台万里地	Luntai, a place ten-thousand <i>li</i> distant,
无事厉三年 ¹⁷¹	Nothing to attend to at the moment; three years have passed.

(lines 5-8)

¹⁶⁶ According to page 182 of the *CSJJZ*, the poem was written in 756, making it a rather late example of Cen Shen's frontier verse. The poem becomes quite noteworthy when considering how even towards the end of his seven (non-continuous) years spent in the north-west, easily recognized motifs of frontier poetry could still be found in Cen Shen's texts.

¹⁶⁷ Here referring to the north-west. 异域 (*yiyu*), as meaning “other lands” (or “different/ foreign lands”), is found in the second of Gao Shi's “Ji Gate” (“Jimenxing wushou” 蓟门行五首): The house of Han can be able to use weapons/to open up the very ends of other lands” 汉家能用武，开拓穷异域。 See *GSJJZ*, p. 35.

¹⁶⁸ Or “Sea of Snow”. As an actual place, “Snow Lake” is within roughly one hundred miles “Hot Lake” (Rehai 热海 or Lake Issyk Kul in modern day Krygyzstan). The term, however, also connotes a scene of broad, dense snow.

¹⁶⁹ *CSJJZ*, p. 182

¹⁷⁰ Many decades later, the poet-narrator of Guan Xiu's 贯休 “Below the Ancient Frontier” (“Gusaixiaqu sishou” 古塞下曲四首) would have a similar olfactory reaction to the frontier in general: “The ancient frontier, a place that smells like mutton/Hu soldiers gather together like flies” 古塞腥膻地，胡兵聚如蝇。 See *QTS* 827.9321.

¹⁷¹ *CSJJZ*, p. 182

Not only does Cen Shen surpass the paradigm of assembling the land of China's northwestern periphery through its negation against entities of China's heartland, he also sensualizes the scene through an explicit fine-tuning of immediate percepts¹⁷² apprehended both through sight (the damp felt walls) and smell (the lingering odour of cooking mutton). The stock imagery of the first four lines shifts away from view to allow the distinctness of High Tang frontier poetry to enter the text: the poet-narrator who takes down his central-China blinders¹⁷³ and presents a brief vignette of the northwestern regions without forcing the sights (and the scent as well) to undergo severe central-southern China “sinification”, and offers instead a relatively unadulterated vision of the frontier unhampered by, though not completely liberated from, literary tradition.

Cen Shen's employment of negation is not restricted to acts of structuring the frontier on a basis of that which it lacks. In “Song of the Youboluo Flower”¹⁷⁴ (“Youboluohua ge” 优钵罗花歌), Cen Shen reverses the direction of negative comparison and describes one tiny aspect of the northwestern hinterland as a matter of what does not exist in central China:

白山南	South of White Mountain, ¹⁷⁵
赤山北	North of Vermillion Mountain, ¹⁷⁶
其间有花人不识	In between there exists a flower no one knows,
绿茎碧叶好颜色	Green stem, bluish-green leaves, a lovely appearance.
叶六瓣	Its leaves divided into six segments,
花九房	Its flowers have nine petals,

¹⁷² Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 174

¹⁷³ Li Mei, “Shilun Luo Binwang, Cen Shen biansaishi de wenhua guanzhao”, p. 160.

¹⁷⁴ Marie Chan notes that the “plant is probably the flower of the Persian variety of the fig...This blossom has never entered Chinese poetry, hence Cen [Shen] perceives a correspondence between the anonymous flower and an anonymous official like himself”. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 94. The flower “Youboluo” could be the Utpala, and here in the poem refer to the Xuelian 雪莲 (snow lotus, *saussurea involucrata*) (Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, personal correspondence, February 2013).

¹⁷⁵ Reference is to Tian 天 mountain. Another alternative name, “Snow Mountain” (Xueshan 雪山), also derives from the fact that the mountain was covered in snow throughout the year.

¹⁷⁶ Another name for “Fire Mountain” (Huoshan 火山 or Huoyanshan 火焰山), so named for the colour of the mountain's geology and the accompanying thermal intensities of the area.

夜掩朝开多异香	At night it closes, in the morning it opens; it has many different scents,
何不生彼中国兮生西方	Why does it not grow in central lands but grows in the west?
移根在庭	I transplanted it to the courtyard,
媚我公堂	It beautifies my office.
耻于众草之为伍	Ashamed to be partners with all kinds of grasses,
何亭亭而独芳	How tall and straight it stands uniquely fragrant!
何不为人之所赏兮	How is it not appreciated by people,
深山穷谷委严霜	In deep mountains and inaccessible valleys it is unfairly treated under intense frost.
吾窃悲阳关道路长	I am secretly sad that the road to <i>Yang Pass</i> ¹⁷⁷ is long,
曾不得献于君王 ¹⁷⁸	and that I have not yet been able to present the flower to my lord.

Unlike previous examples in which inclusion of nouns absent from the frontier functioned as a means of describing the frontier (such as the cicada of “Seventh Month at Luntai”, the flowers of Li Bai’s “Below the Frontier”, and the silk on willow trees in Zhang Jingzhong’s “Frontier Song”), the first negative particle in “Song of the Youboluo Flower” does not expel the flower from the northwest but rather transfers existential negation of the floral entity to central China (zhongguo 中国). The consequences of such a deflection, one in which the territory of the familiar, central China, is now immediately associated with negation, allows the frontier’s geographic identity to retain a sense of wholeness often enervated by negative particles reinforcing the non-presence of flora native to China’s interior. Although the paradigm for describing the frontier through negation is retained in “Song of the Youboluo Flower”, the absent-present dichotomy has shifted in direction with presence now resting on

¹⁷⁷ Name of an ancient pass south-west of Dunhuang county 敦煌县 in Gansu 甘肃 province.

¹⁷⁸ CSJZ, p. 180.

the frontier and absence qualifying the Chinese interior.

In addition to straightforward description and negation, the frontier, both as a topographical and cultural entity, was habitually construed by contrasting differences between its immediate strangeness with that of a distant, but familiar, China deep within the country's own borders. As with negation, this method also gestured towards that which was absent; the discontinuity between the two techniques, however, is characterized by the latter's comments on how phenomena located both on the border and in central China could still display certain inherent incongruities when contrasted against one another, disparities which were then consolidated into an illustration of the frontier itself.

By demanding a certain degree of frontier familiarity, the approach of contrasting China's periphery with its interior as a mode of description was not a technique frequently realized. One pre-Tang example in which contrastive treatment is particularly pronounced is Lu Sidao's 卢思道 (535-586) "In the Army" ("Congjunxing" 从军行). After constructing a frontier environment from an array of peripheral place names and inclement weather conditions, the limits of the Chinese world are further assembled as a place of pure contrast in which seasonal changes seem to obey a separate set of natural laws:

边庭节物与华异

The seasons and scenes of the frontier differ from
the Chinese interior,

冬霰秋霜春不歇¹⁷⁹

Spring cannot disperse Winter's soft hail or Autumn's frost.
(lines 21-22)

The previously excerpted "Frontier Song" concludes with a gesture of contrast, one often seen in the subgenre, where the inner and outer realms of China are, as in Lu Sidao's "In the Army", differentiated by seasonal inconsistencies out of which the unfamiliarity of the frontier region itself is illustrated:

¹⁷⁹ YFSJ 32.482

即今河畔冰开日 正是长安花落时 ¹⁸⁰	Today on the banks of the river ice starts to open up Right now in Chang'an it is the time of falling blossoms (lines 3-4)
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The Spring season in this instance is disjointed between two locales: while just commencing on the frontier, it is already well advanced in Chang'an.¹⁸¹ This contrast in seasonal behaviour between one geographic coordinate and another is here acting as the descriptive backbone of China's hinterlands, but it is still a fairly imprecise picture of the frontier, and one which relies heavily on well-worn motifs and imagery.

3.2.3. Forays Into Frontier Responses: Local Peoples and Customs

As personal exposure to Tang China's borderlands increased, a more refined utilization of contrast between the familiar and unfamiliar in the creation of a frontier picture could be exploited. The previously cited Cen Shen poem “Impromptu Poem About Luntai”¹⁸² (“Luntai jishi” 轮台即事) brilliantly reflects this trend. Beginning with direct acknowledgement of Luntai's “differences” in fairly common terms, such as the fact that despite the season green grasses are nowhere to be found (negation) while white elm trees, emblematic of frontier flora, surround domestic dwellings, Cen Shen's poet-narrator moves from contrasting climatic and ecological inconsistencies with central China and redirects the poem towards the linguistic peculiarities and divergent customs of the region's non-Chinese peoples in his act of contradistinction: local orthographies are described through their difference *vis-a-vis* Chinese written characters while the sound system of the local language is also shown not to align with the phonetics of the poet-narrator's native tongue. This means of employing contrast between inner and outer China through the writing and sound structures of local languages in order to depict the frontier transcends many earlier poets' reliance on prototypical wasteland scenes in

¹⁸⁰ *QTS* 75.819

¹⁸¹ Ronald Miao, “T'ang Frontier Poetry”, p. 117.

¹⁸² See chapter one of the thesis for a translation of the poem

its novelty and perspicacity; it also employs a deeper degree of observation that is able to access aspects of the frontier and assimilate them into striking vignettes of China's borderland.

In fact, it is in the inclusion of such minutiae that the delights of High Tang frontier poetry become especially pronounced. These moments crafted by poets such as Cen Shen dispense with a total reliance on climate and geography, as well as the neatness of the negation/contrast paradigm, in presenting the northwestern hinterlands, following instead the sights, smells and sounds of human habitation at the limits of the Tang empire, phenomena which would be near impossible to fabricate without the threat of unrealistic absurdities infiltrating a poem, to undo caricatures of the frontier and offer a more substantial world without near frenetic reference to its “differences” from central China.¹⁸³ By blurring, and not constantly referencing or reinforcing, the border between inner and outer China, and removing the fright from frontier spaces, Cen Shen, above all other writers of the period, managed to create a moment in the evolution of frontier poetry distinguished by fresh descriptions of unusual physical environments which at times seem to familiarize the unfamiliar¹⁸⁴ non-militaristic activities taking place in army camps and among the local population, a people who in many High Tang frontier poems in addition to Cen Shen's own would finally come to be released from the strict friend-foe binary prison common to the subgenre.

Advancements in responses to and descriptions of non-Chinese frontier peoples and customs,

¹⁸³ Descriptions of and responses to the frontier landscape and its peoples/customs have been discussed as representing two of the three thematic pillars of frontier poetry. In the majority of cases, however, these themes are realized in standard and predictable manners. The frontier landscape, for example, is quite often an uninviting and desolate, cold place wracked by violent winds and roiling sands; it is a climate conceived in sharp contrast to the gentler climes of central China, an environment conducive to the integrative tendencies of poet and landscape found in landscape poetry (shanshuishi 山水诗). Such stock, even hackneyed, representations of the frontier were frequently the norm until Cen Shen infused the subgenre with new thermal variants and complex perspectives of the frontier landscape. The same poet, along with a selection of other writers of the same period, is also responsible for draining conventional responses of the frontier poet-narrator to non-Chinese peoples, their cultural practices and frontier martial life itself. With military service being an alternative to the official examination system in seeking employment and personal success, and not merely a dreary form of exile, depictions of army camp life and events often received a refined treatment in High Tang frontier poetry which exceeded the typical reaction of homesickness and longing for those in central China to include moments of curiosity and conviviality during raucous gatherings and even apathy for the once passionate motives buffeting one to the frontier as the tedium of secretarial or clerical duties slowly set in. See Yan Fuling, “Han-Tang biansaishi zhuti yanjiu”, pp. 16, 177.

¹⁸⁴ Li Mei, “Shilun Luo Binwang, Cen Shen biansaishi de wenhua guanzhao”, p. 160.

attitudes which at times were able to break the well-entrenched paradigm of viewing such peoples through the lens of a military enemy, can in part be ascribed to the increase in numbers of poetically talented men whose employment led them to the frontier.¹⁸⁵ Unlike previous eras in which direct experience rarely informed frontier poetry, many High Tang writers could now use an admixture of tradition and local interactions in their borderland compositions. For instance, in Cui Hao's 催颢 (d. 754) “Song: Hu People of Yanmen” (“Yamenhuren ge” 雁门胡人歌) local denizens are portrayed without projecting an atmosphere of antagonism, becoming humanized through descriptions of their non-militaristic customs as well as their preferences for alcohol over enemy annihilation:

高山代郡东接燕	At the towering mountains of <i>Dai</i> county ¹⁸⁶ which eastward meet up with <i>Yan</i> , ¹⁸⁷
雁门胡人家近边	Are the <i>Hu</i> people of <i>Yanmen</i> , their homes near the border.
解放胡鹰逐塞鸟	They have the falconry skills to catch birds of the frontier,
能将代马猎秋田	They can ride <i>Dai</i> horses ¹⁸⁸ and go on Autumn hunts.
山头野火寒多烧	In the mountains they light wild fires ¹⁸⁹ , coldness turned into swathes of burnt grass,
雨里孤峰湿作烟	From solitary mountain peaks in the rain damp smoke ¹⁹⁰ rises.
闻道辽西无斗战	Hearing that in Liaoxi county ¹⁹¹ there are no battles to fight,
时时醉向酒家眠 ¹⁹²	One can keep getting drunk and sleep in taverns.

Rather than borrowing the trope of barbarian berserkers relentlessly harassing the Tang border, Cui

¹⁸⁵ Yan Fuling, “Han-Tang Biansaishi zhuti yanjiu”, p. 132, and Kam-lung Ng, “Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu”, p. 174.

¹⁸⁶ Located in modern day *Dai* county 代县, Shanxi 山西 province. See Wang Jun 王军 Li Ye 李晔 ed., *Biansaishipai xuanji* 边塞诗派选集 (Beijing: Capital Normal University Press 首都师范大学出版, 1994), p. 46.

¹⁸⁷ Refers to Youzhou 幽州.

¹⁸⁸ Famous breed of horse produced in northern Hu territory. See the opening of Cao Zhi's “Lyric on the Northern Wind” (“Shuofeng shi” 朔风诗): “Raising my head and facing the northern wind/I think of the capital of *Wei*/I wish I could gallop off on the back of *Dai* horse/and quickly head north” 仰彼朔风, 用怀魏都. 原骋代马, 倏忽北徂. See *Wenxuan zhu* 文选注 2.8 in *SKQS*.

¹⁸⁹ To smoke out prey for hunting.

¹⁹⁰ Or mist.

¹⁹¹ Area of northeastern frontier.

¹⁹² *QTS* 130.1326.

Hao's "Hu" are compassionately captured in non-militarized moments, their identities decoupled from the status of fearsome enemy¹⁹³ and latched instead to the non-threatening, and very ordinary, habits of survival.¹⁹⁴ War is also conspicuously absent, if still lurking in the background, but Cui Hao's "Hu" do not mourn the temporary reprieve; in fact, they avail themselves of the calm and drink to excess.

Gao Shi's "Song of Yingzhou" ("Yingzhou ge" 营州歌)¹⁹⁵ plunges even further into the presentation of frontier society through a dense quatrain describing the sartorial habits and preternatural imbibitional, as well as equestrian, abilities of the people populating the northern border. Compared to Cui Hao's "Song: Hu People of Yanmen", "Song of Yingzhou" applies a broader categorical range in depicting the subject while also appending perceivable details of the subjects' appearance. For instance, both Cui and Gao's poems present the frontier peoples through an action – hunting. However, Gao Shi complements the action by including adverbial details missing in Cui Hao's poem on "how" the men hunt, namely that they do it "in fuzzy fur garments" (皮裘蒙茸猎城下). This particular hemistich sensualizes the hunters of Yingzhou, recreating in verse both the actions and garments of the non-Chinese on the Tang frontier. Like Cen Shen's "Impromptu About Luntai" ("Luntaijishi" 轮台即事), "Song of Yingzhou" proffers a world divergent from that of civilized and cultured central China, one where in this instance youth ride horses like men and alcohol is incapable of forcing drunken fits of rhapsodic fancy.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Li Bai's *yuefu* topic poem "South of the Walls We Fought" ("Zhanchengnan" 战城南) also introduces non-martial imagery in association with non-Chinese: "The Xiongnu treat slaughter as farmers treat ploughing/Since bygone days only white bones are seen in their fields of yellow sand". See Stephen Owen, tr., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), p. 244. 匈奴以杀戮为耕作, 古来唯见白骨黄沙田。 See *QTS* 162.1682. However, unlike Cui Hao's poem in which falconry and hunting are not indirect expressions of Hu ferocity and innate violence, Li Bai's association of non-Chinese with harmless peace time activities actually enhances the familiar depiction of frontier people (in this case Xiongnu) as brutish, uncivilized slaughterers who in this instance equate the normalcy people of an agricultural based society have towards tilling fields to killing. In "South of the Walls We Fought", the non-Chinese Xiongnu are only capable of producing a culture of unending death and destruction; they are depicted as a people interminably locked in the role of dangerous foe.

¹⁹⁴ Kam-lung Ng, "Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu", p. 176.

¹⁹⁵ See chapter one of this thesis for a translation of the poem.

¹⁹⁶ Xue Zongzheng 薛宗正, *Lidai xichui biansaishi yanjiu* 历代西陲边塞诗研究 (Lanzhou: Dunhuang wenyi chubanshe 敦煌文艺出版社, 1993), p. 70

Aside from the venatic and oenological skills of Tang China's peripheral peoples, local rituals also featured in examples of the subgenre with a thematic foothold in descriptions of frontier people and customs. Although known primarily for his landscape poetry, Wang Wei 王维 (701-761)¹⁹⁷ did compose a number of works whose topical scope permits them entry into the frontier poetry school. One poem in particular, “Deity Worship at Liangzhou” (“Liangzhou saisheng” 凉州赛神), briefly illuminates a religious practice of Liangzhou denizens while concurrently reaffirming the vision seen in the previous two poems of a frontier people who are physically healthy and hearty yet who in this case are also seen to be devoted to supernatural deities charged with overseeing the fortunes of mounted archers:

凉州城外少行人	Outside the walls of Liangzhou travellers are few,
百尺峰头望虏尘	From high mountain tops, the dust of <i>Lu</i> manoeuvres are gazed upon.
健儿击鼓吹羌笛	Hearty men bang drums and play <i>Qiang</i> flutes,
共赛城东越骑神 ¹⁹⁸	And join together at the Eastern wall to worship the God of Mounted Archers.

Whereas in many other frontier poems whose distant stirrings of desert dust inevitably lead the poet-narrator to adopt a gaze fixated on martial conflict at its various stages of progress,¹⁹⁹ the focal apparatus in Wang Wei's poem swivels from ever present military concerns in the second line towards

¹⁹⁷ In 737, Wang Wei was assigned to the post of Investigating Censor (Jianchayushi 监察御史) of Hexi 河西 in Liangzhou 凉州; the assignment included assisting the Grand Imperial Commissioner (Jiedudashi 节度大使) of the border region, Cui Xiyi 崔希逸, a general who had waged several campaigns against the non-Chinese tribes of the northwest frontier. Wang Wei remained in the region until sometime after his superior's death in mid 738. See Pauline Yu, *The Poetry of Wang Wei* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. 45.

¹⁹⁸ *QTS* 128.1308.

¹⁹⁹ For example at the beginning of battle in the opening line of Gao Shi's “Song of Yan”, and final pacification of the enemy in the concluding quatrain of Cen Shen's “Six Paeans Presented to Military Commissioner Feng On His Victory at Boxian” (献封大夫破播仙凯歌六首): “Dusk rain, flags and banners not yet dry/*Hu* dust, white grass, the sunlight cold/Last night the general fought all the way until dawn/Of the *Fan* army one only sees empty saddles” 暮雨旌旗湿未干, 胡尘白草日光寒。昨夜将军连晓战, 藩军只见马空鞍 (*CSJJZ*, p. 154) as well as his “Song of Eliminating the *Hu*” (“Miehu qu” 灭胡曲): The general has again eliminated the *Hu*/The army's spirit is strong/Dreary and desolate the *Lu* dust has cleared/Tian mountain stands lofty and alone” 都护新灭胡, 士马气亦粗。萧条虏尘净, 突兀天山孤。 See *CSJJZ*, p. 161.

the physically immediate scene of the third and fourth lines in which both local music and religious custom unfold. However, given that the widest delineation within which the events unfold – the frontier – is a periphery of frequent instability, not even a noteworthy local religious celebration can seduce both observant eyes from the ever restive horizon.²⁰⁰

These poems by Wang Wei, Gao Shi and Cui Hao exemplify that subtype of frontier poem whose thematic content is derived from descriptions of local people and customs, a pseudo-ethnographic record of the non-Chinese inhabiting China's borderlands. With these northern climes being the temporary homes of many men of letters (*wenshi* 文士) serving in non-combat roles on the frontier, observation of and interaction with the people and culture of the immediate area was impossible to avoid;²⁰¹ the recently cited poems can testify to these non-imagined encounters. However, the content of these cited compositions reveal only the larger world of the frontier exclusive of the Chinese presence. Within this large expanse were army encampments in which Chinese and non-Chinese socialized with one another beyond the battlefield. Frontier poems capturing these scenes are able to present aspects of local peoples and customs difficult to access without the close intimacy afforded by meetings and celebrations held within military camps.

The local world as witnessed through gatherings between native and non-native peoples in Chinese army camps and barracks falls under the near exclusive purview of Cen Shen's contribution to the subgenre.²⁰² In many frontier poems, such sites, like the surrounding frontier itself, were places lacking any hint of warmth, joy or curiosity in matters unrelated to military conflict.²⁰³ In fact, when a

²⁰⁰ Ren Wenjing, *Zhongguo gudai biansaishishi*, p. 186.

²⁰¹ Li Mei, “Shilun Luo Binwang, Cen Shen biansaishi de wenhua guanzhao”, p. 159.

²⁰² Besides supplementing the frontier subgenre with more than a few notable examples, these poems, with their “allusions to [the] feasting...music and dancing that went on at these isolated Chinese camps and Government-houses”, are also of “considerable value from an ethnological, historical and topographical point of view”. See Arthur Waley, “A Chinese Poet in Central Asia”, in Arthur Waley, *The Secret History of the Mongols and Other Pieces* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963), pp. 39-40; 45.

²⁰³ One notable exception outside of Cen Shen's oeuvre is Gao Shi's “Accompanying Censor Dou on a Cruise on Lingyun Lake” (Pei Doushiyu fanlingyunchi” “陪窳侍御泛灵云池) in which, as noted in chapter two of this thesis, the frontier suddenly becomes a place of leisure and socializing.

poem included reference to a frontier camp, such places were generally perceived by poet-narrators from an external vantage point and through a militarized lens.²⁰⁴ Although produced decades after Cen Shen had passed away, the first three lines of Wang Jian's 王建 (767-830) “Moon at the Mountain Pass” (关山月) exemplifies such a convention:

关山月	Moon at the mountain pass,
营开道白前军发	The camp opens, the road is white, the front line army heads out.
冻轮当碛光悠悠	Frozen wheels in the desert, a light passing far into the distance,
照见三堆两堆骨 ²⁰⁵	Illuminates piles and piles of bones. (lines 1-4)

The army barracks in Wang's poem is a source of militaristic eruption, a power which soon after exiting its protective cocoon and entering the enervating chill of the moon and endless desert expanse quickly weakens and collapses into a morbid display of human wastage. Ma Dai 马戴 (799-869), a contemporary of Wang Jian, reverses the direction of violent movement into, and not out from, a military dwelling in the final two lines of his “Beyond the Frontier” (“Chusai” 出塞) while also maintaining a strong martial association with the human structure:

卷旗夜劫单于帐	Flags rolled up and looting the Xiongnu chief's tent at night,
乱砍胡兵缺宝刀 ²⁰⁶	Frenetically hacking <i>Hu</i> soldiers and damaging my precious sword. (lines 3-4)

Depictions of army barracks included few specifics of frontier life either of non-Chinese or Chinese peoples employed on these hinterlands. Although Gao Shi's “Song of Yan” features some

²⁰⁴ Meaning that the martial attributes of the entity “camp” or “barracks” were foregrounded.

²⁰⁵ *YFSJ* 23.338.

²⁰⁶ *YFSJ* 21.321.

rather enticing (if, according to some readings, morally questionable) entertainment in a commander's tent during the height of battle, details remain scarce and the description is overall quite brief. For the most part, the dwellings within army camps were dreary places in which

月冷边帐湿²⁰⁷ the moon is cold, and the frontier tent is damp

a place in which even the writing devices needed for drafting commands or composing reports are frozen solid.²⁰⁸ This view seems to be the predominate impression, that is unless Cen Shen's occasional deviant breaks from the norm, his visions of a congenial²⁰⁹ and intercultural army barracks inclusive of the immediate cultural landscape, is visited.

A good place to commence this examination is to drop by “Song: General Gai²¹⁰ of *Yumen* Pass”²¹¹ (“Yumenguan jiangjunge” 玉门关将军歌) where an especially raucous gathering held “for a field commander...not engaged on the battlefield... [was attended by] Cen Shen “on his way back to court in 756”²¹². The poem begins with a description of the guest of honour, General Gai, where his

²⁰⁷ Line five from Zhang Ji's 张籍 (767-830) “Beyond the Frontier” (“Chusai” 出塞). See *YFSJ* 22.325.

²⁰⁸ Such as the interior chill of Cen Shen's “The Ballad of Running Horse River: Presented When Sending Off General Feng Heading Out With His Troops on a Western Campaign” (Zoumachuanxing song chushixizheng” 走马川行送出师西征): “In the camp, the inkstone's water for writing documents denouncing the enemy has frozen” 幕中草檄砚水凝. See *CSJJZ*, p. 148.

²⁰⁹ Although not including references to the local culture or peoples, the poet-narrator of “Presented to General Feng: Dispatched to Jiaohe County. The county is at the foot of Fire Mountain, a place of intense heat without rain or snow” [“Shijiaohequn...” 使交河郡郡在火山脚其地苦热无雨雪献封大夫] appears to inhabit an army complex that when unoccupied by military matters becomes a rather rowdy place: “In the army camp, days of nothing needing to be done/Drunk and dancing, pouring wine into gold designed goblets” 军中日无事, 醉舞倾金罍. See *CSJJZ*, p. 152. Cen Shen's “At *Wuwei* Sending Off Administrative Assistant Liu Dan On His Way to the Encampment at *Anxi* (also to be shown to Commander Gao) (武威送刘单判官赴安西行营便呈高开府) also contains a similar scene of demilitarized army life: “Setting out wine in the tall guest quarters at sunset/The moon over the frontier town is a deep blue/In the army camp they slaughter plump cows/In the hall they array fine goblets/The red tears are candles dripping in their holders/The mellow, moving songs are sung by girls in dazzling fresh make-up” 置酒高馆夕, 边城月苍苍. 军中宰肥牛, 堂上罗羽觞. 红泪金烛盘, 娇歌艳新妆(*CSJJZ*, p. 91) as do these two lines from “Song of White Snow: Sending Off Administrative Officer Wu on His Return to the Capital (白雪歌送武判官归京): “At the army camp wine is laid out and drunk to the returning guest/ *Hu* songs are strum on *pipas* along with *Qiang* flutes” 中军置酒饮归客, 胡琴琵琶与羌笛. See *CSJJZ*, p. 162.

²¹⁰ The military commander referenced in the title was most likely general Gai Tinglun 盖庭伦, Commander of Hexi (Hexi bingmashi 河西兵马使). The *CSJJZ* bases this admittedly uncertain hypothesis on Wen Yiduo's 闻一多 *Cen Jiazhou xinian kaozheng* 岑嘉州系年考证. See *CSJJZ*, p. 166.

²¹¹ *Yumen* Pass (Yumen guan 玉门关, lit. “Jade Pass”) is near today's Shuangtabao, Anxi county 安西县双塔堡, Gansu province. The pass was a major thoroughfare to the western regions in the Han and Tang periods. See *CSJJZ*, p. 87.

²¹² Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 104.

person is presented through a sequence of name, exclamatory judgement, position and striking physical attributes:

盖将军	General Gai
真丈夫	What a man!
行年三十执金吾	At thirty he is Chamberlain for the Imperial Insignia, ²¹³
身长七尺颇有须 ²¹⁴	Seven <i>chi</i> tall with quite a beard. ²¹⁵
	(lines 1-4)

Before entering the lavish party scene where local products are on display, a scene which, through Cen Shen's poet-narrator's distinct curiosity, is divested of the typically morose sights and feelings of those serving on the frontier, the dangerous and doleful environs of the exterior world are presented as a foil to emphasize the ease and jubilation of the army camp's interior:

玉门关城迥且孤	The citadel of <i>Yumen</i> Pass is far and lone,
黄沙万里白 ²¹⁶ 草枯	Yellow sand ten thousand <i>li</i> , white grass withers.
南邻犬戎北接胡	Adjoining the <i>Rong</i> tribe in the south ²¹⁷ , neighbouring the <i>Hu</i> in the north ,
将军到来备不虞	The general arrives, prepared for all contingencies. ²¹⁸
五千甲兵胆力粗	Five thousand armoured troops, bold and brawny,
军中无事但欢乐	When there are no military disturbances there is only merriment.

²¹³ Allusion to a Han dynasty position of “a dignitary commanding one of the two large armies that were stationed at the dynastic capital who was responsible for policing the capital”. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, p. 157. “金吾” (*jinwu*) is “traditionally interpreted as a special weapon, or a gold-tipped baton, or the image of a bird called “*jin wu*” that was believed to frighten away evil. From Han on commonly used in reference to imperial insignia, as in 执金吾 (*chijinwu*)” (*Ibid.*, 168). The term here refers to the Tang post of Imperial Insignia Guard (金吾卫), “a distinguished unit of the imperial bodyguard normally commanded by a General” (*Ibid.*, 168), with the implication in the poem being that general Gai also held such a post in addition to the aforementioned “Commander of Hexi”. See *CSJZ*, p. 166.

²¹⁴ *CSJZ*, 165. The remaining lines of the poem are all from the same source.

²¹⁵ Marie Chan, tr., *Cen Shen*, p. 104. I've modified Chan's translation of 执金吾 (“Bearer of the Golden Apotropaion”) to emphasize the governmental associations. The remaining lines follow Chan's translation, though several changes have been made on my part.

²¹⁶ Following the *QTS* version in this instance; the *CSJZ* has 百 in place of 白.

²¹⁷ None-Chinese peoples of the western region.

²¹⁸ Where Chan translates 备不虞 as “prepare for sudden dangers”, I've followed a footnote on page 99 of Zhan Hui, ed., *Cen Shen Biansaishi xuan* which explains 备不虞 as “防备意料不到的事情” (guard against unexpected matters).

(lines 5-10)

The poem now moves to differentiate itself from the conventional, heavily militarized army encampment where responses to frontier life and service might be made by presenting a gathering infused with elements of the local cultural atmosphere despite being held in a Chinese military headquarters:

暖屋绣帘红地炉	In a warm room, embroidered blinds and red braziers,
织成壁衣花氍毹	Patterned rugs woven as wall hangings.
灯前侍婢泻玉壶	Before the lamps, maid servants pour from jade flasks,
金铛乱点野酖 ²¹⁹ 酥	A fluster ²²⁰ among gold plates for the wild camel ²²¹ mincemeat.

(lines 11-14)

These four lines form the locus of the poem²²² when read through the facet of the frontier subgenre's thematic prism of displays of local people and customs. Two elements in particular underscore such a reading: the patterned rug wall hangings,²²³ a visual indication of the local culture, and wild camel meats, a gastronomical expression of the region. By narrowing his focal beam at these items, the poet-narrator enhances the “outside” frontier cultural presence “inside” the Chinese governed world of the army camp, and in doing so discloses the concomitant existence of two worlds. The non-Chinese half of the binary, however, is mute in this case, and only a material manifestation of itself. But this

²¹⁹ The *CSJZ* suspects that this character should be read as “駝” ; the intended “駝” was led to the erroneous “酖” during the printing process by way of the proceeding character's radical (the 酉 of 酥) having exerted a reverse influence on “駝” . See *CSJZ*, p. 166.

²²⁰ Describes a scene of chopsticks clashing towards bowls to pick up morsels of food (Ibid., 166). Chan translates 乱点 as “sparkles” though I prefer the suggestion provided by the *CSJZ* and read 乱点 as the miniature, chaotic swarm of clicking chopsticks deflecting off bowls and plates.

²²¹ Chan translates 野[駝]酥 as “rustic delicacies”. I've chosen to be more literal in order to bring out the local flavour (pun unintended) of the western frontier. See also the previously cited section of “Written After Getting Drunk at a Banquet Held By the Prefect of Jiuquan” (“Jiuquan Taishou xishang jiuhouzuo” 酒泉太守席上醉后作) for another instance of fine camel dining.

²²² The poem continues with a delightfully decadent description of slaves, singers and slender fingers casting gambling dice. Since these passages do not contribute to arresting examples of local peoples and culture in frontier poetry, I've chosen to omit them in this section.

²²³ The translation unfortunately does not convey the fact that these “patterned rugs” (qushu 氍毹) were representative products of the western region in ancient China.

situation is not absolute.

In “Song: Prefect²²⁴ Tian's Lovely Lady Dances The Northern Twirl Dance Like a Lotus Flower (The tune originates from Beitong²²⁵)” (“Tian shijun meiren rulianhua wubeixuange (ciqu benchu beitongcheng)” 田使君美人如莲花舞北旋²²⁶歌[此曲本出北同城]), a *Hu* 胡 dance and song originating from Kangguo 康国 (today's Samarkand, Uzbekistan)²²⁷ performed in a civil official's hall is described with incredible visual and aural detail. As with the previous poem, manufactured elements of the cultural frontier are transported into a Chinese martial building. For example, the third line of the poem focuses on the local style of interior decor while beginning to present the dancer and her movements:

如莲花, 舞北旋	Like a lotus flower, [she] dances the northern twirl dance,
世人有眼应未见	The eyes of men have likely not seen it before.
高堂满地红 ²²⁸ 氍毹	The entire floor of the hall is red embroidered rugs,
试舞一曲天下无 ²²⁹	She dances to a tune which does not exist in the world
	I have seen.
	(lines 1-4)

Aside from the third line's rendering of the furnishings of the immediate setting, the majority of the poem is devoted to the incomparable movements of a western region dance twirl dance as well as its musical accompaniment. The immediately following lines, for instance, trace the transmission of frontier peoples' music and dance. Their way of presentation reveals how Cen Shen's poet-narrator directs attention not only towards this example of local culture *as a cultural entity of the frontier* but

²²⁴ Many thanks to Dr. Daniel Bryant for pointing out the correct translation of the official title.

²²⁵ Northern part of today's Eji'naqi 额济纳旗, Inner Mongolia 内蒙古.

²²⁶ The *QTS* has “鋋” (*chan*, short spear) in place of 旋 (*xuan*, whirl, twirl).

²²⁷ *CSJJZ*, 185. Marie Chan notes that according to Du Yu's 杜佑 (735-812) *Tongdian* 通典, the dance became such a favourite that various non-Chinese tribes sent dancers who excelled at its movements as tributes to the capital Chang'an. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 87.

²²⁸ The *CSJJZ* notes that the *Tangshijishi* 唐诗纪事, a Southern Song anthology of Tang poetry, anecdotes and commentaries, has “铺” (*pu*, spread) for “红” (*hong*). See *CSJJZ*, p. 186.

²²⁹ *CSJJZ*, p. 185

also the non-militaristic interaction between non-Chinese and Chinese involved in its propagation, an encounter between peoples that moves emotions rather than remove heads from shoulders on battlefields:

此曲胡人传入汉 诸客见之惊且叹	The <i>Hu</i> people transmitted this tune to the Han, ²³⁰ All the guests watch, are surprised and sigh. (lines 5-6)
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The remainder is devoted to the dance and dancer herself, and the poet-narrator's fusion of the frontier environs and literature of frontier themes from the *yuefu* into his exalted description of local musical culture:

曼脸娇娥纤复秣 轻罗金缕花葱笼	Fine faced sweet beauty, hourglass figure, ²³¹ Diaphanous silk gauze with golden threads and embroidered flowers.
回裙转袖若飞雪	The turn of her skirt and spinning her sleeves are like flying snow,
左旋右旋生旋风	A twirl to the left and a twirl to the right produces a whirlwind. ²³²
琵琶横笛和未匝	The <i>pipa</i> and horizontal flutes join in, though before they are finished
花门山头黄云合	Yellow clouds close over the summit of <i>Huamen</i> mountain. ²³³
忽作出塞入塞声	Suddenly the sounds of “Beyond the Frontier” and “Entering the Frontier”, ²³⁴

²³⁰ The “Han” being the Chinese people

²³¹ “Hourglass” may be anachronistic here. The sense is that the dancer is well-proportioned, both slim (xian 纤) and buxom (nong 秣)

²³² The repetition of 旋 in the original, twice as “twirl” and then in the compound 旋风 (*xuanfeng*, whirlwind), dramatically conveys the sense that a vortex of snow and gauzy cloud is gradually building until it fully strengthens and whiplashes into the accompanying strings and flutes. The following two run-on lines stylistically transmit a similar sense of uncontrollable, rapturous winds.

²³³ The mountain is located about three hundred miles north of Juyan Lake 居延海, Inner Mongolia. In the context of the poem it signifies a prototypical frontier scenery. The line should be read as a personification of the music where the tune causes the aforementioned weather patterns to occur.

²³⁴ Not the original *yuefu* tunes themselves; they were long lost by the Tang period. Rather, the music expresses the sentiment of these sets of *yuefu* poems, a mood visualized in the succeeding line's desert of desolation.

白草胡沙寒飒飒	White grasses, <i>Hu</i> sands and cold sougning winds.
翻身入破如有神	Turning as the melody becomes rapid, nimble as if aided by some god,
前见后见回回新	Glancing forward, glancing back, every turn so new. ²³⁵
始知诸曲不可比	Only now I know that other songs can't compare,
“菜莲”，“落梅”徒聒耳	“Plucking Lotus Flowers” and “Falling Plum Blossoms” do nothing but grate the ears. ²³⁶
世人学舞只是舞	People learn to dance and it's just a dance
姿态岂能得如此	How could their movements ever be like this (lines 7-20)

The preceding *tour de force* highlighted Cen Shen's multifaceted observations of frontier interior decor, cuisine, music and dance. Though less sensually inspiring as an object of contemplation, Cen Shen's poet-narrator, as noted earlier, also devoted attention to the local linguistic character of the border region, further decoupling non-Chinese peoples from the frequently encountered “enemy” association found throughout the subgenre. To convey the intricacies of how local languages were presented in Cen Shen's frontier poetry, a brief return needs to be made to an excerpt from an already oft-cited poem in this thesis, “Impromptu About Luntai” (“Luntai jishi” 轮台即事):

蕃书文字别	<i>Fan</i> documents and characters are different,
胡俗语音殊	<i>Hu</i> customs and pronunciations are unfamiliar.

The poet-narrator of “Impromptu About Luntai” is only capable of addressing the local linguistic environment as a matter of a clinical, binary relation in which “Chinese” is the node *against which* the

²³⁵ A noticeable intratextual action is underway between this line and the earlier “左旋右旋生旋风” where sequences of locative words (left...right...front...back) are used to describe the dancer's movements.

²³⁶ The first of these titles is of “one poem among a group of poems in the *Yuefushiji* collected under the general designation “South of the Yangtze Performances” (“Jiangnan nong” 江南弄). The earliest models for this poetry are associated with southern areas, considered anonymous, and attributed to female singers...The “Plucking Lotus” title is associated with a whole tradition of “plucking” poems with similar feminine and sexual implications”. See Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voices of Others*, pp. 124, 126 and 129. The second title is also of *Yuefu* origin, and was still very popular during the Tang. With some background awareness to these *Yuefu* works, a hypothesis can be made that the poet-narrator has a preference for the violent sorrow and heroism (beizhuang 悲壮) of the frontier (a conjecture securely based on reference to the “出塞” and “入塞” cycles of the *yuefu* and the dancer's own dizzying, cyclonic routine where she herself partially becomes the frontier much to the poet-narrator's delight) over the somewhat calm and effete south as represented by the second *Yuefu* allusion.

non-Chinese languages of the Fan and Hu node are juxtaposed and described. Besides resulting in a presentation of local languages as different, or “not-Chinese”²³⁷, the spoken pronunciation of the *Hu* language²³⁸ is analyzed without any reference to the speaker; the poet-narrator makes note of the *Hu* language but divorces the language from its producer.

In “Offered to Accompany General Feng At a Banquet: [I Have Received 'Campaign' as my Rhyme Word]²³⁹ (At the Time General Feng Also Held the Position of Chief Minister of the Court State Ceremonial²⁴⁰)” (“Fengpei Fengdafuyan dezhengzi shifenggong jianhongluqing” 奉陪封大夫宴得征字, 时封公兼鸿胪卿), the poet-narrator reflects on a banquet attended by both Chinese and non-Chinese military officials during a pause in frontier conflict. While the phenomenon of local languages is addressed through a means similar to that of “Impromptu About Luntai”, that is through a paradigm of difference, the speakers of non-Chinese languages in this poem are not extracted from the language but are present and socializing with their, albeit “uncommon” for the poet-narrator, verbal tools of communication:

西边虏尽平	The <i>Lu</i> of the western frontier have been completely pacified,
何处更专征	What need could there be for more orders to launch further campaigns?
幕下人无事	Subordinates in the administrative tent have nothing to do,
军中政已成	Within the army government decrees have already been completed.
座参殊俗语	At the banquet there are different customs and languages,
乐杂异方声	A miscellany of music, the sounds of other places.
醉里东楼月	In my drunkenness the moon at the east building,

²³⁷ Were “Chinese” a feature for linguistically describing a language, then the languages in “Impromptu About Luntai” would be (-) Chinese whereas Chinese itself would be (+) Chinese.

²³⁸ Or more generally language of the non-Chinese peoples along the frontier.

²³⁹ At banquets, the host or master of ceremonies would assign rhyme words to the poets present, and these were frequently mentioned in the titles of poems (Daniel Bryant, personal correspondence, April 2013).

²⁴⁰ “Lit., chief minister for making loud announcements”. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles In Imperial China*, p. 264.

偏能照列卿²⁴¹

Shines just so on the array of ministers.²⁴²

This paradigm of difference in framing the local language of the frontier people is surpassed in a later poem also written at Beiting²⁴³ titled “Heptasyllabic Old Style Poem For Dugu Jian on Our Parting (Also to be Presented to Attendant Censor Yan Wu)” (“Yu Dugu Jian daobie changju jianchengyanbashiyou” 与独孤渐道别长句兼呈严八侍御). After first addressing his loneliness, feelings of separation (sentiments which incidentally also close the poem), the poet-narrator continues by praising his friend's moral rectitude and perseverance before entering an extended flight of idealized recollection of their time together while employed on the frontier. Of interest to this portion of the thesis is how the poet-narrator describes a particularly jubilant intercultural feast replete with drink, drums and singing:

军中置酒夜挝鼓

In the army camp wine is set out, drums pound in the night,

锦筵红烛月未午

Embroidered mats, red candles, the time has yet to reach midnight.

花门将军善胡歌

The general of *Huamen* excels at singing *Hu* songs,

叶河藩王能汉语²⁴⁴

The *Fan*²⁴⁵ king of *Yehe*²⁴⁶ can speak the Han language.
(lines 25-28)

Rather than through comparison, the language of the frontier is here presented directly. But what makes this depiction of non-Chinese language especially brilliant is its conveyance in the first line

²⁴¹ *CSJJZ*, p. 161.

²⁴² A synecdochical reference to General Feng. The “array of ministers” were the Nine Chief Ministers, “a collective reference to high central government officials...with varying applications”, among which was included General Feng's new position, 鸿胪卿. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles In Imperial China*, p. 176.

²⁴³ The *CSJJZ* dates “Heptasyllabic Old Style Poem For Dugu Jian On Our Parting (Also to be Presented to Attendant Censor Yan Wu)” at 756 and the previously cited poem within the preceding year. See *CSJJZ*, pp. 177, 161.

²⁴⁴ *CSJJZ*, pp. 176-177)

²⁴⁵ Non-Chinese tribe of northwest

²⁴⁶ The Ye river, in today's Wusu county 乌苏县, Xinjiang province, once fell under the administrative command of the Military Commissioner of Beiting. See *CSJJZ*, p. 179. The *CSJJZ* further notes this the “Fan king of *Yehu*” may not in fact have actually existed.

of the second quoted couplet by way of song, the language's immediate context, and the non-Chinese speaker projecting its lyrics to the gathered guests. As lyrics made audible through the articulations of a human vocal tract, the local language becomes infused with emotion; what had been a brute fact, like white grass and elms, is humanized and no longer a curio, a linguistic specimen participating in acts of analytical juxtaposition undertaken by the poet-narrator in “At Luntai” and “Accompanying General Feng at a Banquet”. Language, a vital component of any local people or culture, is now a singularity that can be represented independent of other languages.

Of equal note is the identity of the reveller belting out the *Hu* song, a Chinese general. Normally, and especially within the atmosphere of a frontier poem, men of martial position would be issuing orders to attack the *Hu*, or perhaps even uttering complaints over poor government policies²⁴⁷ for policing the border between China and its non-Chinese neighbours. However, this general of *Huamen* is not only a human vehicle for language, he is also a non-native speaker of the language. This second facet furthers the intimacy now afforded the local language by incorporating its being into a character of the poem nationally aligned with the poet-narrator, and in the process making non-Chinese languages, and, given the medium, music, less strange and alien. In stark comparison, a later poem by Zhang Ji, “Longtou” (陇头), uses non-Chinese languages as a synecdoche for invasion and occupation of Chinese lands:

龙头路断人不行

The road to *Longtou* was cut off, people couldn't
get through,

胡骑夜入凉州城

Hu cavalry at night invaded *Liangzhou* city.

汉兵处处格斗死

Han soldiers everywhere struggled to the death,

一朝尽没陇西地

In one day they had disappeared from the lands of *Longxi*.

驱我边人胡中去

My frontier people were forced to enter the midst of
Hu lands,

散放牛羊食禾黍

Pasture cattle and sheep, eat grains and millet.

²⁴⁷ Although not in the voice of a general, the poet-narrator of Gao Shi's “Upon the Frontier” (“Saishang” 塞上), vents such frustrations: “Frontier dust fills the northern desert/*Lu* cavalry are pushing south/Cycles of combat is no lasting policy/Nor marriage alliances a permanent strategy”. Modification of Marie Chan tr., *Kao Shih*, 26. 边尘涨北溟, 虏骑正南驱. 转斗岂长策, 和亲远图非. See *GSJZ*, p. 34.

去年中国养子孙	In the past, the central region raised children and grandchildren,
今著毡裘学胡语	Now they wear fur coats and learn the language of the <i>Hu</i> .
谁能更使李轻车	Who can once again dispatch General Li Guang of the Swift Armoured Cavalry,
收取凉州入汉家 ²⁴⁸	And take back <i>Liangzhou</i> , return it to the House of Han?

The aforementioned brilliance of “Heptasyllabic Old Style Poem For Dugu Jian on Our Parting” becomes blinding when the second half of the parallel couplet “The general of *Huamen* excels at singing *Hu* songs/The *Fan* king of *Yehe* can speak the language of the Han” is considered within the framework of a frontier poem whose thematic base is comprised of descriptions of local people and customs. In reading Cen Shen's poem against Zhang Ji's “Ballad of *Longtou*”, the disposal of the friend-foe framework in presenting non-Chinese peoples and their language is not merely seen to be superseded, the dyadic nature of the structural system through which non-Chinese of the frontier are presented, a binary where such peoples are the “Other” opposite the “Chinese/Han”, is itself also made to collapse. This particular dismantling is located in the Hu²⁴⁹-Han linguistic cross-pollination germinating in the mouth of the *Fan* king. After an initial exchange from “Hu” (song) to “Han” (singer), a process which familiarized, while humanizing, a non-Chinese feature of the frontier, the *Fan* king in the poem is shown to familiarize that which from the perspective of the “other” would appear alien and unusual: the language of the Han. The *Fan* king's Han (Chinese) language abilities obliterates a core principle of the portrayal of local frontier people and customs: they are not at all like us; they are different. Whether it be Gao Shi's descriptions of superhuman feats in “Song of *Yingzhou*” or Wang Wei's highlighting of local religious festivities in “Deity Worship at *Liangzhou*”, the proportionally few frontier poems with either a complete or partial emphasis on borderland peoples and their customs, including a number written by Cen Shen, have throughout relied heavily on maintaining a conceptual framework in which subjects are engaged in activities that the poet-narrator cannot

²⁴⁸ *YFSJ* 21.311.

²⁴⁹ Here used in the generic sense of “non-Chinese of the frontier”.

integrate into his own previous experiences.²⁵⁰ This overarching angle of contrast is turned inside-out in “Heptasyllabic Old Style Poem For Dugu Jian on Our Parting”, a poem whose frontier “other” does not speak in a strange, different language but instead speaks in the language of the poet-narrator, and in doing so sends a quake throughout the whole descriptive matrix utilized in realizing the “local people and customs” theme of the frontier subgenre. Contrast, the poet-narrator shows, need not be the sole pattern for presenting non-Chinese; examples of integration and gradual blurring of absolute otherness are also available for describing the peoples of the frontier.

With an attitude that was “more of an explorer or admirer than a suffering or intimidated traveller”,²⁵¹ the poet-narrator of Cen Shen's frontier poems could set aside static tropes of desolation and despair while still satisfying certain thematic requirements of frontier poetry. Unencumbered by accustomed ways of perceiving the periphery of China proper, the geographic and social reality conveyed by the poet-narrator in Cen Shen's frontier works invigorated the subgenre with hitherto unseen sights and sounds. These aspects of the frontier were presented in a particular manner that at times had become released from common paradigms of calculated difference between the familiar central China world and its peripheral regions as well as intentional negation of the familiar in an unfamiliar setting. This technique created a poetic story replete with unique, memorable singularities existing from the heights of burning mountain slopes to the convivial gatherings held within tents and halls temporarily purged of martial associations, an aesthetic space colonized by both convention and independent vision.

²⁵⁰ That is unless empathy, as in Li Qi's “In the Army” (“Congjunxing” 从军行), is the angle from which frontier peoples are viewed since the nature of empathy forbids the maintenance of contradistinction between perceiver and perceived.

²⁵¹ Robert Shanmu Chen, “A Study of Bao Zhao and His Poetry”, p. 195. Although it skirts dangerously near the ugly maw of biographical fallacy, one might argue that the sheer amount of cumulative time Cen Shen spent in the northwestern region, the travelling between places such as Anxi and Beiting on official business, and the various official positions he held (such as Investigating Censor (監察御使), a post whose holder was “generally empowered to gather complaints from the people, to review the handling of prisoners [and] to impeach any official for misconduct” (Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, p. 146) allowed for an intimacy with and awareness of the frontier beyond the grasp of most poets. This thesis did not, and will not, discuss Cen Shen's, or any other writers', frontier poetry from an angle of authorial intent, a perspective impossible to ascertain without first conducting a seance. While certainly an influence, Cen Shen's life experiences, events which are now only texts themselves, will remain outside the analytical toolbox opened to explore in the second half of this thesis how the poet-narrator, who is wholly present in the text, perceives the frontier landscape.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with an overview of concerns regarding the potential problems inherent in assigning both a body of texts and writers to the subgenre “frontier poetry”. With “frontier poetry” as a thematic category open to variations in its definition, the very act of declaring a text as belonging under the mantle of the sub-genre is never inviolate nor free from possible protestations. Also, by ascribing individual poets to the “frontier poetry” subgenre, as is often the case with Cen Shen and Gao Shi, other texts by these writers that are impossible to insert into the “frontier” paradigm may be left neglected, hidden under a shadow cast by the dominant image of the “frontier poet”.

While mindful of the precariousness of thematic paradigms, the remainder of this chapter nonetheless continued to work within Xiao Chengyu's framework of frontier poetry to demonstrate how several poets of the High Tang period brought the subgenre to its creative pinnacle. Such an accomplishment was due in part to the personal involvement of many poets, in particular Cen Shen and Gao Shi, with the subject matter of their texts, writing from both the perspective of lived experiences and traditional approaches to rendering China's borderlands – its military confrontations, local peoples and terrain – into verse. In some instances, the intimacy between subject matter and experience allowed poets serving on the frontier, and not simply imagining the borderlands of China's peripheral regions, to present a broad range of responses to their employment as well as the broader martial, geographical and cultural atmosphere within which they were immersed.

Part Two: Focalization in Cen Shen's Frontier Landscapes

Introductory Remarks

Part one of this thesis was somewhat general in its approach. Beginning with a historical background to frontier poetry in chapter one that was immediately followed by the introduction of frontier poetry's core themes in chapter two, and then ending with a discussion of the burgeoning of the subgenre in chapter three, the thesis thus far has yet to refine its attention and engage in an extended analysis of one feature of frontier poetry. But such paucity of particulars is about to be remedied here in part two.

The second half of this thesis continues with frontier poetry as its subject; however, rather than discussing several writers and numerous works of differing thematic scope, the following chapters will be concerned primarily with one poet, Cen Shen, and how the poet-narrators in his frontier poems focalize borderland settings characterized by heat, cold and distance. The objective of such an investigation is to demonstrate how Cen Shen's poet-narrators display certain selfsame patterns in focalizing each type of frontier environment. These manners of focalization are not limited to single texts but are instead repeated intertextually, and in their iterations form a habit in how the hot, cold and distant frontier landscapes are perceived by the poet-narrators.

Chapter four begins with an overview of a common paradigm for discussing Cen Shen's frontier poetry, in particular his frontier landscape, where the poems' "strangeness" predominates critical attention and responses. The second half of the chapter introduces, defines and exemplifies the theoretical terminology behind the focalization framework that is applied in chapters five and six to evince the underlying patterns of perception in the three types of frontier landscapes.

Chapter five addresses focalization in two of Cen Shen's frontier settings – the thermal (hot) and

hibernal (cold). The first section treats the thermal frontier setting by examining how the poet-narrators of four key poems follow a selfsame progression in focalizing the poems' opening "hot" theme and initial sub-theme, and then retain, to varying degrees of consistency, parallel approaches in how following sub-themes of the thermal frontier are perceived through a variety of "lenses" in both ordinary and imaginary modes of focalization. The section ends by examining the natural violence perceived within several of these hot landscapes, expressions of thermality that scorch and burn the broader frontier environment while simultaneously uniting the texts through the manner in which the landscape's aggressive conflagration is perceived by the poet-narrators.

Section two of chapter five addresses poems in which the "cold" frontier landscape is dominant. The ensuing discussion draws attention to how the poet-narrators in Cen Shen's hibernal landscapes use definite patterns of shifting focalization to convey imagisitic details of the setting, and how these patterns are found in each of the poems that feature a well developed cold environment. These shifts occur in the spatial coordinates of focalization, the alterations in attention to active and inert features of the hibernal landscape, and the perception of two types of cold objects emphasizing the freezing conditions of the northwestern frontier.

Chapter six examines the relationship between homesickness and the focalization of the frontier of vast distances. After introducing some of the more common tropes for expressing nostalgic feelings for home, the chapter proceeds with an investigation into how acts of perception themselves are able to convey the inner emotional state of the poet-narrator. One area of analysis is the direction of the poet-narrator's gaze, and how its spatial coordinates alone bespeak feelings of homesickness and separation. The other aspect considered is how by focalizing the mobile characteristics of objects both living and non-living the poet-narrator expresses a wish to lessen the distance between himself and his home east of the frontier.

By narrowing the scope of analysis to the poet-narrators' focalization of Cen Shen's three

frontier settings, the second part of this thesis strives to demonstrate that there is an underlying manner of perception presenting the thermal, hibernal and distant landscapes. Despite the separation between different poems of similar frontier settings, the repeated manners in which their poet-narrators apprehend selfsame frontier environments suggests that a relationship exists between the texts that is not simply one of authorship and imagery but also one of ways of perceiving the frontier itself. Understanding the intricacies of this relationship as it pertains to each distinct frontier setting is the goal of the following chapters.

Part Two: Focalization in Cen Shen's Frontier Landscapes

Chapter Four: Critical Overview and Theoretical Framework

Introductory Note

The aim of this chapter is twofold. The first section is an overview of one particular area of Cen Shen criticism, namely scholarly works that are concerned primarily with “qi” 奇 in Cen Shen's frontier poetry. The second section is an introduction and explanation of key aspects of “focalization”. The reason for this second section is to clarify the concepts and terminology that will be applied in chapter five when the frontier landscapes of heat and cold will be analyzed with the goal of investigating the various manners in which the poet-narrator “sees”¹ the landscapes, and how in chapter six the emotional state of the poet-narrator can be understood by the presentation of distance in the frontier landscape. Bundling these two rather disparate sections together into one chapter was done to first provide the reader with an overview of one popular method of reading Cen Shen's frontier poetry, and then to prepare the reader for the relatively new approach to analyzing the same material from a different critical perspective in chapters five and six.

4.1. 奇 (qi) and Cen Shen's Frontier Landscape: A Common Reading

As noted earlier in this thesis, Cen Shen had occasion to serve separately on the staff of two generals dispatched to military positions in Tang China's northwestern frontier.² During these years on

1 “See” meaning to use any of the body's senses to detect the existence of objects.

2 The first period being from 749 to 751 when Cen Shen served in a secretarial role on the staff of general Gao Xianzhi 高仙芝, the regional commander of Anxi 安西. After a brief return to the capital, Cen Shen set out again attached to the staff of Gao's successor, general Feng Changqing 封常清. This second assignment, one which included a greater number of duties and responsibilities, commenced in 754 until Cen Shen returned east and eventually arrived at Su Zong's 肃宗 court in 757.

the country's near abroad, a time when he experienced a creative phase that would produce what have become his most memorable, and anthologized, works, Cen Shen wrote of a frontier landscape which could scald, freeze and emotionally wrench apart interlopers from metropolitan China with a topography of burning mountains, biting winds and aching endless distances. Although not the exclusive concern of his frontier verse, the sheer plethora of geographic and meteorological entities populating Cen Shen's contributions to the frontier school nonetheless easily accommodates analytical endeavours focusing on the poet's descriptions of and responses to the physical environment of China's peripheral regions.

These borderland settings have long been regarded by critics as a defining trait of Cen Shen's frontier poems, as was noted in chapter three of this thesis through Hu Zhenheng's 胡震亨 observation that Cen Shen, in contradistinction to Gao Shi, stresses scene (jing 景) in his frontier poetry. The contemporary age as well has displayed an inclination towards discussing the scenic facet of Cen Shen's frontier poetry. In an essay centred on the stylistic differences between Gao Shi and Cen Shen's frontier poetry³, Yu Zhengsong 余正松 explains how Gao Shi's deep dedication to the human experience of the frontier, and not the frontier's geological being, was responsible for the paucity in his collected works of poems in which attention to the hinterlands as a geographic entity dominates a text's thematic thrust. Yu continues to claim that when the setting itself does have a noticeable presence in Gao Shi's frontier poems, the intellectual and emotional concerns of the poet-narrator overpowers the imagery of the landscape. This adoption of setting as a means of self-expression then leads to geographic descriptions fraught with generalities and imprecision, descriptions that otherwise might have been meticulously rendered had they not been mere vehicles pronouncing the poet's sentiments.⁴

3 Yu Zhengsong 余正松 “Gao Cen shu huan bu, Shen Bao de tong xing: Gaoshi yu Cen Shen shifeng zhi yitong 高岑殊缓步, 沈鲍得同行: 高适与参岑诗风之异同” in Yu Zhengsong 余正松, *Gaoshi yanjiu* 高适研究 (Chengdu: Ba Shushushe chuban 巴蜀书社出版, 1992), pp. 227-242.

4 Yu Zhengsong, “Gaoshi yu Cen Shen shifeng zhi yitong”, p. 235. Of course, one also needs to bear in mind that for Tang poets in their “choice of nature images...the highly specific [was] generally avoided [so that] the natural world

This subsuming of the frontier environment into the poet-narrator's expression of his own anxiousness occurs in lines one to six of Gao Shi's "Written at Ji" ("Jizhong zuo" 薊中作):

策马自沙漠	I whipped on my horse out of the desert,
长驱登塞垣	Galloped afar to climb the barrier walls:
边城何萧条	So somber and grim, these border ramparts, ⁵
白日黄云昏	Where the bright sun darkened in clouds of brown.
一到征战处	Each time I come to some site of battle,
每愁胡虏翻 ⁶	I worry that the nomads may return. ⁷

The prototypical "somber and grim" frontier landscape with its "darkened...white sun" and "clouds of brown" manifests the "grief" of the poet-narrator towards the territory's political instability, and as such manifests a habit in Tang poetry in which "the general tendency was to merge themes of the natural world with those of personal states of mind...often described as a 'fusion of feeling and scene' (qing jing jiao rong 情景交融)".⁸ In this instance, the northern frontier is the amalgam of a generic atmosphere and the poet-narrator's feelings of doom, a worried mind embodied in an emotionally affected geography.

Cen Shen, on the other hand, not only had a tendency to foreground the natural setting of the frontier but did so in an especially detailed, imaginative and exaggerated manner.⁹ Furthermore, Yu

presented..tend[ed] to be very much generalized". See William Tay, "The Substantive Level Revisited: Concreteness and Nature Imagery in T'ang Poetry" in William Tay, Ying-hsiung Chou and Heh-hsiang Yuan ed., *China and the West: Comparative Literature Studies* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1980), pp. 127-149, especially pp. 132-133. Nonetheless, when juxtaposed against the perceptual particularity of Cen Shen's poet-narrator, Gao Shi's frontier landscapes do often sink into the standard and fairly unremarkable.

5 "Somber and grim" (xiao tiao 萧条) refers to a desolation evocative of a mood of gloom. See Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 373.

6 *GSJZ*, p. 188

7 Stephen Owen, tr., *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 150-151.

8 Charles Egan "Recent-Style *Shi* Poetry: Quatrains (*Jueju*)" in Zong-Qi Cai ed., *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 199-225, especially p. 199. James Liu categorizes this understanding of poetry as the "Intuitionist View", one in which "the essence of poetry lies in its embodiment of the external world as reflected through the poet's mind, as well as its revelation of the internal world of feeling". See James Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 86-87. For an extended study on the subject, see Cecile Chu-chin Sun, *Pearl from the Dragon's Mouth: Evocation of Scene and Feeling in Chinese Poetry* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1995).

9 Yu Zhengsong, "Gaoshi yu Cen Shen shifeng zhi yitong" p. 236. Yu further qualifies Cen Shen's frontier landscape as possessing an air of "浪漫主义" (langmanzhuyi), a term I would tentatively translate as "Romanticism" though in which context and tradition is impossible to know since Yu omits any explanation of its usage. The problem that ensues through such explanatory omission poses enough of a risk to force this thesis away from any overview of

argues that Cen Shen's frontier environment was not entirely restricted to the role of expressive apparatus for the poet-narrator's own emotional and intellectual responses to frontier service; rather, the poet-narrator often de-emphasized his presence within the setting and wrote of its fierce, yet magnificent, natural phenomena out of fondness and curiosity in addition to using such imagery as a foil for bitter homesickness, personal disappointment and exuberant panegyrics to Tang military might.¹⁰ “Song of Hot Lake¹¹: Sending Off Cui On His Return to the Capital” (“Rehaixing song Cui Shiyu huanjing” 热海行送崔侍御还京) typifies the predilection of Cen Shen's poet-narrator for exploring the landscape without an overriding need to contort its colour, temperature, and inanimate inhabitants, be they terrestrial or of the hanging celestial kind, into a dramatization of personal feelings:

侧闻阴山胡儿语	I overheard the <i>Hu</i> people of <i>Yin</i> mountain ¹² say
西头热海水如煮	That at the end of the Western frontier lies Hot Lake; its waters seem to boil.
海上众鸟不敢飞	Flocks of birds don't dare fly overhead,
中有鲤鱼长且肥	In the lake carp are long and fat.
岸旁青草常不歇	Green grasses on the shore grow for a long time and don't wither,
空中白雪遥旋灭	Snow at a distance overhead swirls and then melts.
蒸沙烁石燃虏云	Steaming sands and shining rocks burn the <i>Lu</i> clouds, ¹³
沸浪炎波煎汉月	Boiling billows and heated waves scorch the <i>Han</i> moon.

“Romanticism” in Cen Shen's frontier poetry despite the frequency of the term in other writings on Cen Shen's frontier poetry, one example being the opening and second to last paragraph of an essay by Chen Yixin's 陈贻焛 where the appeal of Cen Shen's frontier poetry is ascribed in part to its “spirit of Romanticism” (langmanzhuyi jingshen 浪漫主义精神) and “Romantic affect” (langman qingdiao 浪漫情调). See Chen Yixin 陈贻焛 “Tan Censhen de biansaishi 谈岑参的边塞诗” in *Tangshi luncong* 唐诗论丛 (Changsha: Renminchubanshe 人民出版社, 1980), pp. 189-196.

- 10 Yu summarizes the major distinction between Gao Shi and Cen Shen's frontier landscapes as a difference between a place containing the first-person subject (youwozhijing 有我之境) and a place not containing the first-person subject (wuwozhijing 无我之境) with the former situation ascribed to Gao Shi and the latter to Cen Shen, the suggestion being that Cen Shen's poet-narrator, unlike Gao Shi's, could minimize his emotional imprint on the poem's frontier environment.
- 11 “Hot Lake” is Issyk Kul, a lake in eastern Kyrgyzstan. During the Tang, the area was under the jurisdiction of the Anxi Military Commissioner (Anxi jiedushi 安西节度使).
- 12 Zhang Hui 张辉 notes that Yin Mountain (Yinshan 阴山) actually refers to the Tian Mountain (Tianshan 天山) range in the border region of today's Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and not the Yin mountain range traversing parts of Inner Mongolia. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen Biansai shixuan*, p. 56).
- 13 Meaning “frontier clouds”.

阴火潜烧天地炉	Fires burn underground in Heaven and Earth's furnace, ¹⁴
何事偏烘西一隅?	Why does its combustion incline towards the Western corner?
势吞月窟侵太白	The force of the steam's heat swallows moon caves ¹⁵ and attacks Venus, ¹⁶
气连赤坂通单于	Vapours continue into the <i>Chi</i> Pamirs ¹⁷ and through <i>Xiongnu</i> lands.
送君一醉天山郭	Seeing you off drunk at a small town on <i>Tian</i> Mountain, ¹⁸
正见夕阳海边落	I just happen to see the evening sun setting in the corner of the lake.
柏台霜威寒逼人	The official's cold and freezing severity intimidates the people;
热海炎气为之薄 ¹⁹	The scorching steam of Hot Lake is cooled by this.

In a poem ostensibly written to commemorate the sending off of Censor Cui,²⁰ the “descriptions... of heat...contribute little to the human implications of friendship and parting[;] the frontier landscape which so captivated Cen Shen is a blank slate empty of affective associations. Consequently, the fullness... in which scene embodies sentiment...eludes this [poem of] parting”.²¹ Rather than step into the formulaic predictability of a poem on a significant person's departure,²² “the

14 The allusion here to Jia Yi's 贾谊 (200-168 BCE) “Owl Fu” (“Funiao fu” 鵩鸟赋), and its importance in the perceptualization of Cen Shen's thermal frontier, will be discussed in the following chapter.

15 “In ancient tradition and in Tang poetry the moon was pitted and honeycombed, like a volcanic rabbit warren. From Han times at least we hear of ‘moon dens’ or ‘moon burrows’ (yueku 月窟)...In one sense it refers to the dank and gloomy hiding place of the moon at the western verges of our world...It follows naturally that the expression also symbolizes the cold and remote lands of the western barbarians...”. See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: Tang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 187.

16 See chapter one, footnote 24. Venus was the quintessence of metal (Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 212) while metal's directional equivalent has traditionally been that of the western regions (*CSJJZ*, p. 92). “In general it [Venus] was a baleful star...and the mild associations that Venus has for us are almost totally lacking in Chinese imagery, for whom white [Venus in Chinese being “great white”(taibai, “great 太白)] is the colour of the ghost world and, in its most lustrous phase, of the flash of deadly weapons”. See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 214.

17 Located in Yang county 洋县, Shaanxi 陕西 province. See *CSJJZ*, p. 170.

18 The *CSJJZ* notes that reference here is to Luntai, which was located north of Tian mountain.

19 *CSJJZ*, p. 169-170.

20 The identity of Censor Cui is unclear.

21 Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 93. Marie Chan earlier remarks that in several poems, Cen Shen “combines his descriptions of great snowfall and fearful heat with poetic farewells. These poems mark a departure from standard poetic practice which explores the theme of farewell comprehensively, covering scene, sentiment and situation. Instead, Cen Shen singles out the scene of parting for sustained description” (*Ibid.*, p. 89).

22 Poems whose scenes often, though not inevitably, include farewell banquets, descriptions of the traveller's itinerary and words of encouragement for the person setting off. See Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 85. “The typical poem of parting contains references to the scene at parting as well as to the sentiments of that moment, to the situation which led to the departure, and to the destination of the traveller. More often than not, the conclusion expresses regret, anticipates

brehtaking scene depicted not only has no correlation to the sorrows of parting, but actually serves to alleviate, if not actually obliterate, human sentiments. The eerie natural beauty infuses the [poet-narrator] with a feeling of wonderment rather than the traditional melancholia [associated with parting]”.²³

Another putative parting poem set within the frontier is Cen Shen's “Parting: Song of Fire Mountain Clouds” (“Huoshanyunge songbie” 火山云歌送别).²⁴ In this instance, sentiments of separation and feelings of farewell are suffocated and nearly snuffed out by the poet-narrator's awe for the physical environment of the region; even the title of the poem itself neglects to name the person whom the poet-narrator is sending off. After preceding lines of sustained meteorological observation, it is only in the final couplet where a limited selection of core features of a poem about parting are activated with the presentation of the scene of departure and a subtle gesture towards the loneliness it engenders:

火山突兀赤亭口	Fire Mountain towers over the entrance to <i>Chiting</i> , ²⁵
火山五月火云厚	Fire Mountain in the fifth month, fire clouds are thick.
火云满山凝未开	Fire clouds fill the mountain, dense they do not break;
飞鸟千里不敢来	Flying birds within a thousand <i>li</i> do not dare come by.
平明乍逐胡风断	At daybreak the clouds are suddenly dispersed, severed by <i>Hu</i> winds;
薄暮浑随塞雨回	Near dusk they return accompanying the frontier rain.
缭绕斜吞铁关树	Curling, coiling and all aslant they swallow the trees at Iron Pass, ²⁶
氛氲半掩交河戍	A swarming mist half covering the garrison barracks at Jiaohe.

reunion, and may offer counsel or consolation”. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, pp. 61-62. For a diachronic examination of notions and images informing poems on parting, see chapter eight of Hans H. Frankel *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

23 Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 116.

24 Written when the poet was stationed at Beiting 北庭. See *CSJJZ*, p. 171.

25 Refers to an area south-west of modern day Hami county 哈密县, the location in Tang times of the Chiting (赤亭, literally “vermillion pavilion”) Defence Detachment (shouzhuo 守捉, “an early T'ang generic term for military units along the northern frontier too small to be considered armies (jun 军), each commanded by a Commissioner (shi 使). See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, p. 432). See also p. 93 of the *CSJJZ* for background to *Chiting*.

26 Located between Yanqi 焉耆 and Ku'erle 库尔勒, Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

迢迢征路火山东

The journey's road leads far away to the east of
Fire Mountain,

山上孤云随马去²⁷

Above the mountain a single cloud follows the departing
horse.

Both Yu Zhengsong's comment on the involvement of “curiosity” (haoqi 好奇) in the rendering of Cen Shen's frontier landscape and Marie Chan's observation of how the poet-narrator's feelings of “wonderment” (jingqi 惊奇)²⁸ in perceiving the radiant rocks and sultry steam surrounding the environs of Hot Lake superseded the poem's titular concern for parting²⁹ dovetail smoothly with a popular approach to reading Cen Shen's northwestern terrain, a mode of criticism which surveys how lexical relatives of 奇³⁰ (qi), as in “striking” (qite 奇特), “novel” (xinqi 新奇) and “strange” (qiyi 奇异), characterize the perceptualization of Cen Shen's northwestern terrain. While subjective in its ascription, and dubious in what it is able to reveal beyond reaffirmations of the peculiar uniqueness of many of Cen Shen's frontier settings, numerous articles continue to persist in reiterating, though rarely magnifying or expanding, this hallmark of Cen Shen's borderland verse.

The genesis of the affiliation between Cen Shen's frontier poetry and qi 奇 ironically began without reference to his frontier poetry. A comment on Cen Shen's poetic craft by the anthologist Yin Fan 殷璠 in his *Collected Works of the Outstanding Spirits of Rivers and Mountains* (Heyueyinglingji

²⁷ CSJZ, p. 171.

²⁸ Though the text is in English, I've translated “wonderment” into Chinese to show how with its “奇” (qi) component the term has an affinity with other relatives of “奇”, a predominant attribute in critical writings on Cen Shen's frontier landscape.

²⁹ See also Qian Yechun 钱叶春 “Jingwushi haishi songbieshi: Cen Shen 'Baixuege, song Wu pangyuan guijing' tanxi 景物诗还是送别诗: 岑参 '白雪歌, 送武判官归京' 探悉” *Xiandaiyuwen* 现代语文 No. 5 (2010): 31-33. Qian argues that Cen Shen's “Song of White Snow, Sending Off Administrative Officer Wu On His Return to the Capital” epitomizes the poet's curiosity for the peculiar and beautiful even at the expense of an elaborated leave taking. With attention in the poem only brushing feelings of departure, it is the transmission of a wondrous and strange hibernal landscape which drives the act of literary creation; the “sending off” component of the poem, amidst such perceptual splendour, is but a perfunctory, even forgettable, feature.

³⁰ 奇 (qi) in classical Chinese usually refers to four basic definitions: “special; rare” (teshu 特殊; hanjian 罕见); “shocking, astonishing” (jingyi 惊异); “surprising; change unpredictably” (churen yiwai 出人意外; bianhuanmoce 变幻莫测); “unusual, abnormal” (yichang 异常). See *Cihai* 辞海, p. 1198.

河岳英灵集)³¹ states that “the diction of Cen Shen's poetry is startling, his form strong and energetic; his meaning is also startling”,³² an assessment which over a thousand years later would be cited as a “precise and appropriate comment” (jingdangzhilun 精当之论³³) from which to research the unusual and strange in Cen Shen's frontier poetry. Within the same era as Yin Fan's anthology, Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), in the opening of his “A Meipi Lake Song” (“Meipi xing” 漾陂行), refers to the attraction Cen Shen, and apparently his brothers, too, had for the strange and extraordinary, though specifically what kind of peculiarities and in which medium is left vague and unspoken:

岑参兄弟皆好奇
携我远来游漾陂³⁴

The brothers Cen have a passion for wonders,
And took me to visit Meipi far away.³⁵

(lines 1-2)

Comments on Cen Shen's “qi” 奇 come closer to referring to Cen Shen's frontier poetry with the Qing 清 dynasty (1644-1911) poet and scholar Shen Deqian's 沈德潜 (1673-1769) laconic review of Cen Shen in his anthology *Selections of Tang Poetry* (Tangshi biecai 唐诗别裁) in which, like Yin Fan over nine hundred years earlier, he writes that Cen Shen is able to compose poems with wondrous language, though adds that the poet is also especially skilled at writing frontier poems.³⁶

Riding this ancient momentum, modern criticism has continued to support the intimacy between Cen Shen's frontier works and “qi” 奇. These investigations are able to exceed the length of the single

31 Written in 753. “Seven of Cen's poems are included in Yin Fan's *Heyueyinglingji*...[But since Yin Fan was] governed by a taste for expressions of remorse by frustrated literati, [he] did not select from the frontier works for which Cen Shen [was] to become best known. The seven poems by Cen Shen [in the anthology] either...celebrate... the life of retirement or are songs about life's brevity...”. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, pp. 112-113.

32 “参诗语奇，体峻；意亦造奇”。See Yin Fan 殷璠, *Heyueyinglingji* 河岳英灵集 [中], p. 1 in *SKQS*. The translation of the quote is an adaptation of Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 113.

33 See the introductory paragraph of Li Jin 李锦, “Yuqi tijun, yi yi zaoqi: qianxi Cen Shen biansaishi de qi 语奇体峻，意亦造奇：浅析岑参边塞诗的奇” *Neimenggu shifandaxue xuebao* 内蒙古师范大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) No. 5 (2006): 245-248.

34 *QTS* 216.2261

35 Stephen Owen, tr., *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 191. Marie Chan translates the same lines as “The Cen brothers relish the strange; they take me afar for an excursion of Meipi”. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 5.

36 “参诗能作奇语，尤长于边塞”。See Shen Deqian, *Tangshibiecai*, p. 36.

sentence statements seen in the previous paragraph by assigning qualities of “qi” 奇 to what is perceived in the poems as well as how, in simple terms, the poet-narrator perceives the poems' existents,³⁷ thus refining and broadening the long established characterization of the “qi” 奇 of Cen Shen's northwestern landscape. Gao Jianxin 高建新, for instance, emphasizes how the existents of the poems' settings embody the “robust and uncommon” (qiqiao 奇峭) quality of Cen Shen's frontier poetry;³⁸ these include both the towns and garrisons of the northwestern region, or “Hu lands” (hudi 胡地), such as Jiuquan 酒泉, Luntai 轮台, and Anxi 安西, and their beautifully bizarre geographic and cultural features. Gao also cites several poems which exhibit “unusual” naturally occurring features of Cen Shen's frontier landscape, such as Hot Lake 热海 and Fire Mountain 火山. Cases in which time and temperature seem unaligned,³⁹ as in lines seven to eight of “Late Spring at Hexi and Having Recollections of Qinzhong” (“Hexi chunmu yi Qinzhong” 河西春暮忆秦中), are also selected by Gao to further qualify the “strange” (qi 奇) in the non-human environment described by Cen Shen's poet narrator:

凉州三月半
犹未脱寒衣⁴¹

Half way through the third month at Liangzhou,⁴⁰
And still one has yet to take off winter clothes.

(lines 7-8)

Finally, glimpses are offered by Cen Shen's poet-narrator of “strange and unusual; extraordinary” (qiyi 奇异) and “peculiar” (qite 奇特) food, clothes, interior furnishings and music⁴² serve to conclude Gao's

37 The actor or item of a setting. In the sentence “Henry smelled a most divine piece of toast in the kitchen”, Henry and toast, the subject and object of the sentence, are existents of the setting “kitchen”. See Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 28.

38 Gao Jianxin 高建新, “Hudi yu Cen Shen biansaishi zhi qiqiaomei 胡地与岑参边塞诗之奇峭美” *Neimenggu daxue xuebao* 内蒙古大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) 2009.1, pp. 3-8.

39 A common technique for describing the frontier in Chinese frontier poetry. See chapter three for examples and a brief discussion.

40 Wuwei county 武威县, Gansu province.

41 *CSJZ*, p. 90. Qinzhong 秦中 refers to an area of today's central Shaanxi 陕西 province.

42 See for example “Song of Hu” 胡歌, “Seventh Month at Luntai” 首秋轮台, “Written After Getting Drunk at a Banquet

exemplification of “qi” (奇) in Cen Shen's frontier verse.

Balancing discussion of the “qi” (奇) quality of the poems' existents are essays that offer comments on issues surrounding the odd manner in which the poet-narrator at times perceives the northwestern lands of Tang China. For example, Li Jin's 李锦⁴³ claims that Cen Shen's aesthetically orientated vision, one quite distinct from Gao Shi's politically motivated gaze in its sensitivity towards discrepancies between northern and southern climes, is responsible, along with the very strangeness of the frontier's natural and human sights, for the “unusual” (qi 奇) hue of Cen Shen's frontier poetry. With a perceptual apparatus that could sustain attention to one attribute of the frontier landscape while remaining attuned to miniscule fluctuations in its behaviour,⁴⁴ the “poet”, according to Li, displays a unique and novel (xinqi 新奇) way of perceiving the borderland setting rarely encountered in poems of the same subgenre.⁴⁵

Held By the Prefect of Jiuquan” 酒泉太守席上醉后作, and “Song: Prefect Tian's Lovely Lady Dances the Northern Twirl Dance Like a Lotus Flower” 田使君美人如莲花舞北旋歌, all of which have been referred to in this thesis. Liao Li 廖立 also notes that the “奇” (qi) of Cen Shen's frontier environment is realized in images of culinary and domicile decor, domestic entities which were difficult, if not impossible, to encounter in central China, and that in the poems also exist within an equally uncommon physical terrain. See Liao Li 廖立, “Censhen biansaishi de fengege tese 岑参边塞诗的风格特色” in Liao Li 廖立, *Censhen shiji zhuzuokao* 岑参事迹著作考 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe 中州古籍出版社, 1997), pp. 259-272, especially p. 268.

43 Li Jin, “Yuqitijun, yiyizaoqi”, *passim*.

44 Li Jin cites images of fridity in “Ballad of Running Horse River: Presented Upon Sending Off the Army on a Western Campaign” (“Zoumachuanxing fengsong chushi xizheng” 走马川行奉送出师西征) as examples of such keen perceptual precision: “Horse coats covered in snow and steaming sweat, dappled spots like linked coins suddenly turn back into ice, inside the army tent the inkstone's water for writing documents denouncing the enemy has frozen” (the second line is based on Stephen Owen, tr., in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* p. 468.. 马毛带雪汗气蒸, 五花连钱旋作冰, 幕中草檄砚水凝. See *CSJZ*, p. 148.

45 Dai Weihua 戴伟华 ascribes this seeming search for the new and strange to Cen Shen's immersion in a special (i.e. non-central Chinese) physical and cultural environment. Regarding Cen Shen's sharp observational skills, Dai suggests that the natural scenery surrounding Cen Shen's early days of semi-retirement, and rendered into verse in many of his pre-frontier poems, helped to enhance his ability to note the subtle details and minutiae of the northwestern frontier. See Dai Weihua 戴伟华, “Lun Cen Shen biansaishi dute fengge xingcheng de yuanyin 论岑参边塞诗独特风格形成的原因” *Wenxueyichan* 文学遗产 1997.4, pp. 27-35, especially pp. 28-29. Chen Jing's 陈静 brief analysis of Cen Shen's “Song of White Snow: Sending Off Administrative Official Wu on His Return to the Capital” 白雪歌送武判官归京 also notes how Cen Shen implements graded levels of detail as a means of expanding perception of the highly unusual (qiyi 奇异) frontier environment. See Chen Jing 陈静, “Shenqi zhuangli de biansai fengguang, yuwei wuqiong de songbie changjing 神气壮丽的边塞风光, 余味无穷的送别场景” *Caizhi* 才智 2011.4, p. 179.

Cen Shen's own curiosity⁴⁶ (haoqi 好奇) and interest in the unusual and peculiar (qi 奇)⁴⁷ are also regarded as influencing how the poet saw the frontier landscape and then incorporated these sights into his poetry. In reference to how Cen Shen's disposition towards the strange (qi 奇) can influence the focus of his frontier verse, Liao cites lines one to four of “Tune: Remembering Chang'an, Two Verses, Sent to Pang Que” (“Yi Chang'anqu erzhang ji Pang Que” 忆长安曲二章寄庞权⁴⁸) to show how the frontier sun transforms into the “Chang'an sun” (Chang'an ri 长安日) after the poet's homesick, yet also quite unique, imagination alters the geographical feature of the northwestern sun and creates a new phenomenon representative of his own psychological state:⁴⁹

东望望长安 正值日初出 长安不可见 喜 ⁵¹ 见长安日 ⁵²	Gazing east, gazing towards Chang'an, ⁵⁰ Directly facing where the sun first appears. Chang'an cannot be seen, Happily I see the Chang'an sun.
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Although quite imaginative, this peculiar way of envisioning the frontier, Liao continues, remains grounded in reality and is not an utterly fantastic approach to perceiving the frontier. This is a completely reasonable observation when considering how those existents found in the poems which were not native to central China were actually rather ordinary elements of the frontier's physical and human environment, and only become truly bizarre when apprehended by readers accustomed to a

46 Qian Yechun, “Jingwushi haishi songbieshi”, p. 31.

47 Liao Li, “Cen Shen biansaishi de fengge tese”, pp. 267-268.

48 The correct“权” is with the water, and not wood, radical.

49 Liao also refers to the snowflake-pear blossoms in “Song of White Snow” 白雪歌 as another case in which the poet's uncommon imagination is responsible for generating a bizarre mood in the presentation of mutually exclusive natural sights co-existing at a single moment: “Suddenly it is as if in one night the Spring wind arrives/pear blossoms of tens of thousands of trees bloom” 忽如一夜春风来, 千树万树梨花开. See *CSJJZ*, p. 163. The *QTS* version (*QTS* 199.2050) has “忽然” (huran, suddenly) for “忽如” (huru, suddenly as if), a variant which leads the couplet away from simile and into the truly fantastic.

50 A synecdoche for home.

51 The *YFSJ* version has “但” for “喜” See *YFSJ* 91.1284. This variant would lead to a translation of “I only see the Chang'an sun”. The poet-narrator's mood of the *YFSJ* version is certainly less joyful: rather than “happily” perceiving a celestial representative of home, he “only” sees the empyreal entity, a possible suggestion being that his vision is incomplete and haunted by the absence of Chang'an. See also chapter six where the *YFSJ* variant is discussed.

52 *CSJJZ*, p. 84.

central Chinese physical and human environment.⁵³ Liao cites this idea of a “realistic” type of strange (qi 奇) as deriving from Hong Liangji's 洪亮吉 (1746-1809) comments on Cen Shen's poetry in his *Beijiang shihua* 北江诗话 where “strange” (qi 奇) can only fulfil its preternatural requirements through an ironic infusion with “natural law” from which the believably bizarre is forged.⁵⁴

“The strangeness of a poem is only strange when it is in accordance with natural law (li 理); if its strangeness is not in accordance with natural law, it is not strange. One could say that the poetry of Lu Yuchuan [Lu Tong 卢同] and Li Chang'gu [Li He 李贺 (790-816)] is strange, but it is a strangeness not in accord with natural law. As for strangeness in poetry that is in accord with natural law, there is only Cen Jiazhou [Cen Shen]”.

诗奇而入理, 乃谓之奇, 若奇而不入理, 非奇也. 卢玉川, 李昌谷之诗, 可云奇而不入理者矣. 诗之奇而入理者, 其惟岑嘉州乎⁵⁵

The preceding overview of the “qi” 奇 paradigm, while not the only approach to analyzing the texts⁵⁶, has nonetheless shown to be an appealing model among critics when reading Cen Shen's frontier poetry. Given the sheer volume of secondary source material promulgating the “qi” 奇 of the poems' imagistic content manner by which it is perceived, the framework's attraction would also appear to be immune to fatigue, and investigations into the “singular beauty”⁵⁷ (qili 奇丽) and “peculiar scenes”⁵⁸ (qite de jingxiang 奇特的景象) of Cen Shen's versified northwestern lands is far from becoming exhausted.

Yet despite introducing the finer aesthetic pleasures of Cen Shen's poetry, these “qi” 奇 guided

53 Liao Li, “Cen Shen biansaishi de fengge tese”, p. 268.

54 Or as Marie Chan observed, “the strange within the ordinary”. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 84.

55 Cited from Liao Li, “Cen Shen biansaishide fenggetese”, p. 269.

56 Other thematic rubrics employed in discussions of Cen Shen's frontier poetry include restricted readings of the texts' attitudes towards the attainment of official success and fame as well as commentaries on the poet-narrator's often fervent patriotism and tacit support for military ventures. Since this second part of the thesis will be addressing issues related to the representation of the frontier landscape, these other aspects of Cen Shen's frontier poetry, and the history of criticism behind these approaches, will not be discussed as they have only tenuous links with the following analysis of Cen Shen's geographic scenes.

57 Liao Li, “Cen Shen biansaishide fenggetese”, p. 266.

58 Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫 “Tan Cen Shen de biansaishi 谈岑参的边塞诗” in *Tangdai biansashi yanjiu lunwen xuancui*, pp. 200-206. See especially p. 203.

analyses fail to satisfy a reader's curiosity to understand the anatomy of Cen Shen's frontier landscapes, namely the underlying images structuring the dominant landscape themes and the poet-narrator's manner of perceiving these imagistic features as they cooperate to form the long regarded unique world of Cen Shen's frontier poems. Rather than relying on the sticky subjectivity of “strange” and “peculiar” as an exegetical impetus, the remainder of this thesis will apply a more rigorous set of terms under the umbrella of “focalization” to explore in detail the imagery constituting Cen Shen's thermal, hibernal and distant frontier landscapes⁵⁹ and the means by which this imagery is perceived, or “focalized”, by the poet-narrator and how his psychological orientation has occasion to reveal itself and affect the presentation of a landscape's existents. The analysis will evince patterns in the imagistic structure of the frontier landscape and habits the poet-narrator follows while he perceives, or “focalizes”, three major frontier settings. But before embarking on this examination, the theoretical tools vital to such an explication need to be defined and exemplified.

4.2. A Model of Focalization: Key Instruments For Investigating the Frontier Landscape

In order to facilitate an understanding of what comprises Cen Shen's hibernal, thermal and distant frontier landscapes and how these components are presented by the poet-narrator, one method is to direct attention to an awareness of processes involved in the poems' focalization.⁶⁰ In its broadest sense, focalization refers to the relationship between the elements in a story, or for purposes of this thesis the existents of the poems' settings, and the perceptual or psychological manner in which they are perceived and presented to the reader.⁶¹ The manner of presentation is determined by the focalizer, the

59 Frontier landscapes characterized by heat (thermal), cold (hibernal) and vast spaces (distant). These three landscapes comprise the three main landscape themes of Cen Shen's frontier poetry. The remainder of this thesis seeks to uncover the composition and pervading structure of these three themes.

60 This subsection of chapter four is intended as an introduction to theoretical terms which will be employed to reach conclusions on *how* Cen Shen's frontier landscapes are perceived and *what* comprises their poetic being.

61 Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* 3rd. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p.

subject of focalization.⁶² In the following chapters, the focalizer will also be referred to as the “poet-narrator”,⁶³ an entity who first acts as an agent of perception in the world of the poem and then conveys these perceptions, perceptions affected by the poet-narrator's senses and psychological state, to the reader. The term “poet-narrator” has been chosen because the perceiving agent of the poems, or the agent who “sees”⁶⁴ the poetic world, is also the agent who “speaks” or narrates information of the story world to the reader. Since there will be no instances in the poems under analysis in which the identity of the narrative agent is separate from the focalizer, a poem's focalizer and speaker will be considered to be one and the same.

Within the focalization equation, the focalizer presents elements of the story world: these elements are the focalized, “the object of focalization [or the] existents...presented in terms of the focalizer's perspective”.⁶⁵ In the modified language used in this thesis, the focalizer is the poet-narrator whose perceptual apparatus (such as eyes, ears and olfactory system) orients the presentation of the poetic world, whereas the focalized is that which is presented.⁶⁶ For example, in the opening two lines of Cen Shen's “Passing Fire Mountain” 经火山:

火山今始见
突兀蒲昌东

Fire Mountain, today seen for the first time
Towers to the east of Puchang

the poet-narrator is the agent who “sees” (jian 见) and then conveys what is seen while the focalized is

145; Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, p. 31. As will be explained shortly, these two manners often overlap one another in a poem so that the perceptual aspect of the focalized (the images of the poem or the poem's existents) can be read as having been heavily influenced by the psychology of the focalizer. These concepts demonstrate how the vision of a poem “is not free: what is seen grows out of a complex and ongoing interplay between the physical world [that which is perceived through the perceptual facet of focalization]...and the interior state of the poet [the psychological facet of focalization]”. See Stephen Owen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics* (Madison: University of Madison Press, 1985), p. 64.

62 Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, p. 32.

63 “Poet” is included in the compound since it “is a feature of lyric [poetry] that the point of view of the poet and the point of view of the speaker of the poem are meant to be the same”. Were this thesis tackling narrative poetry, which unlike lyric poetry contains “multiple points of view...separated in time and space from the narrator [and] poet”, the term “poet-narrator” would require modification. See Dore J. Levy, *Chinese Narrative Poetry: The Late Han through T'ang Dynasties* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 58.

64 “See” is used here in the sense of perceiving through all available channels of apprehension.

65 Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, p. 32.

66 Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 74.

the object of the verb of perception, Fire Mountain and Puchang.

The poet-narrator, as already noted, focalizes the focalized in a particular manner, that is he “sees” and then “focuses” particular aspects of an object. The means by which this is undertaken can be divided into two facets: the perceptual and psychological.⁶⁷ The perceptual facet of focalization is concerned with the use of the senses, such as sight, hearing, touch, and the spacial coordinates of the focalizer and/or focalized during acts of focalization.⁶⁸ The following sentences, and their analysis, illustrate the perceptual facet: “While in the kitchen, Henry looked at the piece of toast which had fallen on the floor ”. In this statement, sight is the activated aspect of the perceptual facet; however, in the similar sentence, “Henry salivated while gazing upon the piece of toast which had fallen on the kitchen floor”, the perceptual facet has expanded to include the gastronomical (“seeing with the stomach”) as evidenced by the focalizer salivating in anticipation of not merely seeing but also consuming the focalized (the piece of toast). These aspects of the perceptual facet of focalization can be referred to as “lenses”. Thus, in the first sentence, Henry, the focalizer, uses an ocular lens (sight) to focalize (“see”) the focalized (the piece of toast), and in the second sentence uses a combination of ocular and gastronomical (stomach) lenses in the act of focalization.

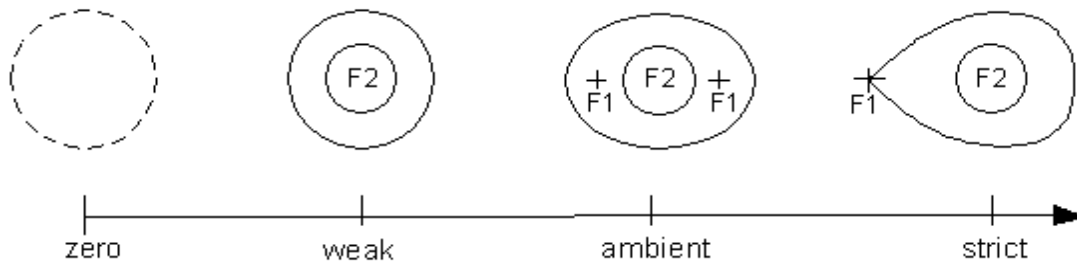
Rimmon-Kenan categorizes spatial coordinates as either being a bird's eye view of the focalized or that of a limited observer whose focalization lacks fluidity and is restricted by physical laws.⁶⁹ However, since focalization in Cen Shen's frontier poems, like many lyrics, often moves between disparate spatial coordinates, Rimmon-Kenan's second division is not of any importance for this thesis; yet reference to a purely panoramic or omniscient spatial coordinate is too inexact for purposes hereafter. In order to avoid the limitations of Rimmon-Kenan's system, the spatial coordinates of

67 *Ibid.*, pp. 77-81. A third facet introduced by Rimmon-Kenan, the ideological, will not be considered in this thesis.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 77. Rimmon-Kenan also discusses the temporal coordinates of the perceptual facet. But since these coordinates are not very pronounced in the poetry under analysis, this aspect of the perceptual facet will not be introduced here.

69 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 77.

focalization, as discussed in this thesis, will be handled by Manfred Jahn's "scale of focalization".⁷⁰ The following diagram⁷¹ illustrates the four significant divisions on Jahn's focalization continuum:



At its strictest realization, the right end of the scale, the focalizer (F1) focalizes the focalized (F2) "under conditions of precise and restricted spatio-temporal coordinates".⁷² The following is an example of strict focalization, one in which Henry, the focalizer, never deviates from his perspective angle, be it spatially or temporally, and the focalized itself is never presented from variant spacial coordinates:

"Henry lay in his kitchen corner bed staring hungrily across the predawn floor. Between his nose and the cupboard under the sink lay the crumb of a piece of toast he had missed during yesterday's sweep, a lonely last remnant not big enough to cast even a sliver of a shadow. Famished, Henry inches forward but immediately slinks back under his blanket. It was too early to traverse the chilled expanse of linoleum".

The coordinates of ambient focalization, the position on Jahn's scale of greatest applicability to the following chapters' analyses of Cen Shen's frontier landscapes, signals a focalization which "depicts a thing summarily, from more than one side, [or] possibly from all sides...[while] considerably relaxing the condition of specific time-place anchoring, and allowing a mobile [or] summary...point of view".⁷³

⁷⁰ Manfred Jahn, "More Aspects on Focalization: Refinements and Applications", in Pier, John ed., *GRAAT: Revue des Groupes de Recherches Anglo-Américaines de L'Université François Rabelais de Tours* 21: 85-110 (Recent Trends in Narratological Research: Papers from the Narratology Roundtable, September 1997, Debrecen, Hungary), especially pp. 95-100. The essay can be accessed at www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/jahn99b.htm

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 97.

⁷² Ibid., p. 98.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 98. Ambient focalization can also refer to focalization by more than one focalizer. However, this aspect is not relevant to the following discussions of Cen Shen's frontier poetry since there is never more than one focalizer in a poem, though the single focalizer's focalization is still ambient in that his spatial coordinates are not restricted to one

Since it is early and Henry is rather groggy, Wang Wei will step in to demonstrate ambient focalization with the poem “Arriving at the Frontier on a Mission” (“Shi zhi saishang” 使至塞上):

单车欲问边	With a single coach I'll visit the frontier,
属国过居延	And of client kingdoms, pass by <i>Juyan</i> . ⁷⁴
征蓬出汉塞	Voyaging tumbleweed ⁷⁵ leaves the passes of Han,
归雁入胡天	A home bound goose enters Tartar skies. ⁷⁶
大漠孤烟直	Great desert: one column of smoke stands straight;
长江落日圆	Long river: the setting sun hangs round.
萧关逢侯吏 ⁷⁷	At Xiao ramparts ⁷⁸ I met a mounted messenger –
都护在燕然 ⁷⁹	“The Grand Marshall is now at Mount <i>Yanran</i> ”. ⁸⁰

The middle couplets of Wang Wei's poem exhibit two directions of focalization functioning in contrast with one another. In the second couplet, the poet-narrator focalizes frontier existents from a horizontal spacial coordinate, which in line three follows the level ground (the path of the tumbleweed) and in line four traverses across the sky (the goose). As for the third couplet, focalization of the frontier shifts to a vertical pole whose fifth line focalized rises (the smoke) and sixth line falls (the setting sun).

Furthermore, the existents of lines three and four occupy a space nearer the poet-narrator than those of five and six, adding a dichotomy of closeness and distance to the horizontal-vertical opposition.

Despite their brevity, these two lines are unhooked from a single, stable focalization; the spatial coordinates of their existents are focalized from multiple angles on a scale of ambient, rather than strict, focalization.⁸¹

single coordinate.

74 “Juyan refers to both a river and a client state, but the term is used here less for geographical accuracy than to echo the exploits of the great Han general Huo Qubing 霍去病 who passed Juyan when he achieved a great victory”. See Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 336.

75 “A set metaphor for the traveller, torn from his 'roots' and carried here and there by the vagaries of chance”. *Ibid.*, p. 336.

76 Meaning “frontier sky”.

77 The *QTS* notes that 吏 (li, petty official) has the textual variant 骑 (ji, rider of a horse).

78 South-east of today's Guyuan county 固源县, Ningxia 宁夏 province.

79 *QTS* 126.1279.

80 Stephen Owen, tr., *The Great of Chinese Poetry*, p. 33.

81 The remaining two stations on Jahn's scale of focalization, weak and zero focalization, do not occur in Cen Shen's frontier poems. Briefly, weak focalization is of an object without a focalizer, a perceived without any noticeable perceiver. In zero focalization, object and subject disappear. A random string of clauses might suffice as an example. See Manfred

Prior to mentioning issues surrounding the spatial coordinates of focalization, matters surrounding the “lenses” of focalization were introduced. Returning to this aspect, the lenses of the perceptual facet can be understood as operating within one of two “modes of perception”, the ordinary and the imaginary.⁸² As a way of focalizing, the ordinary mode of perception encompasses all types of real-life focalization, such as vision, audition, touch, smell, taste, and bodily sensation;⁸³ as for the focalized itself, the ordinary-mode is inclusive of objects which, within the world of the poem, exist outside the focalizer's mind and in the real, shared world. A poetic example of the ordinary mode of focalization is Li Bai's “Holding a Drink and Asking Questions of the Moon” (“Bajiuwenyue” 把酒问月), a poem in which the main focalized object, the moon, is focalized through an ocular lens within the ordinary mode of focalization:

青天有月来几时	How long has there been a moon in the blue sky?
我今停杯一问之	Today I put down my cup and ask this question.
人攀明月不可得	People want to climb the bright moon but they can't succeed,
月行却与人相随	It is the moon, however, which moves and follows the people.
皎如飞镜临丹阙	Shining like a flying mirror down upon the cinnabar palace gate;
绿烟灭尽清辉发	Green mists dissipate, a clear sheen radiates.
但见宵从海上来	Only seeing it at night rise up from the ocean,
宁知晓向云间没 ⁸⁴	How can one know of it hiding between the morning clouds?

In these initial eight lines, focalization is undertaken entirely within the ordinary mode, one where the poet-narrator relies on ordinary sight to focalize an existent (the moon) which can hover and fly within

Jahn, “More Aspects on Focalization”, pp. 98-100.

82 The first mode refers to objects perceived by the senses while the focalizer is conscious and immediately in the world; the second to objects perceived by the focalizer in recollection, dreams or the imagination. However, I am using the “ordinary-imaginary” dichotomy to also differentiate “how” a focalizer perceives an object, meaning that a focalizer might not be dreaming or hallucinating yet still perceive the world *as if* he were dreaming or hallucinating. See Manfred Jahn, “More Aspects on Focalization”, p. 89.

83 Ibid., p. 89. In a different essay, Jahn refers to the ordinary mode as “online perception” and the imaginary as “offline perception”. See Manfred Jahn, “Focalization” in David Herman, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 94-108, especially pp. 99-100.

84 *QTS* 179.1827

range of the poet-narrator's physical senses.

Like its ordinary sibling, the imaginary-mode of the perceptual facet of focalization can also be divided between *how* focalization occurs and *what* is focalized. With regards to the former of the two halves, the focalizing lens of the imaginary mode possesses modifications to the curvatures of its normal physical senses, meaning that recollection, hallucination or dreams have cut a new angle into the focalizer's lens to alter the normal focalization of an object existing in the ordinary world. An example of this phenomenon is found with a return to Henry and his toast. Having had nothing to eat for the entire early morning, Henry has become somewhat silly headed. When a soapy red dish rag plops down from the edge of the sink and onto the kitchen floor, the following observation is made by our exemplary focalizer:

“After detecting a slight tremor radiating through the tiny patch of linoleum pressed against his empty, whimpering stomach, Henry musters together the last dregs of last night's crunchy calories and turns his head towards the source of the disturbance. And there, drenched in gurgling butter and oozing puddles of strawberry jam, he spots a piece of toast, a magnificent slice quite beatific in its triangular pose”

Focalizer Henry is focalizing the dish rag with an ocular lens, but it is an ocular lens reflecting the world through the imaginary mode of the perceptual facet of focalization. Influenced by memories of previous pieces of toast which found their way from plates and tabletops to the kitchen floor, and a visualization further enhanced by the delirium of mid-morning morsel deprivation, Henry's ordinary senses have contorted the inedible into a vision of unexpected breakfast bliss through a perceptual lens that has amalgamated aspects of sight, memory and hunger to create an ocular-mnemonic-gastronomic lens. In this case, focalization for Henry is not mere “seeing” but an act of “seeing through memory” and “seeing through an empty stomach”. The existent, a dish rag, is thus imaginatively transformed into a piece of toast whose colour and texture bears a resemblance to the object prior to being focalized by Henry – a red dish rag covered in soap suds – but in the end is focalized by a hungry Henry, the focalizer, as something far more palatable.

Aside from describing *how* the focalizer perceives, the imaginary mode of the perceptual facet of focalization also refers to objects of perception, or *what* is perceived, as existing entirely inside dreams, recollection or hallucinations.⁸⁵ The first half of Li He's 李贺 “A Dream of Heaven” (“Meng tian” 梦天) not only aptly demonstrates the act of focalization through the imaginary mode, an action already illustrated in the previous “Henry and the piece of toast/wet rag” example, but also how the focalized itself, by inhabiting the unreal world of a hallucinatory dream, can be understood as an object existing within the imaginary world of a dream:⁸⁶

老兔寒蟾泣天色	The ancient hare and shivering toad ⁸⁷ weep sky blue tears;
云楼半开壁斜白	Cloud towers half revealed, walls slant white. ⁸⁸
玉轮轧露湿团光	Jade wheel crushes dew, a wet bright sphere; ⁸⁹
鸾珮相逢桂香陌 ⁹⁰	Phoenix pendants meet on a cassia fragrant path. ⁹¹

Before the first line commences, the title of the poem, “A Dream of Heaven”, has already positioned the text's events and existents inside the imaginary space of a dream, meaning that the objects focalized by the poet-narrator, and the space these objects occupy, is within the imaginary mode. Yet when considering *how*, and not only *what kind of*, existents are focalized by the poet-narrator, the imaginary mode of perception continues to be of great relevance in Li He's poem. Unlike the moon in Li Bai's “Holding a Drink and Asking a Question of the Moon”, a moon that is focalized

85 Manfred Jahn, “More Aspects on Focalization”, p. 89; Manfred Jahn, “Focalization”, p. 99.

86 This imaginary, or “offline” perception, can resemble online perception while also being “notably less realistic than online perception [ordinary mode]; specifically, it [offline perception] easily overcomes real-life constraints when executing spatio-temporal jumps” See Manfred Jahn, “Focalization”, p. 99.

87 There was a belief “that among the denizens of the moon were a rabbit and a toad”. See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 174.

88 The Jade Towers of the moon. See J.D. Frodsham, *The Poems of Li Ho* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 31.

89 A lunar vision, one in which “the moon hangs in the middle of the sky like a jade wheel, rolling and crushing dewdrops while absorbing their moisture and becoming a sphere of light”. See Kuo-Ch'ing Tu, *Li Ho* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), p. 45.

90 Wang Qi 王琦 ed., *Li He shige jizhu* 李贺诗歌集注 (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1977), p. 57.

91 “According to legend, Chang E 嫦娥 stole the elixir of immortality from her husband [Hou] Yi 后羿, the Archer, and fled to the moon. This line refers either specifically to Chang E or to goddesses in general whom Li He might meet on the moon”. See Kuo-Ch'ing Tu, *Li Ho*, p. 140. The path is cassia-scented because of the cassia tree on the moon. See J.D. Frodsham, *The Poems of Li Ho*, p. 31. The English translation is an admixture of J.D. Frodsham, *The Poems of Li Ho*, p. 31 and Kuo-Ch'ing Tu, *Li Ho*, p. 45.

by the poet-narrator through a lens of ordinary sensual perception (sight), the selfsame extraterrestrial body in Li He's "A Dream of Heaven" is focalized through the imaginary mode of the perceptual facet. Without once directly perceiving the "moon" (yue 月) as the moon, Li He's poet-narrator nonetheless focalizes the astral existent through a means informed by fantastic preconceptions of the lunar body. Rather than apprehend colour, luminosity, or shape, qualities which are all available to the ordinary mode of perception, the poet-narrator focalizes the moon through a mythological lens, one which presents the moon as a phantasmagoric sequence of unreal denizens derived from Chinese lunar mythos, a vision perceivable only through the imaginary mode⁹² of the perceptual facet of focalization.

An apposition of the moon in Li Bai and Li He's poems reveals how, depending on the mode of the perceptual facet of focalization used by the poet-narrator, a single focalized can have wildly divergent manifestations. But aside from perceptual modes, another influence on a focalized's presentation is the psychological facet of the focalizer. Unlike the perceptual facet and its relation to the means of perception of the focalized itself, the psychological facet is concerned with the focalizer's mind and emotions⁹³ and their potential effects on subsequent acts of focalization. This second facet is subdivided by Rimmon-Kenan into two components, the cognitive and emotional, though it is only the latter of these two divisions which will be of relevance to this thesis.⁹⁴ The emotive component reveals degrees of objectivity (neutral, uninvolved) and subjectivity (coloured, involved) informing a text's focalization,⁹⁵ or for purposes of this thesis how the poet-narrator's mental state may or may not have a

92 David McCraw refers to the mode in which the unusual dominates poet-narrator's presentation of a "simple landscape" in Li He's "Walking the Fields Around South Alp" ("Nanshan tian zhong xing" 南山田中行) as "Li He's peculiar mode of perception", a term certainly suggestive of the "imaginary" node of Jahn's "imaginary-ordinary" binary. See David McCraw, "Hanging by a Thread: Li He's Deviant Closures" *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, Vol. 18 (Dec., 1996), pp. 23-44, especially p. 33.

93 Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 79. Since this thesis will have a section devoted to addressing the emotive component of the psychological facet of focalization when examining the effects of nostalgia on Cen Shen's poet-narrator's focalization of the "distant" frontier landscape, only the emotive component of the psychological facet, and not the cognitive, will be explained and exemplified in this chapter.

94 The cognitive component deals with how knowledge, conjecture, and belief affect focalization. See Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, pp. 79-80.

95 Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 80.

demonstrable bearing on the manner in which the existents of the poem's world are focalized. A return to Henry will serve to demonstrate the emotive component of the psychological facet of focalization.

On mornings when toast is not forthcoming,

“Henry realizes the futility of his smiles and cute antics, and meanders out of the kitchen and onto the back deck to be alone. Between gaps in the railing he stares at a glum garden drooping into parched, neglected dirt. It's all hollow. Roots gnawing and sucking up dust. Empty black stems”.

However, if we visit Henry on a morning of toasted munificence, the same garden

“winks at Henry. The roundness of its flowers and richness of its soil a sign that the universe is an expression of fullness, an indestructible principle blooming ever sated among plump bumblebees sharing forever flowing sweetness”.

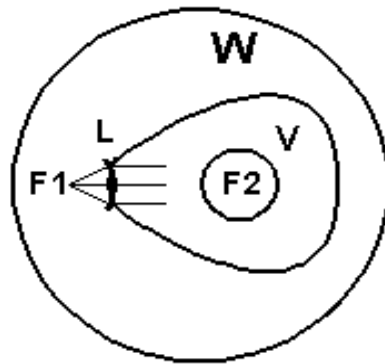
These excerpts from two of Henry's mornings illustrate how the subjectivity of the focalizer impacts the presentation of the single focalized, the garden. When Henry's emotions are gloomy, the garden is focalized through a filter of negativity, a psychological facet which forces flowers to droop and the dirt to desiccate. However, when focalizer Henry is in good spirits, the same flowers instead bloom and the soil is perceived as a foundation of inexhaustible nourishment.

Aside from factors such as facet and mode, aspects of focalization that are primarily concerned with issues surrounding the focalizer, an introduction to the concept of themes and sub-themes⁹⁶ of the focalized needs to be made before concluding this chapter and beginning an analysis of focalization in Cen Shen's frontier landscapes. Theme here refers to the focalized object perceived by the subject focalizer with very little, if any, qualification; a straightforward example of a theme is “house”. Sub-themes are the qualities or features of the focalized which are selected for attention by the focalizer, for example the eerily ajar door and ghostly glowing windows of a house. Although using a different set of terms, Manfred Jahn's “field of vision” diagram⁹⁷ graphically presents theme and sub-theme and how

96 The use here of themes and sub-themes is adapted from Bal's “rhetoric of description”. See Mieke Bal, *Narratology*, p. 46. An understanding of the focalized's theme and sub-themes will be indispensable for understanding the underlying patterns in the structure of Cen Shen's thermal frontier landscape.

97 See Manfred Jahn, “Windows of Focalization: Deconstructing and Reconstructing a Narratological Concept” *Style* 30:2

they relate to both the focalizer and the focalized:



Within the world of a story or poem, here represented by the “W” domain, a focalizer (F1) uses a perceptual facet lens (L) to first delimit a field of vision (V) within the world and then concentrate on a specific detail of the field of vision (F2), such as focalizing the tiles (F2) of a house (V) in the neighbourhood (W). Transposed into the nomenclature of Bal's “rhetoric of description”, the “V” becomes theme (house) and the “F2” is one of many possible sub-themes (tiles on the roof). The utility of Jahn's diagram lies in its ability to display the connection theme and sub-theme has to the focalizer and the focalized.

Conclusion

After having first summarized the “qi” (奇) paradigm, a long established framework for discussing Cen Shen's frontier poetry, this chapter then introduced a number of concepts associated with focalization. The purpose behind this temporary diversion from Cen Shen's frontier poetry was to introduce and explain the theoretical concepts which will soon be addressed to discover patterns and manners by which the poet-narrator focalizes the thermal, hibernal and distant frontier landscape in Cen Shen's poetry. Once having completed this analysis of the poet-narrator's habits of focalization, the

(1996), pp. 241-267, especially p. 242.

underlining methods of focalizing the borderland environments in Cen Shen's frontier poetry will be uncovered, and a new appreciation of the frontier landscape will become available to readers. This appreciation, however, does not challenge the “qi” 奇 of the poetry but rather opens new roads into enjoying one particular poetic vision of Tang China's northwestern regions.

Part Two: Focalization in Cen Shen's Frontier Landscapes

Chapter Five: Underlying Perceptual Facets of the Thermal and Hibernial Frontiers

5.1. Cen Shen's Thermal Landscape: Patterns in Perceiving Heat

Although few in number, poems in which a northwestern environment of intense, even supernatural, heat demands the full attention of the poet-narrator have nonetheless long been considered some of Cen Shen's "most striking pieces about the frontier".¹ In the centuries preceding the poet's own lifetime, such extraordinary desert scenes were rarely ever evoked.² On the few occasions they were, China's burning vistas became topographies of hyperbole, places of imagination and fear incarnate. One early formulation is found in this excerpt from "Calling Back the Soul"³ ("Zhao hun" 招魂) of the *Lyrics of Chu* (Chu Ci 楚辞):

魂兮归来 西方之害 流沙千里些 旋入雷渊 靡散而不可止些 幸而得脱 其外旷宇些 赤蚁若象 玄蜂若壶 五穀不生 藜菅是食些 其土烂人 求水无所得些	Soul! Turn back! There is harm for you in the west, Where the sand flows for a thousand miles, You whirl into the Thunder Pit, You are ground to powder and may not rest. If luck lets you escape, Beyond are boundless barrens. With red ants like elephants and black wasps like gourds. Not one of the five grains grows, clumps of straw-grass is the food. The soil there grills a man, He seeks water with none to be found.
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1 Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 81. These poems are herein referred to as Cen Shen's "thermal landscape poems", a term meaning those poems where the "hot" landscape is prominent and not mere background to the events of the poem.

2 Marie Chan, *Kao Shih*, p. 116.

3 "Calling Back the Soul" is the "literary version...of a religious ritual in which the shaman calls back the soul of someone dead, dying, or otherwise not in full possession of the senses (comatose, wandering). The shaman first describes the terrors that lie in wait for the soul in all directions, then the pleasures that the soul can enjoy if only it comes back to the palace or great house at the centre...In the soul-calling, the major division is between the description of terrors, intended to frighten the soul into returning, and the descriptions of delights, intended to lure the soul back". See Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, p. 204.

彷徨无所倚
广大无所极些⁴

He roams aimlessly with no shelter
In vast spaces that have no limit.⁵

Hundreds of years later, a similar horror seeps out from the malarial haze of Bao Zhao's "The Song of Suffering from Heat" ("Dai kure xing" 代苦热行). The first sixteen lines of the poem describe a fantastically foreboding southwest⁶ thermal landscape teeming with strange and familiar⁷ beasts tormenting the poet-narrator with venomous, Stygian terrors culled from a marriage of imagination and scorching geography:

赤阪横西阻
火山赫南威
身热头且痛
鸟坠魂未归
汤泉发云潭
焦烟起石矶
日月有恒昏
雨露未尝晞
丹蛇逾百尺

玄蜂⁹盈十围
含沙射流影
吹蛊病行晖

瘴气昼熏体
茵露夜沾衣
饥猿莫下食
晨禽不敢飞¹⁰

Chiban⁸ in the west stretches forbiddingly across,
Fiery mountains in the south blaze with awesome force.
One suffers from a throbbing headache and burning fever,
While birds above fall, wandering souls have yet to return.
Hot wells spurt out from the lake of vapour,
Scorching smoke rises from rocky cliffs by the water.
It has perpetually obscured sun and moon,
And has never dried from the dew or rain.
There are red serpents exceeding one hundred feet
in length,
And black hornets with a ten-arm-span girth.
One's floating reflection is shot by a sand-spitting demon,
One's travelling shadow is diseased by virus-spreading
vermin.
One's body is fumigated by miasmatic vapour in the daylight
One's clothes are soaked with dew on toxic grass at night.
The hungry monkeys do not take it as a feeding ground,
The morning birds dare not flutter or hover around.¹¹

While neither noxious nor infested with creatures of unworldly origin, the overpowering heat

4 Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 ed., *Chuci tongshi* 楚辞通释 (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1975), p. 142.

5 Stephen Owen, tr., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, p. 205.

6 Ding Fulin 丁福林 ed., *Xie Lingyun Bao Zhao ji* 谢灵运 鲍照集 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe 凤凰出版社, 2009), p. 143.

7 Lost souls and giant "black wasps" (xuanfeng 玄蜂) have migrated from the western region of "Calling Back the Soul" to Bao Zhao's nightmarish land.

8 Literally "red hot hills". Chiban itself is located in Yang county 洋县, Shaanxi 陕西 province.

9 玄蜂 (xuanfeng) may also refer to a "black hornet nest" (Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, personal correspondence, May 2013).

10 *YFSJ* 65.937.

11 Modified version of Robert Shanmu Chen, tr., *A Study of Bao Zhao and His Poetry*, pp. 306-307.

emanating from Cen Shen's thermal frontier is still marked by an unusual and intimidating character rarely visited by Tang poets¹². Chapter four of this thesis briefly outlined the critical habit of reading these hinterlands through a prism of the strange and wonderful (qi 奇). And while this section of chapter five will also visit Cen Shen's topographically peculiar, it will not be with the goal of mining rare moods and precious sights. Instead, the motivation is to investigate the perceptual facet of the poet-narrators in Cen Shen's "hot" landscape poems, and show how despite belonging to different poems the poet-narrators nonetheless still focalize the landscape in similar fashions. This pattern of focalization is not merely a case of images – the focalized objects – being repeated throughout the texts. Rather, this chapter contends that certain aspects of *how* the poet-narrators focalize the landscape in Cen Shen's thermal frontier landscape poems,¹³ the manner in which they "see" the landscape, is repeated across the poems and thus links them intertextually.¹⁴

One of these aspects of focalization is the similarity among the poems in the presentation of the thermal theme and its initial sub-thematic development; a farther reaching characteristic is the similarity of lenses used by the poet-narrators both in ordinary and imaginary modes of focalization to focalize sub-themes of the landscape's heat, a burning maelstrom which is also apprehended as wrecking great meteorological havoc against the broader world¹⁵ of the poems.

12 Ronald Miao, "T'ang Frontier Poetry", p. 128 and Marie Chan, "The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen", p. 428. Having the greatest knowledge of Central Asian geography among Chinese poets, Cen Shen's most conspicuous contributions to the frontier poetry, the subgenre for which he is best remembered, are on topics such as the heat and volcanic lakes of the far northwestern region, topics previously unknown in Chinese poetry. See Marie Chan's entry in William H. Nienhauser, *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 798.

13 These poems, where Cen Shen's "hot" landscapes feature prominently, are "Passing Fire Mountain" 经火山; "Parting: Song of Fire Mountain Clouds" 火山云歌送别; "Song of Hot Lake: Sending Off Censor Cui on his Return to the Capital" 热海行送催侍御还京; and to a lesser extent the opening of "Mission to Jiaohe Commandery" ("Shi Jiaohequn" 使交河群). See the first appendix of this thesis for their full translations.

14 An intertextual reading means reading "literary works not [as]...autonomous entities, 'organic wholes', but [as] intertextual constructs: sequences which have meaning in relations to other texts...". See Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature and Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 38. The "meaning" of greatest interest here is the method itself by which Cen Shen's poet-narrators "see" the thermal landscape through manners of focalization found across the boundaries of individual poems, manners that are repeated in separate poems which when read against each other reveal similarities in not just *what* is focalized but *how* it is focalized. See also the second chapter of this thesis for a brief discussion of intertextuality as it pertains, in a limited way, to a juxtaposed reading of Cen Shen's and Bao Zhao's frontier poetry.

15 "World" here meaning the macro-space within which existents of the setting are selected by the focalizer for attention, or

In short, the intention behind this section of chapter five is to reinvigorate an appreciation of Cen Shen's thermal landscape through a reading which shows relations between the texts in the very manner by which their poet-narrators focalize the frontier setting of intense heat. By inter-reading¹⁶ Cen Shen's thermal landscape poems with attention to certain qualities of their focalization, one is able to witness the emergence of an affiliated pattern of focalization which draws the texts together into an intertextual relationship substantiated not merely by iterated imagery but also their shared methods of focalization.

5.1.1. Coordinated Openings

The heat of Cen Shen's fiery landscapes is predicated on a central geographic source, a thermal theme that is the opening baseline for sub-thematic amplifications of the sweltering frontier. In “Passing Fire Mountain”, “Song of Fire Mountain Clouds” and “Mission to Jiaohe”, this thermal theme is Fire Mountain (huoshan 火山); in “Song of Hot Lake”, it is the titular Hot Lake (rehai 热海):

火山今始见
突兀蒲昌东

Fire Mountain,¹⁷ today seen for the first time
Towers east of Puchang.

(“Passing Fire Mountain”, lines 1-2)

火山突兀赤亭口
火山五月火云厚

Fire Mountain towers over the entrance to Chiting,
Fire Mountain in the fifth month, fire clouds are thick.

(“Song of Fire Mountain Clouds”, lines 1-2)

in Jahn's terms the “W” field encompassing the “V” and “F2” fields focused by the focalizer (F1). The world in these poems is the frontier itself; the “V” are themes of the focalized existing within the frontier; and the F2 are sub-themes, specific features of the themes that are focused on by the poet-narrator. See Jahn's diagram at the conclusion of the previous chapter.

16 “Poems are not things but only words that refer to other words, and those words refer still to other words, and so on...Any poem is an inter-poem, and any reading of a poem is an inter-reading”. See Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 3. What this section is doing is actually substituting “words” with “focalizations” to argue that Cen Shen's thermal landscapes echo each other through the means by which they are focalized by the poet-narrators.

17 火山 (huoshan) is not translated here as “volcano” because the “fire” (火) of the mountain refers to its colour and the temperature of the region, and not to any penchant for lava spewing.

奉使接胡俗
平明发轮台
暮投交河城
火山赤崔嵬

Ordered on a mission to inspect the customs of the *Hu*,
At dawn setting out from Luntai.
In the evening staying at Jiaohe,
Fire Mountain red and lofty.

(“Mission to Jiaohe”, lines 1-4)

侧闻阴山胡儿语
西头热海水如煮

I've heard the *Hu* people of *Yin* Mountain say
That at the end of the Western frontier lies Hot Lake;
its waters seem to boil.

(“Song of Hot Lake”, lines 1-2)

The poet-narrator introduces the thermal landscape across all four poems by first focalizing the origin of the environment's heat, the thermal theme, and then follows with the theme's sub-thematic particularization. There is nothing intrinsically unique or daring in such method; in fact, Chinese poets “often... begin [their] descriptions by viewing the scene [theme] from a distance, [and] then move closer and closer to pick out the details [sub-themes]”.¹⁸ What is notable, however, is the consistencies between the poet-narrators¹⁹ in how they adumbrate the hot environment theme and then develop it sub-thematically.

After the initial heat theme is established by the poet-narrators, their sub-thematic extrapolations of the thermal frontier also maintain a certain constancy. Focalizing within the ordinary mode, the poet-narrators of “Passing Fire Mountain”, “Song of Fire Mountain Clouds” and “Mission to Jiaohe” all uniformly focus the first sub-theme of Fire Mountain through an ocular lens; what they observe is the mountain's great height, a feature which creates the feeling of a soaring, titanic flame

18 Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism*, p. 23. This practice of subdividing a general theme or image can also be understood as “breakdown amplification”, a procedure whereby “the poet gives an initial statement [or image], and then divides it into component parts with ever greater specificity”. See Stephen Owen, *Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 336.

19 While all four poems are by the same poet, the poet-narrators of the poems inhabit separate, though related, poetic spaces, hence the use of the plural. Even though they are all derived from the same writer, the poet-narrators are still differentiated from one another as their own poem's distinct “central consciousness...the consciousness through which situations and events [of the poem] are perceived”. See Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology*, p. 12.

spouting upwards and overwhelming the landscape. In both “Passing Fire Mountain” and “Song of Fire Mountain Clouds”, this sub-theme describes a Fire Mountain that “towers” (tuwu 突兀) over an existent of lesser altitude, namely Puchang 蒲昌 and Chiting 赤亭. And while still dominating its section of the frontier, Fire Mountain in “Mission to Jiaohe” is simply “lofty” (cuiwei 崔嵬) without any immediate existent over which to display its impressive altitude. However, with its different thermal theme, the opening sub-thematic trajectory of “Song of Hot Lake” unsurprisingly diverges from its cousins' course: the poet-narrator in this instance focalizes the waters of Hot Lake which “seem to boil” (shui ru zhu 水如煮).

5.1.2. Echoes of Ordinary Perceptual Facets

Following the opening lines' establishment of the thermal theme and its initial sub-thematic development, parallels in focalization, while advancing in a less uniform fashion, continue between the poems.²⁰ For example, the poet-narrators of “Passing Fire Mountain” and “Mission to Jiaohe” retain between them a strong affinity of focalization through two types of lenses: the dermal and ocular-dermal. Aside from having selected the sub-theme “height”, the poet-narrators of these two poems also decompose the Fire Mountain theme into the same sub-thematic constituent, the “scorching winds” (yanfeng 炎风) which wrap around the mountain:

我来严冬时
山下多炎风

I arrived when the year was at its coldest,
Below the mountain many scorching winds.

(“Passing Fire Mountain”, lines 7-8)

九月尚流汗
炎风吹沙埃

In the ninth month and still sweating,
Scorching winds blow sand and dust.

²⁰ As with “Song of Hot Lake”, the heat of the frontier in “Song of Fire Mountain Clouds” manifests somewhat differently compared to the other poems: it is the clouds of Fire Mountain, a sub-theme of the thermal landscape focalized visually by the poet-narrator, which project the mountain's heat over the land. Yet focalization of the thermal cloud's sub-themes and the thermal sub-themes of the other poems do share certain similarities. These will be discussed shortly.

(“Mission to Jiaohe”, lines 5-6)

Despite the “scorching” (yan 炎) similarity of the winds in these two poems, their focalization by the poet-narrators is not completely identical. While both poems' winds have the same thermal characteristic (scorching), the poet-narrator in “Passing Fire Mountain” limits his focalization to this one feature while adding information about the quantity of the winds and their location, qualifications which do not enhance the sensuality of the wind. But in “Mission to Jiaohe” these “scorching winds” are focalized as an animated existent, one that “blows sand and dust” (chui sha'ai 吹沙埃). Juxtaposed as such, the “scorching winds” of “Passing Fire Mountain” manifest vaguely and without any prominent visual clues, a result of the poet-narrator only using the body's skin as a dermal lens to “see” the thermal quality of the winds and then quantify them as “many” (duo 多). In “Mission to Jiaohe”, an ocular dimension is added to the dermal aspect of the poet-narrator's manner of focalization to form an ocular-dermal lens. This double manner of focalizing strengthens the perspicuity of the Fire Mountain winds. With sand and dust (沙埃) now blended into the winds through their act of blowing (吹), the initial thermal “scorching” (yan 炎) quality, a characteristic apprehended by the dermal portion of the ocular-dermal lens, joins with a visual quality focalized through the ocular angle of the poet-narrator's ocular-dermal lens to yield a perceptually more intense wind.

Even with the Fire Mountain theme of “Passing Fire Mountain” and “Mission to Jiaohe” broken down into sub-themes of height and scorching winds, qualities of Fire Mountain focalized by the poet-narrators through ocular, dermal and ocular-dermal lenses, there still remains another sub-theme to be focalized by both poet-narrators: the heat itself of Fire Mountain. In order to perceptualize this attribute of the mountain, the poet-narrators do not merely comment that “it is hot here”; instead, they focalize

the Fire Mountain theme through a glandular lens to “see” the mountain's sub-thematic heat²¹. This “sweating-as-seeing” makes the heat of Fire Mountain visceral, something felt by the skin like the “scorching” feature of the “winds” but compounded by a sudoriferous response:

我来严冬时
山下多炎风
人马尽汗流
熟知造化功

I arrived when the year was at its coldest,
Below the mountain many scorching winds.
Men and horses drenched in flowing sweat,
Who knows the works of Nature's invention?

(“Passing Fire Mountain”, lines 7-10)

九月尚流汗
炎风吹沙埃

In the ninth month and still sweating,
Scorching winds blow sand and dust.

(“Mission to Jiaohe”, lines 5-6)

In “Passing Fire Mountain”, the poet-narrator selects the feature of men and horses sweating (ren ma jin liuhan 人马尽流汗) near Fire Mountain and utilizes their dermal glands to focalize the heat of Fire Mountain, that is focalizing the thermal landscape through an act of perspiration or a “glandular” lens.²² Likewise, the poet-narrator of “Mission to Jiaohe”, without resorting to adjectives that simply describe temperature, uses this glandular lens to “see” and express the severe force of Fire Mountain's thermality.

The inclusion of temporal dimensions also works to accentuate the ferocity of the searing heat. Reflecting a custom in frontier poetry in which depictions of the landscape are typically positioned seasonally in the autumnal eighth and ninth months,²³ the poet-narrator of “Mission to Jiaohe” seems to express of feeling of disequilibrium through the adverb “still” (shang 尚), that somehow his

21 The heat that is glandularly “seen” by the poet-narrators is an ordinary heat, a heat detectable by the body's senses, ie its sweat glands through the act of sweating. Fire Mountain and Hot Lake also produce a supersensory heat which the poet-narrators focalize in the imaginary mode of focalization. This sub-theme of the landscape will be discussed later in this section.

22 Or as noted before “sweating-as-seeing”, seeing here meaning an act of focalization not necessarily dependent on the optic nerve.

23 Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 429.

perspiration is unnatural and should restrict itself to the preceding summer months and not exude during “the ninth month” (jiu yue 九月).²⁴ The poet-narrator's discombobulation is even more pronounced in “Passing Fire Mountain”. By noting the time, one in which winter is at its most severe (yandong shi 严冬时), the thermality behind “scorching winds” and “flowing sweat” (hanliu 汗流) becomes even more astounding, suggesting that the ferocity of even the most frigid time of year is enfeebled by the heat of Fire Mountain.

5.1.3. Imaginary Mode Correspondences

Under the ordinary mode of focalization, the poet-narrators used ocular, dermal, ocular-dermal and glandular lenses to focalize sub-themes of Fire Mountain and Hot Lake that were accessible to the five senses. But there is still a sub-theme amplifying these two themes that neither the eyes nor the skin can detect: a heat hiding within the ordinarily perceptual thermal heart of these two regions. The poet-narrator of “Song of Hot Lake” initially focalizes this heat as a generative force interwoven with its perceivable equivalent:

海上众鸟不敢飞	Flocks of birds do not dare fly above the lake;
中有鲤鱼长且肥	In the lake carp are long and fat.
岸旁青草常不歇	Green grasses on the shore grow for a long time and don't wither,
空中白雪遥旋灭	Snow at a distance overhead swirls and then melts.

(“Song of Hot Lake”, lines 3-6)

The temperature of Hot Lake simultaneously repels “flocks of birds” (zhongniao 众鸟) while nurturing

²⁴ This feeling of thermal strangeness is akin to other types of confusion, such as that caused by infinite spaces (to be discussed in chapter six), the bleeding of memory and nostalgia into scene, and the floating, sourceless borderland music, found in Chinese frontier poetry. See Ronald Miao, “T'ang Frontier Poetry”, p. 127. An especially striking couplet of meteorological aberrations on the frontier can be found in lines five and six of Cen Shen's “Composed at Beiting” (“Beiting zuo” 北庭作): “Autumn snow in spring still falls,/Morning winds at night do not cease” 秋雪春仍下, 朝风夜不休. See *CSJZ*, p. 155.

“carp” (liyu 鲤鱼) within “waters that seem to boil” (shui ru zhu 水如煮); it also causes snow to “melt” or evaporate (mie 灭) yet does not wither the “green grasses” (qingcao 青草) on its shore. This aspect of Hot Lake's heat, one that sustains rather than destroying the surrounding environment, is focalized through a lens of contradictions, an imaginary mode of focalization which presents the image of a heat that seems to “defy human comprehension” through fantastic and “incompatible statements”.²⁵

Intertextually more relevant, however, is how this sub-thematic heat radiating from the depths of the Fire Mountain and Hot Lake themes, a heat which is invisible to body's senses, is focalized by the poet-narrators of “Passing Fire Mountain”, “Mission to Jiaohe” and “Song of Hot Lake” in a similar manner. Faced with the limitations of ordinary perceptual lenses in focalizing this sub-theme of the thermal landscape, the poet-narrators shift to the imaginary mode of focalization to focalize this heat which exists beyond the threshold of bodily senses. To accomplish this act of extraordinary focalization, the thermal themes of the landscape, Fire Mountain and Hot Lake, are “seen” through an allusive lens, a way of “seeing” which “allusifies” the supra-sensory heat thereby causing it to be “seen” as the images of a particular, and perceivable, allusion. And although on the surface level there are some variations in what the poet-narrators emphasize within the allusion, this allusive lens remains consistent throughout all three poems as a reference to a short excerpt from Jia Yi's²⁶ 贾谊 (210-169 BCE) “Rhyme-Prose on the Owl”²⁷ (“Funiao fu” 鵩鸟赋). The applicable quotation is as follows:

且夫天地为炉兮	Heaven and earth are the furnace,
造化为工	The workman, the Creator;
阴阳为炭兮	His coal is the yin and yang,

25 Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 93.

26 “Jia Yi was a political thinker and poet whose productive years fell during the reign of Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 179-157 BCE) of the Han dynasty”. See Robert Joe Cutter's entry in William N. Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 254.

27 “A rhapsody (fu 赋) dating from 174 BCE wherein an owl, traditionally a bird of evil omens, flies into the poet's room [during his banishment to a minor post in Changsha in the south]. More philosophical than most early *fu*, the piece uses the presence of the owl to speculate on the mutability of things, especially the transience of success and the nature of life and death. Filled with Daoist ideas, the *fu* takes the stance that life is nothing to cling to, and death is nothing to fear”. See William N. Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 254.

万物为铜²⁸

His copper, all things of creation.²⁹

This vulcanian workshop of creation opens its refinery doors on the thermal frontier as a type of heat only visible to the imaginative eye, an allusive-ocular lens which focalizes and visualizes (as in makes visible, visible as the Jia Yi allusion) a subterranean frontier heat hidden from usual means of perceiving:

不知阴阳炭
何独燃此中
...
孰知造化功

How do the coals of *yin* and *yang*
Burn alone in the midst of this place?
...
Who knows the works of Nature's invention?
(“Passing Fire Mountain, lines 5-6; 10)

何事阴阳工
不遣雨雪来

Why is it that the workman of *yin* and *yang*
Not allow rain and snow to arrive?
(“Mission to Jiaohe”, lines 7-8)

阴火潜烧天地炉
何事偏烘西一隅

Hidden fires deeply burn in the furnace of
Heaven and Earth
Why do they just happen to roast this western border?
(“Song of Hot Lake”, lines 9-10)

Without the benefit of x-ray vision, the poet-narrators resort to an imaginary mode of focalization to peer deep beneath the ground surrounding Fire Mountain and Hot Lake to where a submerged, preternatural heat lies hidden from bodily senses, a sub-theme of the Fire Mountain and Hot Lakes themes that is only visible when focalized through an imaginary mode of focalization. The three poems each utilize one component of the original Jia Yi allusion to focalize this heat, in effect linking three disparate poet-narrators to a single allusive lens focalizing a heat beyond the range of the

28 *Wenxuanzhu* 文选注 13.22-23 in *SKQS*.

29 Burton Watson, tr., *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry*, p. 72.

ordinary mode of focalization. The smouldering “coals of yin and yang” (yinyang tan 阴阳炭) the “Creator workman” (zaohua wei gong 造化工) manipulating these coals, and the “hidden fires of the furnace of Heaven and Earth” (yin huo qian shao tiandi lu 阴火潜烧天地炉) are the allusive lenses through which the poet-narrators focalize an invisible, ubiquitous sub-thematic heat. In tandem with ordinary modes of perceptual focalization, these allusive lenses are able to surpass the limits of the eyes and skin and focalize a heat emanating from Fire Mountain and Host Lake as the thermal imagery of Jia Yi's “Rhyme Prose on the Owl”.

A mild trauma is also associated with perceiving this extra-ordinary heat. The rhetorical questions which infuse the highly imagistic allusions³⁰ suggest that the poet-narrators are unable to accept the presence, even existence, of such an intensity of heat. These questions force the language of the allusions into perceptual and propositional poles.³¹ The former imagistic portion functions as the lens through which the poet-narrators focalize the extra-sensory heat of the Fire Mountain and Hot Lake themes; this is the perceptual facet of their focalization. The propositional end divulges the emotions of the poet-narrators, their feelings of doubt, perhaps even awe, that a heat of such magnitude could exist. These musings reveal aspects of the poet-narrators' psychological facet of focalization, which are here expressions of shock bordering on disbelief.

5.1.4. A Landscape of Natural Violence

Aside from the five types of lenses³² the poet-narrators' selected from among their perceptual facet repertoire to focalize sub-themes of the thermal landscape, as well as the interconnectedness of

30 See the preceding quotes.

31 Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin, “Syntax, Diction and Imagery in T'ang Poetry”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 31 (1971), pp. 49-136, especially pp. 58 and 61.

32 Namely the ocular (perceiving the “height” of the thermal theme), ocular-dermal (“scorching winds of sand and dust”), dermal (“scorching winds”) and glandular (the ordinary “heat” of Fire Mountain, a heat perceptualized through the act of sweating), and allusive (perceiving an extrasensory heat).

their allusive manner in focalizing supra-sensory heat and their responses to these revelations, intertextual commonalities continue to reverberate among the poems in how the existents of the hot landscape reveal their thermal ferocity by assaulting the frontier setting itself. At its most passive, this presentation of thermal existents as violent phenomena is manifested in the pervasive fear that birds have of encountering the landscape's heat:

火山突兀赤亭口
火山五月火云厚
火云满山凝未开
飞鸟千里不敢来

Fire Mountain towers over the entrance to *Chiting*,
Fire Mountain in the fifth month, fire clouds are thick.
Fire clouds fill the mountains, dense they do not break;
Flying birds of a thousand *li* away do not dare come by.

(“Song of Fire Mountain Clouds”, lines 1-4)

侧闻阴山胡儿语
西头热海水如煮

海上众鸟不敢飞
中有鲤鱼长且肥

I overheard the *Hu* people of *Yin* mountain say
that at the end of the Western frontier lies Hot Lake;
its waters seems to boil.
Flocks of birds do not dare fly above the lake;
In the lake carp are long and fat.

(“Song of Hot Lake”, lines 1-4)

From its second line, the heat of Fire Mountain in “Song of Fire Mountain Clouds” transfers the entirety of its thermality into the surrounding clouds. This allocation of heat is immense: in the first four lines “fire” (huo 火) appears four times, a repetition which guarantees that the clouds of Fire Mountain never drain themselves of their thermal reserves. The bubbling waters of Hot Lake also display little likelihood of exhausting their heat source, a sultriness which like the clouds of Fire Mountain is revealed indirectly by two instances of avian apprehension. Confronted with the prospect of traversing a frontier ruled by fiery clouds in one poem and an unnaturally ebullient lake in another, birds choose to “not dare” (bu gan 不敢) the feverish elements and instead commit themselves to avoiding such places.³³

33 The four lines of frontier landscape description in Cen Shen's twenty-six line “Sending Off Qi Le on His Return to Hedong” (“Song Qi Le gui Hedong” 送祁乐归河东) also make use of birds that are reluctant to fly as a vehicle for

It should be noted, however, that frightened fowl are not an infrequent trope in Chinese poems portraying a geography of fearful features. Preceding the thermally timid birds of Bao Zhao's "The Song of Suffering From Heat" cited earlier,³⁴ the difficulties of aerial crossings had already signified a wild and threatening landscape. General Ma Yuan's 马援 (14 BCE – 49 AD) "The Wu Stream is Deep"³⁵ ("Wuxi shen xing" 武溪深行) is one such incipient instance where not only are birds thwarted in their path (niao fei bu du 鸟飞不度) but beasts as well dare not approach (shou bu gan lin 兽不敢临) the dangerous phenomenon that is Wu stream:

滔滔武溪一何深	Flooding, flooding, the Wu stream – how deep!
鸟飞不度	Birds cannot fly across,
兽不敢临	Beasts dare not come down to its banks.
嗟哉武溪兮多毒淫 ³⁶	Woe, the Wu stream is rife with virulent plague. ³⁷

Centuries later in Li Bai's "Hard Ways to Shu"³⁸ ("Shu dao nan" 蜀道难), the brown crane, noted for excellence in high altitude soaring,³⁹ indirectly expresses the magnitude and impenetrability of the imaginatively enhanced and ever hazardous Shu mountains through the impossibility of flying over its

expressing intense heat: "In the fifth month fiery clouds amass/Steam burns heaven and earth red./Birds do not dare fly./You travel back like a tumbleweed" 五月火云屯, 气烧天地红. 鸟且不敢飞, 子行如转蓬. See *CSJJZ*, p. 111. Qi Le himself was a famous Tang dynasty painter who after serving on the frontier at Lintao commandery 临洮, an area equivalent roughly to modern day southwest Lintan 临潭, Gansu province, returned to Chang'an without having attained success or recognition during his frontier service. See also Cen Shen's "Parting from Qi Le at Lintao Guesthouse" ("Lintao keshe liubie Qi Si" 临洮客舍留别祁四"), translated in chapter six of this thesis, for another moment of separation from Qi Le.

34 "The hungry monkeys do not take it as a feeding ground/The morning birds dare not flutter or hover around" 饥猿莫下食, 晨禽不敢飞.

35 The "song was composed in A.D. 49...during a difficult campaign against a non-Chinese tribe at the Wu stream (which runs from southern Hunan to northern Guangdong). The area was infested with a disease which killed many of the Chinese troops, including General Ma himself". See Hans H. Frankel, "The Development of Han and Wei *Yueh-fu* as a High Literary Genre" in Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen, ed., *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 255-286, especially p. 258.

36 *YFSJ* 74.1048.

37 Hans H. Frankel, tr., "The Development of Han and Wei *Yueh-fu*", p. 258.

38 A *yuefu* topic which even before the Tang dynasty poets used to fictitiously describe the hardships and dangers of travelling through the Shu 蜀 mountains of what is modern Sichuan 四川 province. See Literature Research Centre of the Chinese College of Social Sciences (Zhongguo shehuike xueyuan wenxue yanjiusuo 中国社会科学院文学研究所), ed., *Tangshi xuanzhu* 唐诗选注 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 1982), p. 119. In Li Bai's version, the poet-narrator "warns an imaginary traveller from Chang'an not to undertake the hardships of the journey through the mountains". See Stephen Owen, ed., *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, p. 213.

39 *Tangshi xuanzhu*, p. 121.

peaks. The following excerpt is lines eleven to fourteen:

上有六龙回日之高标	Above there is the high ensign where the team of six dragons bend the sun,
下有冲波逆折之回川	And below is the stream that winds around with dashing waves surging back crashing.
黄鹤之飞尚不得过 猿猱欲度愁攀援 ⁴⁰	Even in flight the brown crane cannot pass, Apes and monkeys want to cross and sadly strain, dragging themselves along. ⁴¹

The violence of the thermality of Cen Shen's frontier landscapes is further focalized by the poet-narrators as a series of active and expansive aggressive acts committed not against the poet-narrator – Bao Zhao's sand-spitting demons or headache inducing miasma are found neither at Cen Shen's Fire Mountain nor Hot Lake – but against the larger space encompassing and surrounding the frontier. An intertextual reading reveals a series of parallel focalizations by the poet-narrators whereby sub-themes of Fire Mountain and Hot Lake all conduct a blazing, scalding assault on the general environs, an offensive which expresses the boundlessness of Fire Mountain and Hot Lake's thermal powers:

赤烟烧虏云 炎气蒸塞空	Red smoke burns the <i>Lu</i> clouds, Blistering vapours steam the frontier emptiness. ("Passing Fire Mountain", lines 3-4)
蒸沙烁石燃虏云 沸浪炎波煎汉月	Steaming sands and shining ⁴² rocks burn the <i>Lu</i> clouds, Boiling billows and scorching waves boil the Han moon. ...
势吞月窟侵太白 气连赤坂通单于	The force of the steam's heat swallows moon caves and attacks Venus, Vapours continue into the <i>Chi</i> Pamirs and through Xiongnu lands ⁴³ .

40 *QTS* 162.1681

41 Stephen Owen, tr., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, p. 213.

42 烁 (shuo), translated above as "shining" can also mean "melting" (Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, personal correspondence, May, 2013).

43 单于 (chanyu), translated here as "Xiongnu lands", literally refers to a Xiongnu chieftain.

(“Song of Hot Lake”, lines 7-8 and 11-12)

缭绕斜吞铁关树

Curling, coiling and all aslant they [Fire Mountain clouds]
swallow the trees at Iron Pass,

氛氲半掩交河戍

A hazy mist half covering the garrison barracks
at Jiaohe.

(“Song of Fire Mountain Clouds”, lines 7-8)

A definite preponderance of incendiary and aggressive verbs⁴⁴ also assist in portraying a thermal landscape of uncontrollable, if unconscious, violence thundering across Cen Shen's fiery worlds.

“Burning”, a translation of both 烧 (shao) and 燃 (ran), is the most common destructive act; the “red smoke” (chi yan 赤焰) of “Passing Fire Mountain” and “steaming sands...shining⁴⁵ rocks” (zhengsha shuoshi 蒸沙烁石) of “Song of Hot Lake” mercilessly expose the terrain's heat by nearly incinerating nearby atmospheric entities of the frontier itself, the “*Lu* clouds” (lu yun 虏云). Even Fire Mountain's clouds, unlike their victimized *Lu* siblings, partake in this abuse of frontier existents by “swallowing the trees at Metal Pass” (tun tieguan shu 吞铁关树) and “covering the garrison barracks at Jiaohe” (yan jiaohe shu 掩交河戍).

The conflagrative mayhem that is the expression of the landscapes' thermality also extends into the frontier space beyond the immediate atmosphere. After first focalizing the relatively interior clouds, the poet-narrators of both “Passing Fire Mountain” and “Song of Hot Lake” focalize the frontier's periphery as an object of the landscape's thermal rage. In the former poem's instance, “blistering vapours” (yanqi 炎气) of Fire Mountain reach into the “frontier emptiness” (saikong 塞空) itself, “steaming” (zheng 蒸) the wider expanse of northwestern China. But compared to Hot Lake, Fire

44 “Passing Fire Mountain”: burn (shao 烧), steam (zheng 蒸); “Song of Fire Mountain Clouds”: swallow (tun 吞); and “Song of Hot Lake”: burn (ran 燃), boil (jian 煎), swallow (吞), attack (qin 侵).

45 Or melting.

Mountain's combustive fury seems gentle in its violent aspirations. Penetrating past snow and clouds, Hot Lake's "boiling billows and scorching waves" (feilang yanbo 沸浪炎波) stretch far enough to "boil" (jian 煎) the Han moon (han yue 汉月), an extraterrestrial object which because of its "han" 汉 designation has a correlation with the poet-narrators distant home in China proper.⁴⁶ The sub-thematic steam of Hot Lake also joins the offensive and "swallows moon caves" (tun yueku 吞月窟) while "attacking Venus" (qin taibai 侵太白) before rushing through (tong 通) the more local "Xiongnu lands" (chanyu 单于) to declare the landscape's thermal might.

Conclusion

An advantage of orienting an analysis of Cen Shen's thermal landscape poems towards their focalization is that it draws an awareness towards *how* the existents of the landscape are focalized by the poet-narrators in addition to the type of imagery constituting the thermal landscape itself within the different poems. In so doing, the complexity of the poet-narrators' manners of focalization in ordinary and imaginary modes is foregrounded to reveal an underlying interrelationship in the manner by which the fiery landscape is presented in Cen Shen's frontier poems. The conclusion generated by such an analysis is that the poet-narrators' acts of focalization are multitudinous in nature and repeated across the texts. "Seeing" the complete thermal landscape demands that the poet-narrators not only focalize through their eyes, skin and sweat glands to apprehend that which is in ordinary sensory range but that they also "see" the landscape through allusion in order to convey to readers the extra-sensory sub-thematic heat emitted by its two thermal themes, Fire Mountain and Hot Lake. Despite the burning chaos unleashed by Cen Shen's thermal landscapes, scenes so "forceful and original"⁴⁷ that they

46 Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 350.

47 Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 93.

obliterate the impact of the putative farewells conventionally attached to the end of “Song of Fire Mountain Clouds” and “Song of Hot Lake”, a feeling of calm amidst the environmental entropy can be found through an intertextual understanding of how their poet-narrators harmonize their acts of focalization to present these “new realms”⁴⁸ of the frontier landscape.

5.2 Cen Shen's Hibernial Landscape: A System of Snow and Cold

Cen Shen's frontier thermal landscapes are somewhat anomalous, an alien glow within a sub-genre of poetry whose dominant natural setting prefers the dreary and wintry to the sweat-drenched and hot. Chapter two of this thesis briefly elaborated on how Tang and pre-Tang poets were predisposed towards the bleak and brumal in their depictions of China's northern borderlands, using the geography's dismalness as a delivery system of both experienced and imagined hardship and sorrow:⁴⁹

二月犹北风 天阴雪冥冥 寥落一室中 怅然惭百龄 苦愁正如此 门柳复青青 ⁵⁰	The second month and there is still a northern wind, An overcast sky, snow dark and gloomy. Within a small, cold desolate room, Deeply disconsolate that I've frittered away my life. Bitter sorrow is just like this, The willow ⁵¹ by the gate is green again.
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This first of four poems forming the set “Suffering from the Snow” (“Ku xue si shou” 苦雪四首) is Gao Shi's minimally descriptive⁵² yet devastatingly unsubtle and melancholic response to such a northern frontier; the scene itself is prototypical for its prevalent darkness, marrow-burrowing chill and

48 Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 428.

49 The fact that the climate of northern China's borders was, and still is, cold also had a strong, and obvious, influence on its depictions in frontier poetry in addition to the landscape functioning as a correlative of the poet-narrator's psychological state. See Yan Fuling, “Han-Tang biansaishi zhuti yanjiu”, pp. 25-26.

50 *GSJJZ*, p. 18.

51 The willow itself, whether seen or imagined by the poet-narrator as having grown in his hometown, is often used to signify homesickness through the homophony of 柳 (liu, willow) and 留 (liu, to stay). The poet-narrator here might be saying this reminder of home, the willow, is assaulted on all sides the coldness of the region, an action which makes his homesickness all the more painful (Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, personal correspondence, May 2013).

52 Appropriate when considering that “Gao Shi [was] more a poet of mood rather than descriptive imagination”. See Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 151.

mockery towards the poet-narrator whose espying of budding green only sharpens his misery within an unseasonably cold land. Lines one to four of Lu Zhaolin's 卢照邻 (636-695) earlier composition “Song of Falling Snow”⁵³ (“Yu xue qu” 雨雪曲) offers greater sensual precision in its production of a standard frontier whose gloomy snow and sands are made all the more gelid by the lunar limpid ice:

虏骑三秋 ⁵⁴ 入 关云万里平 雪似胡沙暗 冰如汉月明 ⁵⁵	At autumn's end nomad horseman come down, Clouds over the passes, flat for thousands of miles. The snow seems dark as the <i>Hu</i> sands, The ice as bright as the Chinese moon. ⁵⁶
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(lines 1-4)

Under a similar titular framework and fusing the boreal and desolate to cast an orthodox, though still quite alluring, frontier setting is Huangfu Ran's 皇甫冉 (717-770) “Rain and Snow” (“Yu xue” 雨雪), a poem whose perceivable elements also whisper the typical angst of isolation and sorrow associated with serving one's country in its least clement regions:⁵⁷

风沙悲久戍 雨雪更劳师 绝漠无人境 将军苦战时 山川迷向背 氛雾失旌旗 徒念天涯隔 中人芳草期 ⁵⁸	Wind and sand, a sadness long guarding the borders, Rain and snow further fatigue the tired troops. Unending desert, a place devoid of people, The army general frequently fights bitter battles. Mountains and rivers disappear all around, Flags and banners vanish in the cold fog. Pointless longing separated by the ends of the earth; For those in central lands it is the season of fragrant grass. ⁵⁹
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53 See also Chen Shubao's treatment of the same title in chapter three of this thesis.

54 三秋 (san qiu) refers to the ninth month of the year.

55 *QTS* 42.523

56 Mildly modified version of Stephen Owen, tr., *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 97.

57 Yan Fuling, “Han-Tang biansaishi zhuti yanjiu”, p. 35.

58 *QTS* 250.2824.

59 The sense of interminableness and isolation in Huang's poem was felt centuries earlier by Lu Ji's 陆机 (261-303) soldiers as they endlessly fended off foreign tribes taunting the country's borders in the following excerpt from the *yuefu* topic poem “Watering Horses at the Long Wall Spring” (“Yin ma changcheng ku xing” 饮马长城窟行): “The war carts roll ceaselessly along the rutted road./Banners and pinions move constantly back and forth./Raising their eyes to face the snow piled peaks./Lowering them to wade through frozen streams./Arriving in winter, the next fall they are still here./ Separated from their families by an endless distance”. See Joseph R. Allen, tr., *In the Voice of Others*, p. 73. 戎车无停轨,

The traditionally dolorous domain that was the poetic frontier was also a landscape which in addition to the visually dim and climatically cold gravitated towards the verbally static.⁶⁰ Chapter three of this thesis cited one pre-Tang example of this typical stillness in Chen Shubao's "Song of Rain and Snow", a poem whose setting nearly suffocates under a haze of rain and snow spread thickly across the northern expanse. The opening of Li Shimin's⁶¹ 李世民 (599-649) "Watering Horses at the Long Wall Spring" ("Yin ma changcheng ku xing" 饮马长城窟行) likewise illustrates a landscape of mounting inertness whose first four lines open with a movement of sharp and sorrowful winds before slowing to a stationary silence initiated by the act of "freezing" (jie 结) which then leads to a total vacancy of verbs, an absence of action that is filled by an impenetrable concentration of sand and snow:

塞外悲风切	Beyond the frontier mournful winds cut,
交河冰已结	Jiaohe river ice already frozen.
瀚海百重波	The Gobi desert, hundreds of layers of undulations;
阴山千里雪 ⁶²	Yin mountains. ⁶³ thousands of <i>li</i> deep in snow.

Such frontier environments, realms "continuously generated intertextually out of the language of aridity and coldness of other poems",⁶⁴ often leave the impression that these peripheral spaces only ever clump into "campaign roads full of dark snow" and "watch towers buried in cold clouds",⁶⁵ a land of "ancient towns covered in a profusion of frost"⁶⁶ that is forever inactive and unmoving. These assumptions are certainly reasonable until one enters Cen Shen's hibernal landscape.

旌旗屡徂迁。仰凭积雪岸，俯涉坚冰川。冬来秋未反，去家邈以绵。YFSJ 38.557.

60 Marsha Wagner, *Wang Wei* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), p. 42.

61 Tang Taizong 唐太宗, second emperor of the Tang dynasty.

62 YFSJ 38.559

63 The Yin mountain range spanning central Inner Mongolia. See Sun Quanmin, ed., *Tangdai biansaishi xuanzhu*, p. 4.

64 Joseph R. Allen, *In the Voice of Others*, p. 90.

65 暗雪迷征路，寒云隐戍楼。See Chu Guangxi's 储光羲 (707-763) "Parting at the Waters of Longtou" ("Longtoushui songbie" 陇头水送别), QTS 139.1415.

66 繁霜覆古城。See Chu Guangxi's "Moon at the Mountain Pass" ("Guanshan yue" 关山月), QTS 139.1417.

5.2.1. A Landscape of Shifting Focalization

While appealing in their feeling of otherness and enchanting mood of places beyond the familiar,⁶⁷ Cen Shen's niveous landscapes are also attractive in the complexity of their perceptual and psychological facets of focalization. Commentary on these wintry lands tends to gloss over these intricacies, preferring instead to summarize the poems as being vigorous, curious and attentive to miniscule changes of detail;⁶⁸ one popular example is the sustained vision of peach blossom snowflakes and their movements in the opening six lines of “Song of White Snow” (“Baixue ge” 白雪歌):

北风卷地白草折
胡天八月即飞雪

忽如一夜春风来
千树万树梨花开
散入珠帘湿罗幕
狐裘不暖锦衾薄

The north wind rolls up the ground, white grasses snap
In the eighth month snow already flies throughout the
Hu sky

Suddenly as if in one night the Spring wind arrives,
On tens of thousands of trees pear flowers bloom.
Scattering through beaded curtains and soaking silk drapes,
Fox fur clothing does not keep in the heat, resplendent
blankets are thin.

A landscape where “contortions of turbulent movement [undermine] the lugubrious stillness of the tradition [in frontier poetry]”⁶⁹ is another common feature noted by critics, one whose support often includes reference “Ballad of Running Horse River” (“Zoumachuan xing” 走马川行):

轮台九月风夜吼
一川碎石大如斗
随风满地石乱走

Luntai in the ninth month winds at night howl,
A river of broken rocks big as dippers
Follow the winds covering the ground, rocks
tumble helter-skelter.

(“Ballad of Running Horse River”, lines 3-5))

As for the emotions revealed in these hibernal landscapes, critical attention is drawn disproportionately

67 Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 176.

68 Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 177; Li Mei, “Shilun Luo Binwang, Cen Shen biansaishi de wenhua guanzhao”, p. 160; and Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 430.

69 Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 430.

towards the indefatigable and sonorous martial spirit drowning out the sad and piteous tones often heard in such poetry⁷⁰, a heroic temperament easily discovered intertwined with the following “energetic”⁷¹ and highly kinetic images in lines seven to ten of “Song of Lutai: Presented When Sending Off General Feng Leading His Troops on a Western Campaign” (“Luntai ge feng song Feng dafu chushi xizheng” 轮台歌奉送封大夫出师西征):

上将拥旄西出征	Yak tail adorned pennants ⁷² surround the general on his western campaign march,
平明吹笛大军行	At sunrise pipes sound and the great army sets out.
四边伐鼓雪海涌	On all sides drums pound, the sea of snow roils;
三军大呼阴山动 ⁷³	The entire army shouts, Yin mountain ⁷⁴ shakes.

The aforementioned opinions on the imagery and emotion of Cen Shen's winter landscapes are certainly not inaccurate; the only deficiencies for purposes here are in the limitations of their scope. But rather than find fault with the restricted range of these commentaries, the remainder of this chapter will instead contribute to the discussion of Cen Shen's places of quiver inducing cold by considering patterns in the perceptual facet of the poet-narrators' acts of focalization,⁷⁵ and how their manners of focalization intertextually link Cen Shen's major hibernal landscape poems.⁷⁶ These manners include shifts in the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrators' focalization of the poems' “cold” landscape (scale

70 Yan Fuling, “Han-Tang biansaishi zhuti yanjiu”, p. 39.

71 Marie Chan, “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 432.

72 Pennants that accompanied a military officer on campaign or on the battlefield. See note in *CSJJZ*, p. 147.

73 *CSJJZ*, p. 146.

74 Here a reference to Tian mountain and not the Yin mountain of Inner Mongolia. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 56.

75 The psychological facet of Cen Shen's hibernal landscapes will not be elaborated upon here. Chapter six, however, will be investigating the interaction of the perceptual and psychological facets in the focalization of landscapes characterized by great distances and homesickness.

76 “Hibernal landscape poems” meaning those poems where the setting of the cold, snow laden frontier features predominantly, namely “The Ballad of Running Horse River: Presented Upon Escorting My Lord Feng With His Troops on a Western Campaign” (“Zoumachuan xing feng song chushi xizhang” 走马川行奉送出师西征), “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain: Sending Off Xiao Zhi on His Return to the Capital” (“Tianshanxue ge song Xiao Zhi gui jing” 天山雪歌送萧治归京), and “Song of White Snow: Sending Off Administrative Officer Wu on His Return to the Capital” (“Baixue ge song Wu panguan gui jing” 白雪歌送武判官归京). Although putatively “sending off” poems, Cen Shen in these instances, as noted earlier, “describes...the scene with vigour [and] then ties it in the most tenuous way to the occasion”, foregrounding the landscape and not the circumstances of parting. See Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 177. See the second appendix of this thesis for their full translation.

of focalization); the focalization of alternations in movement between activity and inactivity on the hibernal setting (degree of kinesis); and the focalization of two types of coldness exhibited by the existents of the hibernal setting (typology of cold). As in Cen Shen's thermal landscape poems, the perceptual facet in these hibernal poems is linked intertextually across the poems as a system of focalization, and it is with attention to these shared manners of focalization that the poems will be read and discussed.

5.2.2. Scale of Focalization: Ambient Spatial Coordinates

A major source of symmetry among Cen Shen's poet-narrators in their focalization of the hibernal landscape resides in the shifting spatial coordinates of their perceptual facets. These spatial instabilities can be described as “ambient” on the scale of focalization, a position indicative of a certain amount of fluidity and flexibility. As it pertains to the following poems, these coordinates can be characterized specifically as overlapping sets of exteriority and interiority, and distance and nearness, binaries which reflect the spatial inconstancy guiding the poet-narrator's “roving eye” across Cen Shen's hibernal landscapes.⁷⁷

The exterior-interior spatial dichotomy is most easily recognized in the poems as a shift between scenes of cold focalized outdoors on the hibernal frontier, by far the most frequent coordinate, and scenes within army tents, interior moments which actually function to emphasize the strength of the cold by contrasting tiny human habitations and gatherings with the all pervasive, dominating freeze

⁷⁷ The “roving eye” is a term used by Yi-yu Cho Woo to describe the shifting viewpoint in Wang Wei's “Zhongnan Mountain” (“Zhongnan shan” 终南山), a poem in which perspective also shifts with great frequency; in the first four lines alone there are alterations from level ground, to the mountain at a distance, to exiting the mountain and then looking down from it. See Yi-yu Cho Woo, “Chinese Poetry and Painting: Some Observations on Their Interrelationship” *Monumenta Serica*, Vol. 34 (1979-1980), pp. 403-413, especially p. 412. Although the subject is neither Cen Shen nor focalization, an enjoyable analysis of modulations in perceptual coordinates can still be found in Thomas Yuntong Luk's “A Cinematic Interpretation of Wang Wei's Nature Poetry” in William Tay, Ying-hsiung Chou and Heh-hsiang Yuan, ed., *China and the West: Comparative Literature Studies* (Hong Kong: China University Press, 1980), pp. 151-161. Wai-lim Yip also touches on the topic in the introduction to his translations of Wang Wei's poetry in *Hiding the Universe: Poems by Wang Wei* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973).

of the exterior frontier. The most prolonged interior focalization, a focalization that shifts from exterior spatial coordinates to interior, is in “Song of White Snow”, followed distantly by “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” and “The Ballad of Running Horse River”:

忽如一夜春风来
千树万树梨花开
散入珠帘湿罗幕
狐裘不暖锦衾薄

.....

瀚海阑干百丈冰
愁云惨淡万里凝
中军置酒饮归客
胡琴琵琶与羌笛

Suddenly it is as if in the night the Spring wind arrives
On tens of thousands of trees pear blossoms bloom.
Scattering through beaded curtains and soaking silk drapes,
Fox fur clothing does not keep in the heat, resplendent
blankets are thin.

.....

Vast desert, railings of ice criss-cross a hundred meters
thick ,
Sorrow clouds and gloom condense over ten thousand *li*.
At the army camp wine is laid out and drunk to the
departing guest,
Hu songs are strum on *pipas* along with *Qiang* flutes.

(“Song of White Snow”, lines 3-6 and 9-12)

晦霭寒氛万里凝
阑干阴崖千丈冰
将军狐裘卧不暖
都护宝刀冻欲断

Gloom cold clouds freeze everything over a distance of
ten thousand *li*,
Railings upon shaded cliffs are a thousand meters of ice;
The general's fox skins do not keep the bed warm,
The protector-general's sword is frozen and about
to break

(“Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, lines 9-12)

马毛带雪汗气蒸
五花连钱旋作冰
幕中草檄砚水凝

Horse coats covered in snow; their sweat steams and rises,
Dappled spots like linked coins suddenly turn back
into ice,
Inside the army tent the inkstone's water for writing
documents denouncing the enemy has frozen.

(“Ballad of Running Horse River”, lines 12-14)

The first shift from exterior to interior in “Song of White Snow” is the least abrupt of all three poems. With the poet-narrator's focalization of the “scattering” (san 散) pear blossom-like snowflakes

uninterrupted throughout their migration from external to internal space, not only does the coldness of the snow itself smoothly cross a ruptured spatial border and infiltrate “beaded curtains” (zhulian 珠帘), “silk drapes” (luomu 罗幕), “fox fur clothing” (huqiu 狐裘) and “thin resplendent blankets” (jinqiu bao 锦裘薄), the ubiquitous harshness of the northern temperature as well creeps through the delicately furnished and permeable tent to undermine a potential, if ineffectual, source of warmth, and in the process emphasize the frontier cold. The very delicacy of the scene, one in which the poet-narrator superimposes an imaginary, and quite effete, vernal season onto the very real, and uncompromising, hibernal, creates a false hope of heat; the hollow resistance mounted by furs and fancy furnishings only exaggerates the chill of the “ground rolling northern wind” (beifeng juan di 北风卷地) and “flying snow” (fei xue 飞雪).

The second interior scene, a space of fraternizing and musical entertainment, seems hermetically sealed from the greater landscape of wind, snow and ice, a durable beacon of resistance against the meteorological ravages at China's periphery. But the firmly established exterior order of winter is never completely absent. Faced with “criss-crossing rails of ice a hundred meters thick” (langan bai zhang bing 阑干百丈冰) and “evening snow falling pell-mell” (fenfen mu xue 纷纷暮雪), the warmth of the interior farewell party's music and convivial imbibing is weakened when juxtaposed against the outdoor boreal blasts and glacial gloom. Regardless of the external temperature, the indoor evening banquet held in honour of the capital bound “departing guest” (gui ke 归客) also generates its own dreadful draft of ephemerality in anticipation of the eventual separation between the poet-narrator and Administrative Officer Wu. The poem ends with a final exterior scene of blocked vision and explicit absence that reasserts the feeling of oppressive containment created not by perceptual shifts from exteriority to interiority but by the outdoor snow of the frontier environment.⁷⁸

78 Ronald Miao, “T'ang Frontier Poetry”, p. 125.

轮台东门送君去
去时雪满天山路
山回路转不见君
雪上空留马行处

Seeing you off at the east gate of Luntai,
At your departure snow fills the road of Tian Mountain.
The mountain curves, the road turns, I can not see you:
In the snow empty hoof prints are left behind.

(“Song of White Snow”, lines 13-16)

Corresponding spatial shifts from exterior to interior coordinates are minimal in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” and “Ballad of Running Horse River”. The single focalizational pivot from exteriority to interiority in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” does have a similar effect as that of the first outside-inside movement in “Song of White Snow”: by breaching spatial boundaries and broadening the depth of its penetration into “the general's fox skins” (jiangjun huqiu wo 将军狐裘), the strength and range of the frontier cold, now truly omnipresent, intensifies in its potency. But the interiorization of cold in “Ballad of Running Horse River” is different. Rather than using a spatial shift to expand the dominion of the frontier's deadly temperature, the poet-narrator's focalization of the “frozen” aspect of “inkstone water used for writing documents denouncing the enemy” (caoxi yanshui bing 草檄砚水冰) inside the “army tent” (mu zhong 幕中) functions as a metaphor for the fearless resolve and tenacity of general Feng Changqing and the soldiers under his command. In fact, the failure of the poem's inclement environment to weaken the army's martial resolve is suggested throughout the poem in how the setting's cold existents reflect rather than enervate an attitude of unflagging boldness on the frontier.

A less frequent pattern of spatial coordinate shifts found among all three poems is focalization that alternates between distance and nearness. This paucity of symmetry is due to “Ballad of Running Horse River”; of its seventeen lines, it is only in the opening two lines of the poem and the second line of the second tercet (“West of Jin Mountain one sees smoke and flying dust”) that the poet-narrator focalizes existents of the hibernal landscape from afar. The first instance of distant spatial coordinates establishes the general terrain, a procedure previously noted in Cen Shen's thermal poems where a

thermal theme was presented early and then sub-thematically amplified thereafter:

君不见走马川行雪海边	Have you not seen Running Horse River on the banks of the sea of snow?
平沙莽莽黄入天	Level sands vast and wide all entering the yellow sky.
轮台九月风夜吼	Luntai in the ninth month winds at night howl,
一川碎石大如斗	A river of broken rocks big as dippers
随风满地石乱走	Follow the winds covering the ground, rocks tumble helter-skelter.

(“Ballad of Running Horse River”, lines 1-5)

After first focalizing Running Horse river, the breadth of the desert, and the overarching yellow sky at a distance in the first couplet, the poet-narrator then contracts his focus in order to zoom in on the active existent of the landscape, namely the winds and tumbling stones of the already kinetically named Running Horse river. In the second tercet, with the smoke and dust of Jin mountain signifying enemy movements toward which general Feng sets off to confront with his military forces, the setting is again focalized from a distance:

匈奴草黄马正肥	Xiongnu grasses yellow, horses well fed and sturdy;
金山西见烟尘飞	West of Jin mountain one sees smoke and dust flying,
汉家大将西出师	The general of the House of Han sets off west with his army.

(“Ballad of Running Horse River”, lines 6-8)

Spatial coordinates then shift from distance to nearness with the focalization of the general's armour, the army's weapons, and faces in the third tercet:

将军金甲夜不脱	The general does not remove his coat of armour at night,
半夜军行戈相拨	The army sets out at midnight, halberds rub against each other,
风头如刀面如割	The crest of winds like knives; faces seem sliced.

(“Ballad of Running Horse River”, lines 9-11)

Shifts from distance to nearness in the spatial coordinates of focalization in “Song of White Snow” and “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, while not selfsame in order, do share more intertextual continuities between one another than they do with the relatively infrequent far-near focalization movements in “Ballad of Running Horse River”. As noted by Marie Chan, the poet-narrator in the first eight lines of “Song of White Snow” delineates the stages of a snowstorm and its spreading snow and cold by focalizing the hibernal scene through a slow constriction from distance to nearness that begins with the wind wracked ground and unseasonably snowy sky, and then ends at the chilled paraphernalia of war.⁷⁹ The effect is one of thickening cold founded on sequences of accumulating imagistic frames:

北风卷地白草折
胡天八月即飞雪

忽如一夜春风来
千树万树梨花开
散入珠帘湿罗幕
狐裘不暖锦衾薄

将军角弓不得控
都护铁衣冷难著

The north wind rolls up the ground, white grasses snap,
In the eighth month snow already flies throughout the
Hu sky.

Suddenly as if in the night the Spring wind arrives,
On tens of thousands of trees pear flowers bloom.
Scattering through beaded curtains and soaking silk drapes,
Fox fur clothing does not keep in the heat, resplendent
blankets are thin.

The general's horn bow cannot be pulled,
The protector-general's armour is freezing and difficult to
put on.

(“Song of White Snow”, lines 1-8)

While “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” exhibits a comparable spatial progression in its focalization of the hibernal frontier, one in which distance shifts with nearness, accompanying this gradual change in coordinates is another shifting spatial dichotomy, height to lowness. Whereas in “Song of White Snow” focalization of the wintry scene remains on a horizontal plane while contracting from distance to nearness, the poet-narrator of “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” commits seven lines of far-near focalization to a vertical axis where he focalizes high altitude clouds and mountain peaks, the snow itself of Tian mountain and its reflections of lunar light, the wind of a mountain pass, and finally the

⁷⁹ Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 90.

disappearance of birds in flight before alighting his focus on horse hooves stumbling along Luntai's slippery road:

天山雪云常不开	Snow clouds never break on Tian Mountain
千峰万岭雪崔嵬	Tens of thousands of lofty peaks and ranges are covered in snow;
北风夜卷赤庭口	The night's north wind rolls over Chiting Pass;
一夜天山雪更厚	As night passes, the snow is thicker on Tian Mountain.
能兼汉月照银山	The snow both reflects the <i>Han</i> moon and shines on Yin Mountain
复逐胡风过铁关	And again chases the <i>Hu</i> wind through Iron Gate Pass;
交河城边鸟飞绝	At the edge of Jiaohe birds in flight disappear;
轮台路上马蹄滑	On the Luntai road horses' hooves slip.

(“Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, lines 1-8)

Concluding these two texts where the hibernal landscape figures predominantly are single, lonely images which acknowledge the titular “sending off” (song 送) aspect of the poems:⁸⁰ “empty hoof prints left behind in the snow” (xue shang kong liu ma xing chu 雪上空留马行处) in “Song of White Snow” and a “single green pine branch” (weiyou qingqing songshu zhi 惟有青青松树枝), presented as a substitute for the standard willow branch given at parting, in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”. Aside from fulfilling their titular responsibilities, these final, spatially “near” focalizations also anchor the poems after a wild series ambient focalization which fluctuated between exteriority and interiority as well as distance and nearness. However, these spatial coordinate shifts were necessary for presenting the coldness of the northwestern frontier in a manner where each new spatial coordinate helped strengthen the poems' hibernal punch.

5.2.3. Degree of Kinesis: Active and Static Scenes

⁸⁰ See translations at the end of this chapter for the full titles of the poems.

It was previously noted in this chapter that the frontier landscape in Cen Shen's poetry has often been critically assessed as a “a land of frenetic movement”⁸¹ where “the north wind blows sand and rolls up white grasses ” while cold winds furiously blast like knives and arrows.⁸² Such assessments, while accurate to an extent, do elide the conventional stasis that still haunts Cen Shen's hibernal landscape and participates in patterns of shifting movement and inertness, cycles of active and inactive kinesis⁸³ which in tandem with other factors contribute, if in a minor fashion, to the actualization of the cold environment, one in which sub-zero temperatures both brood in inactivity and lash out at great speeds.

Alternating moments of stillness and highly kinetic activity as a feature of the hibernal landscape are clear when “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” and “Song of White Snow” are read intertextually. The poet-narrators in both works shift their focalization between the two states of movement of the landscape but do so in different orders of procession. In “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” the cold exterior environment is focalized as cycles between two lines of stillness, two lines

81 Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 98. In an assessment of Cen Shen's non-frontier piece “Ascending the Stupa of the Temple of Compassionate Mercy with Gao Shi and Xue Ju” (“Yu Gao Shi Xue Ju tong deng cien shi futu” 与高适薛据同登慈恩寺浮图), Stephen Owen construes an “active topography”, a kinetic energy that also surges through Cen Shen's frontier landscapes, rolling through the following lines: “A range of mountains like surging waves,/Rush eastwards as if heading towards the royal court” 连山若波涛, 奔凑似朝东. See *CSJZ*, p. 101. For the Owen observation see Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 378.

82 “The north wind blows sand the rolls up white grasses” 北风吹沙卷白草. See “Passing Yanzhi Mountain: Sent to Du Wei” (“Guo Yanzhi ji Du Wei” 过燕支寄杜位), *CSJZ*, p. 75. The opening of “Song of White Snow” has a similar line characterizing rapid movements of the frontier: “The north wind rolls up the ground, white grasses snap” 北风卷地白草折. Stephen Owen notes that the use of 折(zhe), meaning “separation of one part from another”, is especially violent and hyperbolic. See Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 376. In a similar assessment, Ronald Miao regards the wind in this sub-genre of poetry as emphasizing the abrasiveness of the frontier environment and its intolerance towards human repose. See Ronald Miao, “T'ang Frontier Poetry”, p. 130. The wind in Bao Zhao's “Imitation: The Song of Departing from the North Gate of Ji” is an early example of such belligerent blowing. See chapter two of this thesis for the relevant quote. For knife-like winds, see “Ballad of Running Horse River” as well as “Song of General Zhao” (quoted in chapter two of this thesis). Wang Changling in the second of four “Below the Frontier” (“Saixia qu” 塞下曲) also uses the same simile to illustrate the hibernal wind: “Watering horses and crossing autumn waters,/the water is freezing and the wind is like a knife” 饮马渡秋水, 水寒风似刀. See *QTS* 140.1420. Winds swift and sharp as arrows fly in Cen Shen's “Western Hostel of Yin Mountain Desert” (“Yinshan qi xiguan” 银山碛西馆): “At the entrance to the gorge of Yin mountain the wind is like arrows” 银山峡口风似箭. See *CSJZ*, p. 79.

83 “Kinesis” here means the feature of movement. Thus, “active kinesis” is a state of movement; “inactive kinesis” is a state of non-movement.

of activity, and then one line of each state of kinesis before the poet-narrator turns his focus in the last two lines of the excerpt towards non-geographic existents:

天山雪云常不开	Snow clouds never break on Tian Mountain
千峰万岭雪崔嵬	Tens of thousands of lofty peaks and ranges are covered in snow.
北风夜卷赤庭口	The night's north wind rolls over Chiting Pass;
一夜天山雪更厚	As night passes, the snow is thicker on Tian Mountain.
能兼汉月照银山	The snow both reflects the <i>Han</i> moon and shines on Yin Mountain
复逐胡风过铁关	And again chases the <i>Hu</i> wind through Iron Gate Pass.
交河城边鸟飞绝	At the edge of Jiaohe birds in flight disappear;
轮台路上马蹄滑	On the Luntai road horses' hooves slip.

(“Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, lines 1-8)

Stillness is focalized in the first two lines through the negation and absence of verbs: in line one, the snow clouds' lack of movement is the result of them “not breaking” (bu kai 不开), and in the second line mountain peaks and mountain ranges are lined up and covered in snow to create a sense of stasis. At lines three and four, the degree of kinesis increases from inertness to action: winds “roll” (juan 卷) over the ground, a common trope in Cen Shen's frontier poems for infusing the terrain with sudden dynamism, and snow no longer quietly sits on lofty peaks but gradually increases in density (geng hou 更厚). Line five then tempers the highly kinetic with a quiescent and ethereal “shining” (zhao 照) of snowy moonlight on Yin mountain before the *Hu* wind⁸⁴ (hu feng 胡风) is chased through Iron Gate Pass to propel the hibernal scene back into active kinesis:

Unlike “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, the poet-narrator of “Song of White Snow” focalizes the active kinesis of the landscape without shifting between activity and stillness:

北风卷地白草折	The north wind rolls up the ground, white grasses snap,
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⁸⁴ For readers with an interest in a typology of poetic frontier wind, see See Yan's division of such entities into direction, strength, emotion and combination in Yan Fuling, “Han-Tang biansaishi zhuti yanjiu”, p. 25.

胡天八月即飞雪

In the eighth month snow already flies throughout the
Hu sky.

忽如一夜春风来
千树万树梨花开

Suddenly as if in the night the Spring wind arrives,
On tens of thousands of trees pear flowers bloom.

(“Song of White Snow”, lines 1-4)

While intertextually echoing the verb of the third line in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” (“the night’s north wind *rolls* over Chiting Pass”), the poet-narrator here opens by focalizing the activeness of the ground that is “rolled up” (卷) by the north wind while white grasses “snap” (折) under the tumult of wintry gales. The fierceness of the meteorological onslaught is somewhat mitigated in the following three lines where aside from a reduction in the number of verbs, now one per line (“flying” snow (fei xue 飞雪); spring wind “arrives” (chunfeng lai 春风来); and pear flowers “bloom” (lihua kai 梨花开)), the movements of the landscape become gentler if also mildly disturbing in their unexpectedness.⁸⁵

After having narrowed their focus on the horse hooves in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” and the general’s armour in “Song of White Snow”, the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrators’ focalization pan back to focalize the frontier at a distance. At this moment landscape stillness returns to dominate the active-still dichotomy, doing so through the focalization of the cold desert’s immobile “railings of ice” and “gloom filled clouds” in both “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” and “Song of White Snow”:

晦霭寒氛万里凝

Gloom cold clouds freeze everything over a distance of
ten thousand *li*,

阑干阴崖千丈冰

Railings upon shaded cliffs are a thousand meters of ice.

(“Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, lines 9-10)

85 The second line’s 即 (ji), meaning “immediately; right then” (See Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 377), and the 忽 (hu) of 忽如 (huru, suddenly as if) in line three, meaning “suddenly”, project a sense of great speed and transition that complements the change from an online (ordinary) focalization of winter to an offline (imagined) description of spring.

瀚海阑干百丈冰

Vast desert, railings of ice criss-cross a hundred meters
thick ,

愁云惨淡万里凝

Sorrow clouds and gloom condense over ten thousand
li.

(“Song of White Snow”, lines 9-10)

This intertextual intersection meets at an image of motionless in the very thickness of the ice, a thousand meters in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” and one hundred meters in “Song of White Snow”,⁸⁶ and the clouds' static states initiated by the verb 凝 (ning), meaning here “to freeze; to condense”.

Patterns of landscape motion and stillness in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” alternate with a greater rate of frequency than they do in “Song of White Snow”.⁸⁷ But focalization in “Ballad of Running Horse River”, the other frontier poem of Cen Shen's where the hibernal lands of China's northwest are prominently featured, tears apart the stillness-motion binary and exclusively follows a wave of incessant motion across the snowy drifts. Aside from the inert calm of the second line's distant perspective of yellow desert sands entering unbroken into the sky,⁸⁸ frenzied forces of movement, and not shifts between activity and inactivity, dictate the quality of the landscape's kinesis. Geographic names themselves, such as the unrelenting push of “running” (zou 走) and “river” (chuan 川) of Running Horse River and the billowing of snow in sea of snow (xuehai 雪海), urge the landscape's movement forward as do the haphazard, chaotic movements of wind and stones along the cold, parched ground. This high degree of kinesis embodied in the poem's landscape effectively erases conventional

86 One 丈 (zhang) is actually 3.3 meters.

87 There is only one kinetic shift, that of motion to stillness, in the core landscape scenes of “Song of White Snow”: lines one to four (motion) and nine to ten (stillness). But in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, there are a greater number of exchanges: stillness (lines one to two) to motion (lines three to four) to stillness (line five) to motion (line six) and then a return to stillness (lines nine to ten).

88 “Level sands vast and wide all yellow entering the sky” 平沙莽莽黄入天. The verb 入 (ru, enter) connotes a spatial continuity of a setting's existents stretching uninterrupted into the distance. See Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early Tang*, pp. 162 and 283.

associations of desolation and uses the turbulent motion of howling winds, tumbling rocks, flying dust and face slashing winds to echo the violence of combat⁸⁹ only indirectly suggested by the armour and weapons in “Song of White Snow” and “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”.

5.2.4. A Typology of Cold: Innateness and Effect

In addition to the ambient spatial coordinates of the poet-narrators' focalization and the focalization of the landscape as patterns of stillness and motion, there is a third intertextual commonality linking the texts' presentation of the hibernal landscape: the types of cold existents of the setting itself. This typology of cold is comprised of two categories of frigid phenomenon: existents which are innately cold, and existents whose “coldness” is not innate and but is instead the effect of the hibernal landscape on the existents themselves.⁹⁰ As with spatial coordinates and degree of kinesis, the typology of cold existents is another intertextual feature of Cen Shen's hibernal landscape, one which here shifts between binary nodes of innateness and effect.

The variety of innately cold existents within the hibernal setting is rather limited. Among those existents which evince the conventional temperature of the Tang frontier in Cen Shen's poems, snow is certainly the most common. In the opening of all three poems featuring extended descriptions of the hibernal landscape, it is snow which establishes the scene. However, there are frontier poems by Cen Shen in which the setting is actually a minor feature, meaning that none of the possible features of the snow is focalized. At its least modified, that is where snow is just background snow, there is the first four lines of “Sent to Administrative Assistant Yuwen” (“Ji Yuwen panguan” 寄宇文判官):

89 Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 98; “The Frontier Poems of Ts'en Shen”, p. 430. See also Ronald Miao, “T'ang Frontier Poetry”, p. 124.

90 An innately cold object is an ice-cube or a snowball. An object which is cold but whose coldness is not innate could be a pair of frozen mittens found on a school field after a snowball fight. Since their cold quality is an effect of the frost and snow which covers them, and not a characteristic of the yarn from which they were crocheted, these mittens cannot be regarded as innately cold even when they are in fact cold.

西行殊未已
东望何时还
终日风与雪
连天沙复山⁹¹

This westward travelling has yet to cease,
Gazing east; when will I return?
All day wind and snow
Sands and mountain stretch into sky.

The snow in the following first four lines of “Staying at the Western Hostel of Metal Pass” (“Su tieguan xiguan” 宿铁关西馆) is also simply a minor existent of the cold setting within which an event – travelling to what seems to be the end of the earth – occurs:

马汗踏成泥
朝驰几万蹄
雪中行地角
火处宿天倪⁹²

Horse sweat trampled into mud,
At morning galloping tens of thousands of hooves.
In the midst of snow travelling to the corner of the earth,
Staying overnight where it is illuminated at the edge of
the sky.

Aside from states of vagueness or inertia, snow can behave as an active existent on the hibernal frontier. For example, there is the geographic locale “sea of snow” (xuehai 雪海) in “Song of Luntai”, “Seventh Month at Luntai” and “Ballad of Running Horse River”, a name which conjures an image of snow in constant, cold flux. Snow also displays its kinetic qualities by being focalized as flying throughout the frontier sky and falling over the main gate of a military camp in “Song of White Snow”,⁹³ and piling thick throughout the night before later falling on Tian mountain in “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”.⁹⁴

Typologically opposite to existents that are innately cold, such as snow and the somewhat common “railings of ice”,⁹⁵ are existents which in the hibernal setting both signify and emphasize cold not through any innate cold qualities but instead through the effects of the surrounding cold

91 CSJJZ, p. 86.

92 CSJJZ, p. 81.

93 “In the eighth month snow already flies throughout the *Hu* sky” 胡天八月即飞雪 and “Evening snow falls pell-mell over the military camp's main gate” 纷纷暮雪下辕门 (“Song of White Snow”).

94 “As night passes, the snow is thicker on Tian Mountain” 一夜天山雪更厚 and “Just when it snows on Tian mountain, I send you off as you set forth for the capital” 正是天山雪下时, 送君走马归京师 (“Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”).

95 See “Song of White Snow” and “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”.

temperature, effects which transform typically temperature-neutral existents into cold existents. A common example of one such “cold-by-effect” existent found in the frontier sub-genre is flags. In Cen Shen's poems, the cold environment has multiple effects on these emblems of battle and allegiances. One such effect, and certainly the more conventional of the two, is that of flags freezing in the hyperborean environment to such an extent that even the strongest of winds cannot force them to flap:

纷纷暮雪下辕门	Evening snow falls pell-mell over the military camp's main gate,
风掣红旗冻不翻	The wind pulls the red flag; frozen it does not flap.

(“Song of White Snow”, lines 13-14)

When focalized by the poet-narrator as frozen, static flags, and not just “flags”, the flags are able to reiterate the harshness of the landscape.⁹⁶ Similarly, in lines five to eight of “Six Paeans Presented to Military Commissioner Feng On His Victory at Boxian”, the flagpole becomes the object of a snowy rage concluding a series of hibernal images:

官军西出过楼兰	The government's army sets out west passing <i>Loulan</i> , ⁹⁷
营幕傍临月窟寒	Tents pitched near moon caves ⁹⁸ are cold.
蒲海晓霜凝马尾	Early frost at Puchang lake freezes horse tails,
葱山夜雪扑旗竿	Evening snow on Cong ⁹⁹ mountain beats the flagpoles.

The poet-narrators of both “Song of Snow on Tian Mountain” and “Song of White Snow”

96 This image is not without its forerunners. For example Zhang Zhengjin's 张正见 (d. 575) “Song of Rain and Snow” (“Yu xue qu” 雨雪曲): “Hu pass, a land of hardships;/Snow roads stretch on and on./Infused with ice horse hooves stomp,/Snow mixed with rain freezes flags on their poles” 胡关辛苦地, 雪路远漫漫. 含冰踏马足, 杂雨冻旗竿. See *YFSJ* 24.358. There is also Yu Shiji's 虞世基 (d. 618) “Beyond the Frontier (second of two)” (“Chusai er shou” 出塞二首): “Snow covers the road to Tian mountain,/An icy frontier at the headwaters of Jiao river./Beacon towers cloaked in fog, dark and shapeless;/Frozen frost covered flags do not flap” 雪暗天山道, 冰塞交河源. 雾烽黯无色, 霜旗冻不翻. See *YFSJ* 21.320.

97 Name of a country in the western territories of the Han dynasty located northeast of modern day Ruoqiang county 若羌县 Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

98 “Moon caves” (yueku 月窟) are a kenning for China's western region. See note to “Song of Hot Lake”.

99 Literally “Onion” mountain.

focalize the cold impaired functions of other fabricated existents¹⁰⁰ as a means of conveying the coldness of the hibernal setting; they do this by focalizing the cold compromised functions of animal furs/skins and weapons. This attention to the inability of the furs/skins to properly function is indirectly expressive of the severity of the northwestern climate.

散入珠帘湿罗幕
狐裘不暖锦衾薄

Scattering through beaded curtains and soaking silk drapes,
Fox fur clothing does not keep in the heat, resplendent
blankets are thin.

(“Song of White Snow”, lines 5-6)

将军狐裘卧不暖

The general's fox skins do not keep the bed warm¹⁰¹

(“Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, line 11)

Aside from blankets and animal skins, there are malfunctioning, or dangerously near shattering, weapons that are also expressive of the cold of the frontier:

将军角弓不得控
都护铁衣冷难著

The general's horn bow cannot be pulled,
The protector-general's armour is freezing and difficult to
put on.

(“Song of White Snow”, lines 7-8)

都护宝刀冻欲断

The protector-general's sword is frozen and about
to break.

(“Song of Snow on Tian Mountain”, line 12)

100 Meaning existents of the setting which are made by human beings and not naturally occurring.

101 An echo of a bed which “cannot retain heat” (bu nuan 不暖) can be seen in Xue Qitong's 薛奇童 “Below the Frontier” 塞下曲: “Frosted armour, the bedchamber cannot stay warm,/In the middle of the night one can hear the frontier winds./In the *Hu* sky snow flies early./On the edge of desolation many tumbleweeds” 霜甲卧不暖, 半夜闻边风. 胡天早飞雪, 荒微多转蓬. See *QTS* 202.2110. Xue Qitong's poem is also relevant here for its near verbatim description of the frontier and flying snow in Cen Shen's “Song of White Snow”: “In the eighth month snow already flies throughout the *Hu* sky” 胡天八月即飞雪. The *QTS* notes that Xue Qitong held the post of “Rectifier in the Court of Judicial Review” (dalisizhi 大理司直) though has no dates of birth or death. See also Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, pp. 444, 468.

Conclusion

There is an underlying structure to Cen Shen's hibernal frontier landscapes, one which operates to intensify the landscape's coldness through a myriad of means. This structure is found across the poems where the cold landscape is prominent, and can be summarized as shifts in the spatial coordinates of focalization between exteriority and interiority and distance and nearness; alternations between focalization of movement and stillness in the frontier landscape; and a typology of "cold" existents where a cold existent is either innately cold or is cold as a result from the influence of the landscape's temperature, a non-natural "cold" quality of the existent that is focalized by the poet-narrators to express the frigidity of the hibernal landscape. As with the first section's discussion of the "hot" landscape, this section's analysis of Cen Shen's hibernal world rarely strayed into any conjectures regarding the ideological or emotional significance of the poems' geographies.¹⁰² Instead, the analyses were motivated by an interest in elucidating a model of the poems' focalization framework, the apparatus of "seeing" through which the thermal and hibernal landscapes are conveyed to readers. Both the perceptual and psychological facets of focalization, however, will feature in the following chapter's examination of an underlying structure of focalization in the frontier landscape of great distances. In this chapter, discussion will focus on how the manner in which the setting itself is focalized is expressive of the poet-narrators' feelings in addition to the setting's existents which also act as an objective correlative¹⁰³ for the poet-narrator's feelings of disorientation, separation and homesickness.

102 Such as reading the intense kinetic activity within the landscape of "Ballad of Running Horse River" not for how it is focalized but for its reflection of the poet-narrator's enthusiasm for war, or reading the heat of "Song of Hot Lake" not for its manifestation as multiple acts of focalization through different modes and lenses but allegorically as a description of the frontier signifying the frictional heat of Chinese civilization clashing with frontier barbarian tribes. For such views on Cen Shen's landscape imagery see Ronald Miao, "T'ang Frontier Poetry", especially pp. 125, 129.

103 "[A] set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which [are] the formula of [a] particular emotion...such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory perception, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked". See T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet", in Frank Kermode, ed., *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1975), pp. 45-49, especially p. 48.

Part Two: Focalization in Cen Shen's Frontier Landscapes

Chapter Six: Perceiving the Landscape of Distance

6.1. The Frontier and Homesickness¹

The pangs and perturbations of frontier homesickness have a long history of poetic wails and whimpers, a history which began stinging hearts in the campaign-themed poems of *Shijing* 诗经 (The Book of Songs).² Developing first from the angst of familial separation, the cleaving of matrimonial bonds expressed through the sorrow of fractured couples became a tenacious and frequent emotive feature of frontier poetry from Han to Tang times.³ Chen Lin's 陈琳 (d. 217) “Watering Horses at the Great Wall Spring” (“Yin ma changcheng ku xing” 饮马长城窟行) makes this correlation rather directly:

长城何连连 连连三千里 边城多健少 内舍多寡妇 ⁴	How the Great Wall goes on and on, On and on for three thousand <i>li</i> . Many young men are in the border towns, Many abandoned women in their homes. ⁵
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(lines 9-12)

as does the anticipatory, if imaginary, scene concluding the first of Xiao Gang's⁶ “In the Army”

¹ See chapters two and three of this thesis for comments on homesickness in frontier poetry. The following few pages here function as a brief return to the topic before embarking on a discussion of how the poet-narrator in Cen Shen's frontier verse perceptualizes the landscape as a materialization of nostalgic feelings for home.

² Such as “Gathering Ferns” (“Cai wei” 采蔚), “Sending Out the Chariots” (“Chu ju” 出车), excerpted in chapter two of this thesis, and “Climb the Wooded Hill” (“Zhi hu” 陟岵), the first third of which is translated here: “I climb the wooded hill./And look toward where my father is./My father is saying, 'Alas my son is in service;/Day and night he knows no rest./Grant that he is being careful of himself;/So that he may come back and not be left behind!’. Slightly modified version of Arthur Waley, tr., *The Book of Songs*, p. 115. 陟彼岵兮，瞻望父兮。父曰：‘嗟！予子行役，夙夜无已。上慎旃哉！犹来，无止。’ See *Shijing*, p. 56. See also Yan Fuling 阎福玲, “Biansaishi xianglian zhuti de shidai tedian yu jiazhi 边塞诗乡恋主题的时代特点与价值” *Jinyangxuekan* 晋阳学刊 5 (1999): 74-78, especially p. 74 and Joseph Allen, *In the Voice of Others*, p. 81.

³ Yan Fuling, “Biansaishi xianglian”, p. 75.

⁴ *YFSJ* 38.556.

⁵ Slightly modified version of Joseph Allen, tr., *In the Voice of Others*, p. 71.

⁶ See biographical note in chapter three of this thesis.

(“Congjun xing ershou” 从军行二首):

何时反旧里
遥见下机来⁷

When will I return to my old home?
Seeing me from afar, my wife would stop her weaving
and come out to welcome me.

(lines 11-12)

But the expression of such emotions evolved over the centuries beyond that of wife and family, so much so that the frontier setting's many perceivable existents – from the sky to the sands to entities passing through – as well as the mere act of gazing (wang 望) upon the frontier setting were to become potential catalysts and conveyances of homeward hankerings. One potent example of perception of the frontier landscape inducing homesickness and a feeling of unrootedness is in the opening of Wang Changling's first of two “In the Army” (“Congjun xing er shou” 从军行二首):

向夕临大荒
朔风辘归虑
平沙万里余
飞鸟宿何处⁸

Towards evening, looking out over the vast wasteland;
The north wind, thoughts of return hurt my heart.
Level desert over ten thousand *li*,
Where will the birds in flight spend the night?

(lines 1-4)

The penultimate couplet of Li Bai's “Moon at the Mountain Pass” (“Guanshan yue” 关山月) also arranges a similar equation in which mere perception of the frontier produces restless yearnings of return:

戍客望边色
思归多苦颜⁹

Garrison sojourners gaze upon the frontier's appearance;
Thoughts of returning home, so many faces full of pain.

(lines 9-10)

⁷ YFSJ 32.478.

⁸ YFSJ 33.487.

⁹ YFSJ 23.337.

In addition to these visual perceptions, nostalgia for home was also triggered in both Tang and pre-Tang frontier poetry by aural elements of the borderland setting, such as the sounds of non-Chinese music:

胡笳落泪曲 羌笛断肠歌 ¹⁰	Tunes from <i>Hu</i> pipes cause tears to fall, Songs from <i>Qiang</i> flutes break one's heart.
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(Yu Xin, “Imitation: Singing My Feelings”, seven of twenty-seven, lines 3-4)

秦中花鸟已应阑 塞外风沙犹自寒 夜听胡笳折杨柳 教人气尽忆长安 ¹²	In Qin the season of birds and flowers is surely over now, Here past the frontier the wind and sand are still bitterly cold. By night we listen to <i>Hu</i> flutes play 'Snapping the Willow Branch' ¹¹ , It makes a man's bold spirit fail and think of Chang'an. ¹³
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(Wang Han, “Song of Liangzhou”, lines 5-8)

酒泉太守能剑舞 高堂置酒夜击鼓 胡笳一曲断人肠 座上相看泪如雨 ¹⁵	The Prefect of Jiuquan ¹⁴ is able to do the sword dance, In the main hall cups of wine are set out and drums are played throughout the night. As soon as <i>Hu</i> pipes play a tune everyone's heart breaks; Seated down and looking at one another, tears fall like rain.
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(Cen Shen, “Written After Getting Drunk at a Banquet Held by the Prefect of Jiuquan”)

Aside from nostalgia inducing northern winds, desolate deserts and lachrymose music, homesickness in frontier poetry could also be transmitted by less imagistic means, such as letters from home. Although more practical than later sentimental usages, the exchange of letters in Chen Lin's

¹⁰ “Ni Yonghuai” 拟咏怀 by Yu Xin 庾信 (513-581). See *Yu Zishan ji* 庾子山集 3.42 in *SKQS*.

¹¹ “Snapping the Willow” (“Zheyangliu” 折杨柳) is a *yuefu* title. The snapping and presentation of a willow branch was a gesture made at parting. See chapter three of this thesis for another example of the title's usage.

¹² “Liangzhou ci er shou” 凉州词二首 by Wang Han 王翰 (687-726). See *Guoxiu ji* 国秀集 [上], p. 9 in *SKQS*.

¹³ A slight modification of Stephen Owen, tr., *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Name of a Tang dynasty commandery. The local seat of government was at today's Jiuquan county 酒泉县, Gansu province.

¹⁵ “Jiuquan taishou xi shang zuihou zuo” 酒泉太守席上醉后作 by Cen Shen. See *CSJJZ*, p. 188. See also chapter two and three of this thesis for comments on the poem.

“Watering Horses at the Great Wall Spring” is an early precursor to this association between frontier service and delayed communication by post:

作书与内舍 便嫁莫留生 善事新姑嫜 时时念我故夫子	He writes a letter to his wife ¹⁶ : “You should marry again, don't wait for me; Take good care of your new in-laws But think of me often, your old husband.”
报书往边地 君今出语一何鄙 身在祸难中 何为稽留他家子 ¹⁷	A letter came in reply to the border: “How crude are your words these days! There you are in the midst of hardship, How could you ask me to be another man's wife?” ¹⁸

(lines 13-20)

But it is through their reception, infrequent arrivals or conspicuous absence that letters from home would come to embody longing for people and places far from the frontier:

月出照关山 秋风人未还 清光无远近 乡泪半书间 ¹⁹	The moon emerges and shines on the mountain pass; Autumn wind, a man who has yet to return. Clear light neither far nor near; Homesick tears shed half way through a letter.
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(Dai Shulun, “Moon at the Mountain Pass”, lines 1-4)

百战一身在 相逢白发生 何时得乡信 每日算归程 ²⁰	After a hundred battles I am still here, Running into one another, my hair is already white; When will I receive letters from home? Everyday I count down the day of my return.
--	--

(Wang Jian, “Encountering an Old Friend on the Frontier”, lines 1-4)

无事向边外 至今仍不归 三年绝乡信	No urgent matters here beyond the frontier, I have so far yet to return. Three years without letters from home,
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¹⁶ 内舍 (nei she), translated here as “wife”, literally means “inner quarter”.

¹⁷ *YFSJ* 38.556-557.

¹⁸ Slightly modified version of Joseph Allen, tr., *In the Voice of Others*, p. 71

¹⁹ “Guanshan yue er shou” 关山月二首 by Dai Shulun 戴叔伦 (732-789). See *YFSJ* 23.338.

²⁰ “Saishang feng guren” 塞上逢故人 by Wang Jian. See *QTS* 299.3390.

六月未春衣²¹ In the sixth month and no Spring clothes to wear.
(Cen Shen, “Parting from Qi Le at Lintao Guesthouse”, lines 1-4)

Despite its popularity as a trope for expressing frequent feelings of homesickness, Cen Shen's frontier poems were still clearly able to monopolize borderland postal services with a wide range of “letters from/to home”, be they 乡信 (xiang xin), 家书 (jia shu) or 家信 (jia xin)²², whose receipt or composition was suggestive of a pining for familiar places:

西向轮台万里余 West towards Luntai is over ten thousand *li*,
也知乡信日应疏²³ I also know that letters from home will be scarcer
by the day.

(“When Heading to Beiting and Passing Long Mountain I Think of Home”, lines 1-2)

送子军中饮 Sending you off with drinks in the army camp,
家书醉里题²⁴ In drunkenness I compose a letter home.

(“In the Desert: Sending Off Administrative Assistant Li on His Return to the Capital”, lines 7-8)

风从帝乡来 The wind arrives from the capital,
不异家信通²⁵ It is not different from receiving a letter from home.²⁶

(“At the Anxi Guesthouse and Thinking of Chang'an”, lines 3-4)

With about half of Cen Shen's frontier works addressing some aspect of homesickness,²⁷ letters

²¹ “Lintao keshe liubie Qi Si” 临洮客舍留别祁四 by Cen Shen. See *CSJJZ*, p. 97.

²² All of which are variants of “letters from home”.

²³ *CSJJZ*, p. 141.

²⁴ *CSJJZ*, p. 83.

²⁵ *CSJJZ*, p. 85.

²⁶ The letter here is more metaphor than paper but present nonetheless.

²⁷ Yan Fuling, “Biansaishi xianglian”, p. 76. Yan's essay also bifurcates homesickness in frontier poetry between feelings originating from scholars serving on the frontier through non-combat service and those of soldiers longing for home, the second often an imaginary perspective affected by poets unfamiliar with the harsh realities of the borderlands. Scholarly homesickness, according to Yan's analysis, was often dependent on the likelihood of achieving personal success through employment at the frontier: when optimistic, tremors of homesickness were weak; when disappointed at not receiving

alone would be insufficient for conveying feelings of nostalgia; other methods were required if only to stave off repetition. Another common means was through dreams of home or distant places close to the poet's heart:

溪流与松风	Flowing creek and pine winds,
静夜相飏飏	Babble and blow together through the still night.
别家赖归梦	Relying on dreams to return home,
山寨多离忧 ²⁸	The frontier mountains are full of the sadness of departure!

(“Passing Through Long Mountain for the First Time”, lines 25-26)

愁里难消日	In sorrow I pass the days with great difficulty,
归期尚隔年	The date of return is still separated by years.
阳关万里梦	In dreams of ten thousand <i>li</i> at Yang Pass
知处杜陵田 ²⁹	I know that I am at Duling's fields ³⁰ .

(“Passing Jiuquan I Recall My Villa at Duling”, lines 5-8)

塞迴心常怯	The frontier is at such a great distance my heart often recoils in fright,
乡遥梦亦迷 ³¹	My hometown is so far away that even in dreams I lose my way.

(“Staying at the West Inn of Iron Gate Pass”, lines 5-6)

乡路眇天外	The road home stretches beyond the sky,
归期如梦中 ³²	The date of return seems like a dream.

(“At the Anxi Guesthouse and Thinking of Chang'an”, lines 13-14)

终日见征战	All day I see armies set out on campaigns,
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recognition for one's service to one's country, feelings of homesickness thickened. Also, see the end of this chapter for the selection of Cen Shen's poems used throughout the chapter to illustrate the relationship between homesickness and the frontier landscape of great distance.

²⁸ *CSJJZ*, p. 73.

²⁹ “Guo Jiuquan yi Duling bieye” 过酒泉忆杜陵别业. See *CSJJZ*, p. 76.

³⁰ Duling 杜陵 was located southeast on the outskirts of Chang'an.

³¹ “Su tieguan xi guan” 宿铁关西馆. See *CSJJZ*, p. 81.

³² “Anxi guan zhong xi chang'an” 安西馆中思长安. See *CSJJZ*, p. 84.

连年闻鼓鞞	Year after year hear battle drums.
故山在何处	Where is my dear old mountain,
昨日梦清溪 ³³	Last night I dreamt of its clear streams.

(“Setting Off Early from Yanqi and Thinking of My Villa at Zhongnan Mountain”, lines 5-8)

新诗吟未足	Chanting new poems does not bring satisfaction,
昨夜梦东还 ³⁴	Last night I dreamt of returning east.

(“Respectfully Presented in Response to Administrative Assistant Li's 'Impromptu at the Government Office”, lines 7-8)

“In the course of a life filled with much travel, Cen Shen had many occasions to express his longing for his home”.³⁵ The use of letters and dreams, as demonstrated above, is one method for presenting such feelings in poetry. Another technique for manifesting these yearnings is in the very manner by which the poet-narrator focalizes the vast distances of the frontier landscape, meaning that aside from the poems' landscape settings themselves being an objective correlative of the poet-narrators' homesick emotions,³⁶ the way these landscapes are focalized by a poem's poet-narrator also expresses feelings of nostalgia for home. Thus, aside from a setting's existents – the desert sands, the sky or music, for example – embodying homesickness and feelings of separation, how the existents are focalized also reveals the emotional state of the poet-narrator.

³³ “Zao fa Yanqi huai Zhongnan bieye” 早发焉耆怀终难别业. See *CSJJZ*, p. 85.

³⁴ “Jing chou Li panguan shiyuan jishi jiancheng” 敬酬李判官使院即事见呈. See *CSJJZ*, p. 162.

³⁵ Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 36. See chapter one of this thesis for details regarding Cen Shen's frontier ventures. For an overview of Cen Shen's frontier and non-frontier travels see Marie Chen, *Cen Shen*, pp. 1-18. See also Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, pp. 171-181 for a general background to the poet's life.

³⁶ The setting can also be understood as symbolic. See Robert Liddell's five types of settings: the utilitarian, symbolic, irrelevant, countries of the mind, and kaleidoscopic. Unlike the utilitarian setting, one which is minimally necessary for action, or the irrelevant setting, a setting bereft of all significance, a symbolic setting is a type of setting which stresses a tight relationship between the actions of its existents, such as the poet-narrator who occupies the setting, and the way the landscape itself is presented. For purposes here, the action is the poet-narrator's feelings and expression of homesickness, an act which affects the presentation of the landscape and makes its perception akin to the feelings of homesickness experienced by the poet-narrator himself. Liddell's other two types of settings, countries of the mind and kaleidoscopic, are concerned with the inner landscape of reminiscence and shifts in perspective between the outside physical world and the world of the imagination. See Robert Liddell, *A Treatise of the Novel* (London: Cape, 1947), pp. 113-128 and Seymour Chapman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 143.

Specifically, two characteristics of the poet-narrators' focalization of the frontier landscape will be discussed in order to show how homesickness is revealed through the poet-narrators' manners of perception. The first of these aspects is the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrators' perceptual facet, in particular eastward, westward and non-directional gazes, and how by examining the spatial coordinates of focalization themselves expressions of homesickness and feelings of separation can be identified. The second characteristic to be investigated is how the poet-narrators, while heavily influenced by a desire to return home, focus their perception³⁷ on three existents of the frontier setting – a river, a commissioner, and a parrot – and rely on them, as mobile, frontier-exiting existents, to bridge, if unsuccessfully, the lonely gulf between the northwestern frontier and poet-narrator's home in the east. The goal of such an analysis is to show that the act of focalization in and of itself resonates with a desire on the part of Cen Shen's poet-narrators to retrace their westward steps of departure and return eastwards to familiar and comfortable locales, and that *Hu* music, letters to and from home, and nostalgia fuelled dreams are not the sole instruments of expressing homesickness on the frontier.

6.1.1. Spatial Coordinates as Expressions of Homesickness and Separation

Feelings of homesickness as revealed through the act of perceiving a seemingly boundless fissure between a poet-narrator's current geographical position and his distant home is not restricted to Cen Shen's frontier poetry. For example, a correlation between gazing into a far off distance, literally “one thousand *li*” (*qian li* 千里) in this case, and the sting of separation is made by the poet-narrator in lines nine to fourteen from Wei Zheng's 魏徵 (580-643) “Expressing My Feelings” (“*Shu huai*” 述怀), a poem in which perception alone wounds the poet-narrator's heart:

郁纆陟高岫
出没望平原
古木鸣寒鸟

Strode over high mountains on torturous paths,
Gazed on the plain, coming into view, disappearing.
In ancient trees the birds of winter sing,

³⁷ That is, focalize specific features of the three existents when perceiving them.

空山啼夜猿
既伤千里目
还惊九逝魂³⁸

On deserted mountains the gibbons cry by night.
The eye gazes far, the heart is wounded;
The dreaming soul flies home, startles awake again
and again.³⁹

(lines 9-14)

In the first half of Du Shenyan's 杜审言 (645-708) exile poem⁴⁰ “Longing to Return on a Spring Day” (“Chun ri huai gui” 春日怀归), the poet-narrator's act of orientating perception towards a homeward coordinate elicits a negative emotional response, a reaction that is exacerbated by how the exile setting's existents – its reflected mountains and vegetation – only remind the poet-narrator of that which is absent and far away:

心是伤归望
春归异往年
河山鉴魏阙
桑梓忆秦川⁴¹

The heart is wounded by my homeward gaze,
Spring's arrival is different from years past.
Mountains in rivers seem to mirror the gate of Wei,
The mulberries, the catalpa remind me of Qin's streams.⁴²

(lines 1-4)

By having become transformed from an act of perception into an immobile object (the Great Wall (changcheng 长城) emanating the sorrow of separation, the homeward gaze in this opening excerpt from Wang Jian's “Watering Horses at the Great Wall Spring” (“Yin ma Changchen ku xing” 饮马长城窟行) becomes an even more concentrated signifier of homesickness, one in which the act of gazing towards home has become part of a cold, hard immobile wall:

³⁸ QTS 31.441.

³⁹ See Stephen Owen, tr., *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Du Shenyan was twice sent into exile, the second time in 705 to the far south of China. See Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, pp. 325-326. Exile poetry was a sub-genre of verse whose audience in the capital “would expect the poet to write on subjects avoided in the capital: the poet's moral values, his doubts, the intensity of his suffering, his hatred of public service...Exiles and non-exiles alike turned to the tradition of exile poetry to express their private intensities...”. See Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 6.

⁴¹ QTS 62.734.

⁴² See Stephen Owen, tr., *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 337.

长城窟
 长城窟边多马骨
 古来此地无井泉
 赖得秦家筑城卒
 征人饮马愁不回
 长城变作望乡堆⁴³

The Great Wall spring,
 At the Great Wall spring there are many horse bones.
 In ancient times this place had no well or spring,
 It came into being when Qin troops built the wall.
 Campaign soldiers water their horses, sad they can't return,
 The Great Wall has transformed to become a pile of
 homeward gazes.

(lines 1-6)

The gaze itself of the poet-narrator also expresses emotion in Cen Shen's frontier verse; more precisely, it is the spatial coordinates of focalization themselves which can be read as expressing either a longing for home or a sense of separation, and at times confusion, across immense peripheral distances. These spatial coordinates include a gaze eastwards, a gaze westwards, and a gaze which does not adhere to one specific cardinal point. The first type, an eastward gaze, is the perceptual spatial coordinate most closely aligned with expressions of homesickness. An early example⁴⁴ of this oriented gaze in Cen Shen's frontier poetry is found in the first two lines of “Encountering a Commissioner on His Way to the Capital” (“Feng ru jing shi” 逢入京使):

故园东望路漫漫
 双袖龙钟泪不干⁴⁵

Gazing east towards home, the road goes on and on,
 Both sleeves soaked with tears that do not dry.

(lines 1-2)

The poet-narrator directs his perception east in the direction of home without actually perceiving home itself; instead he is only able to directly apprehend the road which “goes on and on” (lu manman 路漫漫) in the direction of home. While feelings of homesickness can be extracted from the two existents of the line, home (guyuan 故园) and the long, boundless road (路漫漫), the easterly orientation of the

⁴³ *YFSJ* 38.561.

⁴⁴ The *CSJJZ* notes that the poem was composed during Cen Shen's first frontier excursion while en route from the capital, Chang'an, to the western regions. See *CSJJZ*, p. 77.

⁴⁵ *CSJJZ*, p. 77.

poet-narrator's gaze (dong wang 东望) itself also emits a longing for home in addition to the poet-narrator's abode (故园) and the road (路) stretching out into the horizon towards home. Relevant to the discussion here is how the act of looking east, if understood both transitively (as in ending at an object, namely the nostalgia activating home and the road) and intransitively (without an object), conjures and transmits the poet-narrator's inner homesickness, an emotion that is overtly manifested in the second line's tearful response to being alone on the distant frontier.

The poet-narrator in the opening of the first of two “Tune: Remembering Chang'an, Two Verses, Sent to Pang Que” (“Yi Chang'an qu er zhang ji Pang Que” 忆长安曲二章寄庞榷) is even more acute in his division between the act of perception and the object of perception, thus allowing the spatial coordinates of the gaze itself to speak of a feeling of nostalgia for home. The following are the opening two lines:

东望望长安 正直日初出 ⁴⁶	Eastward gazing, gazing towards Chang'an, Directly facing where the sun first rises.
(lines 1-2)	

By reading both sides of the first line's caesura as separate units, in which “eastward gazing” (dong wang 东望) meets with “gazing towards Chang'an” (wang chang'an 望长安), two qualities of the “gaze” (wang 望) can be clearly delineated. The first is that of a gaze modified adverbially by “eastward” (dong 东) and acting intransitively; the second is a gaze fixed in the direction of an object, Chang'an 长安. This bifurcation allows the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrator's initial “eastward gazing” to imply a longing for home even before home, here represented by Chang'an, even enters the poem in the second half of the line. Furthermore, the two nodes of the “gazing” binary established by the poet-narrator's act of perception in the first line echo and amplify his yearning for home, creating a

⁴⁶ CSJZ, p. 84.

homesickness resonating with both an eastward gaze and the gaze towards a specific place east of the frontier, Chang'an. Although seemingly redundant, the doubling of “gaze” (望) enhances while projecting the nostalgic emotional state of the poet-narrator.

The eastward gaze is also prominent as a perceptual gesture of longing in the final line of “Boating at Lintao: Dismissed From Office, Zhao Xianzhou Returns to the Capital from Beiting” (“Lintao fan zhou Zhao Xianzhou zi Beiting ba shi huan jing” 临洮泛舟赵仙舟自北庭罢使还京):

池上风回舫
桥西雨过城
醉眠乡梦罢
东望羨归程⁴⁷

The wind on the pool blows the boat in circles,
West of the bridge rain passes over the town.
In drunken sleep dreams of home dissipate,
Gazing east I envy your return journey.

(lines 5-8)

As with the opening of “Tune: Remembering Chang'an”, both the eastward spatial coordinates of the poet-narrator's perceptual facet and the object of perception emit feelings of homesickness. Already propelled by a preceding dream of home, the poet-narrator's eastward directed gaze (东望) and envy of Zhao Xianzhou's return journey (xian guicheng 羨归程) extend and enhance the sense of nostalgia, a feeling imbued within the act of perception and the perceived journey back to the capital.

Compared with the eastward spatial coordinate, the westward directed gaze of the poet-narrator in Cen Shen's frontier poetry is less commonly used to imply homesickness.⁴⁸ When the poet-narrator

⁴⁷ *CSJZ*, p. 143.

⁴⁸ Unlike the eastward gaze, the westward gaze of the poet-narrator signals a longing to return home in some poems and in others it is the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrator's perception when he perceives military conflict on the frontier. One example can be found in the following lines from “At Wuwei: Sending Off Administrative Assistant Liu Dan on His Way to the Encampment at Anxi (Also to be Shown to Commander Gao)” (“Wuwei song Liu Dan panguan fu Anxi xingying bian cheng Gao kai fu” 武威送刘单判官赴安西行营便呈高开府): “Gazing west, the clouds are like a snake,/the Rong and Yi know of misery and death./Dawan horses are driven out by the victorious army./The king of Loulan is bound and captured” 西望云似蛇, 戎夷知丧亡. 浑驱大宛马, 系取楼兰王. See *CSJZ*, p. 91. There is also the following lines from “The Song of Luntai: Presented When Escorting My Lord Feng Leaving With His Troops on a Western Campaign (“Luntai ge song fengdafa chushixizheng” 轮台歌奉送封大夫出师西征) in which gazing west leads to perception of the tremors of combat: “From the sentry watchtower gazing west smoke and dust are black./ The Han troops are stationed north of Luntai” 戍楼西望烟尘黑, 汉兵屯在轮台北. See *CSJZ*, pp. 145-146.

gazes westward, feelings of homesickness are more suggestive than direct since home, a major factor in feelings of nostalgia, is not found in the direction of the gaze, and thus is not available to implant a yearning of return within the poet-narrator's heart. Since gazing west means facing away from home, the poet-narrators become even further separated from the familiar and known when they direct their perception westwards. This feeling of separation as expressed through a westward gaze occurs in the final two lines of “At Yu Pass: Sent to Assistant Magistrate Li in Chang'an” (“Yu guan ji Chang'an Li zhubu” 玉关寄长安李主簿), and is intensified by the poet-narrator's response to gazing itself when his heart breaks (*changduan* 肠断) after the line's caesura:⁴⁹

玉关西望堪肠断
况复明朝是岁除⁵⁰

Gazing west from Yu Pass breaks my heart,
Especially with tomorrow morning being the last day of
the year.

(lines 3-4)

In “Presented to Prefect Han of Jiuquan” (“Zeng Jiuquan Han taishou” 赠酒泉韩太守), the pains of homesickness are also expressed by a westward gaze, and are enhanced by a description of the endless mountains, deserts and white grasses of the frontier setting, a setting that manifests its own sense of remoteness:

酒泉西望玉关道
千山万碛皆白草⁵¹

At Jiuquan gazing west – the road to Yu Pass,
A thousand mountains, ten thousand deserts – all is
white grass.

(lines 5-6)

The precision of east and west is undermined by a third type of spatial coordinates in Cen Shen's frontier poems of great distances: a spatial coordinate of indeterminacy and extremity. In poems

⁴⁹ The time of the “gazing west” event, the eve of the new year (*suichu* 岁除), a time when families should not be separated but instead gathered together, also intensifies the homesick emotion.

⁵⁰ *CSJJZ*, p. 168.

⁵¹ *CSJJZ*, p. 89.

where perception of the very vastness of the frontier insinuates not merely homesickness but an overwhelming and helpless feeling of separation and isolation for the poet-narrator, how the landscape is focalized, and not just what is focalized, affects the emotional content of the text. One example of such emotionally charged imprecise spatial coordinates of perception can be found in “Written on a Sentry Building at Iron Gate Pass” (“Ti Tiemen guan lou” 题铁门关楼), quoted here in its entirety:

铁关天西涯 极目少行客 关门一小吏 终日对石壁 桥跨千仞危 路盘两崖窄 试登西楼望 一望头欲白 ⁵³	Iron Gate Pass at the edge of the western sky, The limits of sight ⁵² reveal few travellers. At the gate of the pass there is a sub-official functionary, All day long he faces a rock wall. The bridge spans a height of a thousand meters, The narrow road twists along both sides of the precipice. Attempting a climb of the west building and gazing out: One look will turn your hair white.
--	--

In the opening two lines, the landscape setting within which the poet-narrator exists and the manner of his perception are characterized by being at a limit. Geographically, Iron Gate Pass is at the “edge“ (ya 涯) of not just the “sky” but the “western” (xi 西) sky, a swathe of the heavens far from the more familiar climes of central and eastern China. When focalizing this place of extreme distance, the poet-narrator's visual perceptual facet is also at its utmost range or “limit” (jimu 极目). Yet even with such intense perceiving, all the poet-narrator can see are the “few travellers” (shao xing ke 少行客), existents of the frontier setting whose rarity emphasizes the loneliness and separation already manifested in spatial coordinates of perception. The lack of an eastward orientation of perception also means that perceiving in the direction of home, let alone home itself, is denied the poet-narrator, again intensifying feelings of separation.

⁵² 极目 (ji mu, “as far as the eye can see”; “gazing far into the distance”) has been translated as “the limits of sight” to stress how the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrator's perceptual facet is at its maximum, how nothing else can be seen, or focused, beyond what is seen, namely the “few travellers”.

⁵³ CSJZ, pp. 80-81.

With the act of perceiving opening the poem, the closing two lines function as a response to the perception of the frontier's unending space. Here on the far western border, the mere act of gazing out across the landscape's periphery causes one's hair to turn white (*yi wang tou yu bai* 一望头欲白) regardless of any objects perceived by the poet-narrator; in fact, the gaze of the final line is not directed at any fixed point, implying that perception alone is sufficient for crushing one's spirit and whitening one's head. The rapid ageing bespeaks a horror that physically alters the body, a terror brought about by a loss of familiar bearings at the limits of both the world and perception of the world.

The poet-narrator's spatial coordinates are similarly imprecise in “Passing Through the Desert” (“*Guo qi*” 过碛), a poem where the earlier discussed “east” and “west” points of perception have collapsed into an indiscriminate, all encompassing “four directions” (*si wang* 四望):

黄沙碛里客行迷	Among the yellow sands of the desert, lost while travelling far from home;
四望云天直下低	Gazing in all four directions clouds and sky hang straight down.
为言地尽天还尽	It seems that where the earth ends is also the end of the sky,
行到安西更向西 ⁵⁴	But to reach Anxi one still has to travel further west.

Lack of direction is introduced in the first line with the poet-narrator, while travelling far from home, having lost his bearings (*kexing mi* 客行迷). Following this opening, the poet-narrator gazes all around (四望) but only sees the clouds and the sky hanging down (*yun tian zhi xia di* 云天直下低). In this instance of the poet-narrator focalizing the distant landscape, his perception is unable to possibly extend out from the frontier eastwards towards the direction of home, and is instead bound by a low hanging wall of sky and cloud perceived from all directions at once. With the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrator's gaze being a combination of every direction, perception itself evinces a feeling of

⁵⁴ *CSJZ*, p. 83.

confusion and loss of direction experienced by the poet-narrator within the confines of an empty and immense frontier.

Furthermore, even when a specific cardinal point is introduced at the end of the poem, the western coordinate of Anxi, it is a west that is beyond the third line's terrestrial and celestial limits (*di jin tian hai jin 地尽天还尽*), a notion of west which when read back against the third line seems somewhat supernatural for having apparently surpassed the furthest threshold of the earth and sky. The poem thus ends with space hemorrhaging at its limit, cut by a westward direction towards Anxi that mutilates the bounds of normal topography with a distance beyond distance.

The aim of this subsection was to demonstrate how the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrators' perceptions in several of Cen Shen's frontier poems not only indicate the direction of perception but also augment the poet-narrators' feelings of homesickness, separation and geographical confusion. The first two spatial coordinates examined, eastward and westward, tended to convey the poet-narrator's sense of separation from home and longing; the third spatial coordinate, that of gazing from all directions or gazing at the limit of perception's threshold, intensified the poet-narrator's feeling of being lost and far from home. The following subsection will also address an aspect of the poet-narrator as focalizer of the frontier landscape of distance, namely that of how the effects of a homesick psychological state transforms existents of the frontier setting into vehicles which through the poet-narrator's eyes are focalized as possible bridges that can temporarily overcome the physical divide between the poet-narrator's spatial position on the frontier and home.

6.1.2. Overcoming Distance Within the Frontier Setting

Although characterized at times by intense cold and heat, the incredible distances comprising Cen Shen's frontier terrain, distances that echo the poet-narrator's own feeling of separation and

isolation, are by far the landscape's most distinguishing feature. The following excerpts are some poignant examples:

雪中行地角	In the midst of snow travelling to the corner of the earth,
火处宿天倪	Staying overnight where it is illuminated at the edge of the the horizon.
塞迥心常怯	The frontier is at such a great distance my heart often recoils in fright;
乡遥梦亦迷 ⁵⁵	My hometown is so far away that even in dreams I lose my way.

(“Staying the Night at the West Inn of Iron Gate Pass”, lines 3-6)

走马西来欲到天	On horseback riding west nearing the sky,
辞家见月两回圆	Since leaving home I have seen two full moons.
今夜不知何处宿	Where will I be staying this night?
平沙万里绝人烟 ⁵⁶	The broad level desert goes on for ten thousand <i>li</i> and not a sign of human habitation.

(“Composed in the Desert”)

沙碛人愁月	In the desert one looks sorrowfully upon the moon,
山城犬吠云	The mountain town dogs bark from within the clouds.
别家逢逼岁	Away from home, it's now approaching year's end;
出塞独离群 ⁵⁷	Out on the frontier, alone and separated.

(“At Year's End Beyond the Desert: Sent to Yan Hui”, lines 3-6)

绝域地欲尽	In this far off land the earth nears its limit;
孤城天遂穷	A solitary town, the sky here finally reaches its end.
弥年但走马	For a full year now I've been on horseback,
终日随飘蓬 ⁵⁸	All day long following the wind like a tumbleweed.

(“At the Anxi Guesthouse and Thinking of Chang'an”, lines 5-8)

⁵⁵ CSJJZ, p. 81.

⁵⁶ CSJJZ, p. 82.

⁵⁷ CSJJZ, p. 82.

⁵⁸ CSJJZ, p. 84.

One way of responding to the aches of homesickness and pains of separation caused by such vastness is for the poet-narrator of Cen Shen's poems to utilize existents of the setting to link himself, if rather tenuously, with his home east of the borderlands. In Cen Shen's frontier poetry, these efforts on the part of the poet-narrator to alleviate feelings of homesickness involve the Wei river⁵⁹ (weishui 渭水), a commissioner (shi 使) heading back to the capital,⁶⁰ and a parrot,⁶¹ a trio of existents that when focalized through a psychological facet overwhelmed by a longing to return home become vehicles for soothing the poet-narrator's nostalgic desire to connect with places he left in order to serve on China's northwestern border regions.

The first frontier setting existent which the poet-narrator employs to connect himself with home is the eastward flowing Wei river in “Passing West Through Weizhou: Seeing the Wei River I Think of the Qin Waters”:

渭水东流去
何时到雍州
凭添两行泪
寄向故园流⁶²

The waters of the Wei river flow east,
When will they reach Yongzhou?
I add to the waters two streams of tears,
And send them flowing towards my home.

Before discussing how the poet-narrator focalizes the river and his own tears as a means of overcoming the distance between himself and home, it should be noted that by simply being a river flowing east “as most rivers do in China”, the Wei river also possesses connotations of unending motion, longing and the suffering of separation.⁶³ In fact, another mobile body of water featured prominently in Cen Shen's

⁵⁹ “Passing West Through Weizhou: Seeing the Wei River I Think of the Qin Waters” (“Xi guo Weizhou jian Weishui si Qin chuan” 西过渭州见渭水思秦川).

⁶⁰ “Encountering a Commissioner on His Way to the Capital” (“Feng ru jing shi” 逢入京使).

⁶¹ “When Heading to Beiting and Passing Long Mountain I Think of Home” (“Fu Beiting du Long si jia” 赴北庭度陇思家).

⁶² *CSJJZ*, p. 75.

⁶³ Burton Watson, *Chinese Lyricism*, p. 135; Hans Frankel, *The Flowering Plum and Palace Lady*, pp. 86-87; and Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 130.

frontier poetry and Chinese frontier poetry in general is the eastward rushing waters of Long Mountain (long shui 陇水):

陇水何年有	In which year did the waters of Long mountain ⁶⁴ come to be,
潺潺逼路旁	Gurgling so close beside the road?
东西流不歇	Flowing east to west without resting,
曾断几人肠 ⁶⁵	How many hearts has it broken?

(“Passing Long Mountain Where the Waters Part”)

一驿过一驿	Postal stop after postal stop,
驿骑如星流	Postal horse like a meteor;
平明发咸阳	At dawn set out from Xianyang,
暮到陇山头	At dusk arrive at Long Mountain.

陇水不可听	Can't listen to the waters at Long Mountain ⁶⁶ ,
呜咽令人愁	Sobbing sounds cause sorrow!
沙尘扑马汗	Sand and dust fly at the horse's sweat,
雾露凝貂裘	Wet fog settles on marten skin coat.

(“Passing Through Long Mountain for the First Time: Presented to Administrative Assistant Yuwen, lines 1-8)

In focalizing the Wei river, however, the poet-narrator forgoes surmising how many hearts the babbling and murmuring of the waters might have torn apart. Instead, he focalizes the waters as a vehicle for transporting himself metonymically home by way of his tears (lei 泪), relying on the waters'

⁶⁴ Meaning the Long river (long shui 陇水) at the mountain.

⁶⁵ “Jing longtou shui fen” 经陇头水分. See *CSJJZ*, p. 75.

⁶⁶ Ever since their appearance in the *Yuefu* poem “Song of Long Mountain” (“Longtou geci” 陇头歌辞), the sounds of the waters of Long River (Long shui 陇水) have been catalysts of feelings of separation from home (See Yan Fuling, “Han-Tang biansaishi zhuti yanjiu”, p. 44): “The flowing waters of Long Mountain./Flow out from below the mountain./I think of my entire life./Tumbling about the open wilds./In the morning setting off from Xincheng./At dusk staying at Long Mountain./So cold I cannot speak;/My tongue rolls back into my throat./The flowing waters of Long Mountain,/Murmur and whimper deeply./Gazing far off towards the rivers of Qin/My heart is about to break” 陇头流水, 流离山下.念吾一身,飘然旷野.朝发欣城,暮宿陇头.寒不能语,舌卷入喉.陇头流水,鸣声幽咽,遥望秦川,心肝断绝. See *YFSJ* 25.371. Long Mountain itself is located northwest of today's Long county 陇县 Shaanxi province. In many poems, Long Mountain and its waters were a point of egress on the journey to the borderlands for those travelling from central China, a geographic locale marking the division between China proper and the frontier where one said goodbye, often lachrymously, to his hometown in the east (Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, personal correspondence, January 2013).

eastward movement (dong liu qu 东流去) to reduce the distance growing between his westward movement into the frontier and his home located in the east of the country. A similar urge to contract the endless space between oneself and home is also expressed in “Encountering a Commissioner on His Way to the Capital”:

故园东望路漫漫 双袖龙钟泪不干 马上相逢无纸笔 凭君传语报平安 ⁶⁷	Gazing east towards home, the road goes on and on; Both sleeves soaked with tears that do not dry. We encounter each other on horseback, no paper or brush; I depend on you to pass along word that I'm doing well.
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As with the previous quatrain, the homesick psychological facet of the poet-narrator affects his perception of one particular frontier setting existent, the commissioner (使), directing the focus of his perception to the commissioner's eastward return to the capital. In so doing, the poet-narrator seeks to rely or depend (凭) on the commissioner to act as a messenger and reduce the rift, if only briefly and not physically, separating the poet-narrator from home.

Nostalgia, this time in “When Heading to Beiting and Passing Long Mountain I Think of Home”, again motivates another incident of the poet-narrator perceiving an existent of the frontier setting as being a possible suture for his homesick wounds, emotional injuries he continuously suffers while travelling long distances west towards Luntai:

西向轮台万里余 也知乡信日应疏 陇山鹦鹉能言语	West towards Luntai is over ten thousand <i>li</i> , I also know that letters from home will be scarcer by the day. The parrots ⁶⁸ of Long mountain are able to speak:
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⁶⁷ CSJZ, p. 77.

⁶⁸ Another parrot of Long mountain can be found just under six hundred years earlier in Mi Heng's 弥衡 (173-198) “Rhapsody on a Parrot” (“Yingwu fu” 鹦鹉赋). The poem is “the most important extant work by Mi Heng...an eccentric, unpredictable and sometimes arrogant young genius who lived at the end of the Han dynasty...It is ostensibly a representative example of the subgenre of the rhapsody known as 咏物赋 (*yongwu fu* “rhapsody on an object”)...The first third of the rhapsody is a treatment of the background and rare properties of the parrot. It is in the remaining sixty-odd lines that the poet...expresses the parrot's misery over its fate and captive state...an allegorical plea to be freed from his own captivity and allowed to return north [after having offended Cao Cao 曹操 and banished south]”. See Robert Joe Cutter's entry in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, pp. 625-626 and William T. Graham, Jr., “Mi Heng's Rhapsody on a Parrot”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1

为报家人数寄书

Send word for me and inform those at home to send more letters.

Here the all too frequent feeling of homesickness on the frontier directs the attention of the poet-narrator's perception of a parrot (yingwu 鹦鹉) towards the linguistic skills (neng yanyu 能言语) of the animal, presumably hoping that in concert with the bird's volant feature the likelihood of fewer dispatches from home (xiang xin ri ying shu 乡信日应疏) can be forestalled with a message to those far away to send more letters (wei bao jiaren shu ji shu 为报家人数寄书). As with the previous texts, the poet-narrator is relying on an existent of the frontier setting to shrink the chasm between the borderlands and home in order to relieve the anguish of separation, ironically seeking assistance from an existent of the setting to mitigate the misery initially caused by the setting itself.

The immediately preceding pages detailed how homesick emotions were influential in the poet-narrators' acts of perception. While in a state of sorrow, a sadness brought on by separation from home, the poet-narrators' perception in “Passing West Through Weizhou” and “Encountering a Commissioner on His Way to the Capital” became focused on the eastward moving aspects of the Wei river and commissioner. Aside from such attention exhibiting the desire of the poet-narrators to return east, their perception of this aspect of the Wei river and commissioner, and the connection made with the river and commissioner by way of tears and a message, was also a vain attempt to bridge the distance between themselves and their home in the east. The parrot in “When Heading to Beiting and Passing Long Mountain” was also perceived with this intention. But in this poem it was not the parrot's

(Jun., 1979), pp. 39-54, especially pp. 42, 50. The parrots' language skills and habitat can be found early in Mi Heng's poem: “This marvellous bird from the Western Region,/Endowed by nature with unusual beauty,/Possesses the bright flames of the fire element./Intelligent and capable of speech,/Clever and gifted with foreknowledge...Thus the emperor,/Attracted by its far-reaching reputation,/Admiring the beauty of its form,/Sends his forester to the Long Mountains,/Dispatches Bo Yi to the Moving Sands,/Deploys archers across Kunlun,/Spreads nets about the clouds and rainbows...” See William Graham, tr., “Mi Heng's Rhapsody on a Parrot”, pp. 45-46. 唯西域之灵鸟兮, 挺自然之奇姿. 体金精之妙质兮, 合火德之明辉. 性辩慧而能言兮, 才聪明以识机...于是羨芳声之远畅, 伟灵表之可嘉. 命虞人于陇坻, 诏伯益于流沙. 跨昆仑而播弋, 冠云霓而张罗. See *Wenxuan* 13.25-26 in *SKQS*.

movement eastward that was noted by the poet-narrator (as no such movement exists in the poem) but a hope that the bird could speak on the poet-narrator's behalf to those at home writing letters, and in effect traverse the gap between himself and home. How the parrot might deliver such a message is not stated, though one might surmise, if one were so inclined, that after flying east or perhaps being captured and brought to the capital, as was the fate of Mi Heng's parrot,⁶⁹ it might finally be able to deliver the poet-narrator's message.

Conclusion

This chapter has endeavoured to show how the manner of perception itself was capable of expressing the omnipresent emotion of homesickness on the distant frontier setting. In doing so, the spatial coordinates of the poet-narrator's perceptual facet in several poems were read as suggestive of a heart burdened by thoughts of home and feelings of separation. In another group of poems, the way the poet-narrator focalized specific mobile and linguistic features of three frontier setting existents was also discussed as being indicative of how acts of perception can be guided by and expressive of the poet-narrator's emotional state. Of course, the way a poet-narrator perceives the frontier landscape of vast distances is not the only avenue open to expressing homesickness. Aside from the earlier examples provided at the beginning of this chapter, rhetorical questions, too, made by the poet-narrator referring to a time of return and the location of the capital can also convey a state of homesickness:

西行殊未已	This westward travelling has yet to cease;
东望何时还	Gazing east – when will I return?
终日风与雪	All day just wind and snow,
连天沙复山 ⁷⁰	Sands and mountains stretch into the sky.

(“Sent to Administrative Assistant Yuwen”, lines 1-4)

长安何处	Where is Chang'an located?
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⁶⁹ See earlier footnote to “When Heading to Beiting and Passing Long Mountain I Think of Home”.

⁷⁰ *CSJZ*, p. 86.

只在马蹄下	Only beneath a horse's hooves.
明日归长安	Tomorrow I return to Chang'an,
为君急走马	For you, I hurry my horse onwards.

(“Tune: Remembering Chang'an”, second of two verses)

The actual objects of perception, the existents of the landscape, also emanate a longing for home. Two particularly formidable images of the pain of separation are the moon and sun,⁷¹ especially when direct associations between these existents are made with one's distant home. For instance, when the cold and isolating rays of the moon shine on sentry buildings after the expression of thoughts of loved ones far away is made, there is an amplification of the physical void between family and the poet-narrator:

也知塞垣苦	I know of the bitterness of the frontier,
岂为妻子谋	I did not come for my wife or family.
山口月欲出	The moon about to rise at the mountain pass,
光照关城楼	Shines first on the sentry buildings.

(“Passing Through Long Mountain for the First Time”, lines 21-24)

Not to be restricted in its spatial application, the moon also signifies the temporal quality of such familial separation:

走马西来欲到天	On horseback riding west nearing the sky,
辞家见月两回圆	Since leaving home I have seen two full moons.
今夜不知何处宿	Where will I be staying this night?
平沙万里绝人烟	The broad level desert goes on for ten thousand <i>li</i> and not a sign of human habitation.

(“Composed in the Desert”)

And like the moon, the sun, when perceived as if it were rising above Chang'an, can suggest the poet-

⁷¹ Hans Frankel, *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady*, p. 84.

narrator's homesickness:

东望望长安	Eastward gazing, gazing towards Chang'an,
正直日初出	Directly facing where the sun first rises.
长安不可见	Chang'an cannot be seen;
但见长安日	I only see the Chang'an sun.

(“Tune: Remembering Chang'an”, first of two verses)

燕支山西酒泉道	West of Yanzhi mountain there is the road to Jiuquan,
北风吹沙卷白草	The north wind blows sand and rolls up the white frontier grasses.
长安遥在日光边	Chang'an is far away by the shining rays of the sun,
忆君不见令人老 ⁷²	Remembering you and not being able to meet makes one old

(“Passing Yanzhi Mountain: Sent to Du Wei”)

家在日出处	My home is where the sun rises,
朝来起东风	Morning arrives and stirs the eastern wind.

(“At the Anxi Guesthouse and Thinking of Chang'an”, lines 1-2)

But sometimes letters, dreams, acts of perception, images and rhetorical questions fail, and only the thaumaturgic skills of an ancient Daoist can be relied upon to both express, and perhaps even assuage, the angst of being far from home:

乡路眇天外	The road home stretches beyond the sky,
归期如梦中	The date of return seems like a dream.
遥凭长房术	So far away I have to rely on Zhangfang's magic ⁷³

⁷² CSJJZ, p. 75.

⁷³ An allusion to Fei Zhangfang 费长房, a Daoist trainee of Hu Gong 壶公, whose story can be found in Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283-343) *Shenxianzhuan* 神仙传, “a collection of biographies of eighty-four Daoist immortals. The text has traditionally been ascribed to Ge Hong [though] most of the biographies are extracted from earlier works, so Ge Hong is really much more an editor than an author of the *Shenxianzhuan*”. See Stephen Durrant's entry in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 677. The *Taiping guangji* 太平广记 notes that “Feizhang Fang possessed the magic of the gods, and could contract a land's geography. A thousand *li* would seem to exist right before one's eyes and then disappear as the land expanded back to as it was before”. 费长房有神术, 能缩地脉, 千里存在目前宛然, 放之复舒如旧也。 See *Taiping guangji* 太平广记 12.4 in *SKQS*. In his pre-frontier poem “Inscribed on Daoist Adept Li's Dwelling in Shuangxi, Jingxing county” (“Ti Jingxing Shuangxi Li Daoshi suoju”

Conclusion

Overview

Chapter one of this thesis briefly addressed historical circumstances that were relevant to the writing of Tang frontier poetry, defined the term “frontier” (biansai 边塞), and provided a short introduction to the geography of the Chinese frontier as it appeared around the mid-eighth century. Chapter two followed by presenting the tripartite thematic structure of frontier poetry used in this thesis – responses to frontier warfare, encounters with non-Chinese cultures, and descriptions of borderland environments – and discussed several pre-Tang poetic texts displaying these themes as being literary precursors to Tang frontier poetry. Chapter three commenced with an overview of critical concerns with the limitations and unintended effects of grouping both poetry and poets under a “frontier poetry” heading. The chapter then continued by demonstrating how during the Tang, especially the High Tang period, the themes of frontier poetry were complicated and enriched by a number of poets whose literary talents and frontier experiences brought the subgenre to its apotheosis.

Part two, chapters four through six, shifted attention to a specific coordinate within the realm of frontier poetry – Cen Shen's frontier poems in which the frontier landscape itself is a prominent feature of the texts. Chapter four opened with an overview of critical commentary characterizing Cen Shen's frontier poetry as 奇 (*qi*, strange; unusual). The chapter then introduced and exemplified aspects of focalization that are used in chapters five and six to discuss Cen Shen's frontier landscapes outside the conventional “strange” or “unusual” paradigm.

Chapter five examined Cen Shen's “hot” and “cold” frontier landscapes by exploring underlying manners of focalization repeated by the texts' poet-narrators in their perceptualization of these conspicuously “thermal” (hot) and “hibernal” (cold) frontier settings. The first section's discussion of

the thermal frontier concentrated on the poet-narrators' selfsame methods for introducing “themes” of the thermal frontier landscape before examining the multifaceted “lenses” and “modes of focalization” used by the poet-narrators to focalize particular “sub-themes” of the thermal landscape. The section then concluded with an elucidation of the natural violence, and not mere “strangeness”, that characterizes these settings of exceptional heat. The second section treated Cen Shen's hibernal frontier setting as being predicated on underlying patterns of shifts in focalization that link disparate poems through a nexus of perception. These connections were the poet-narrators' shifts in focalizing the setting from perspectives of interiority and exteriority as well as distance and nearness, and alternations of focalization between an environment qualified by activity and inactivity. Two types of coldness focalized by the poet-narrators were also proposed in furthering support for the interrelatedness of the poet-narrators' focalization of the hibernal frontier setting.

Finally, chapter six investigated relations between the poet-narrators' emotional states and the perception of frontier landscapes of immense distances. Specifically, two aspects of the poet-narrators' focalization of the frontier landscape were discussed in order to show how homesickness was revealed through the poet-narrators' manners of focalization. The first of these aspects was the direction of the poet-narrator's gaze, and how eastward, westward and indefinite spatial coordinates of focalization were themselves expressions of homesickness and feelings of separation. The second aspect investigated how Cen Shen's poet-narrators were further able to express a longing to return home by focalizing features of mobility in the objects they perceived in the frontier landscape of great distances.

Reasoning

The overview in part one of High Tang frontier poetry had two primary goals. One was to offer a brief historical background to the writing of Tang frontier poetry, establish the subgenre's main themes, and then to demonstrate how, and in some instances why, in the Tang prior to the outbreak of

the An Lushan rebellion poems that have since come to be classified as “frontier poetry” were more complex than in preceding centuries in their treatment of the subgenre's standard themes of responses to frontier warfare, descriptions of borderland geography, and encounters with non-Chinese peoples inhabiting the

borderlands. The second goal was to contextualize the later analysis of focalization in Cen Shen's thermal, hibernal and distant landscapes. An early fear that had arisen during the preparatory stages of this thesis was that a narrow focus alone on Cen Shen's frontier environments, regardless of the analytical approach, could skewer readers' perceptions of the poet's topical range, which, to an extent, has unfortunately occurred given the thesis's necessary neglect of Cen Shen's non-frontier poetry, and lead not to misunderstandings *per se* but rather result in a lack of awareness that Cen Shen's frontier poems, as seen in chapter three, touched upon other aspects of serving on the frontier, such as the experience of living for extended periods of time in an unfamiliar cultural environment. In order to avoid the potential impression that Cen Shen's thermal, hibernal and distant landscapes were the single embodiment of his, or even all, frontier poetry, it was felt that the subgenre needed to be first discussed diachronically before refining the scope of analysis on one particular feature. To do this, historical factors affecting the writing of frontier poetry were first presented in chapter one before the subgenre's main themes were introduced and exemplified by pre-Tang poetic precursors. Discussions of other frontier poems by Tang period poets working within the subgenre were included in chapter three to assist in better appreciating the continuum within which Cen Shen's frontier poems were written while also showing how his texts distinguished themselves from both earlier and contemporaneous efforts in the field.

A far humbler motivation for writing the first three chapters was to proffer a relatively in-depth and critical overview which might assist those with little or no exposure to Chinese frontier poetry the opportunity to become acquainted with the subgenre's core thematic elements and evolution during the

Tang dynasty. As discovered quite early during the initial research stage of this thesis, very little criticism has been conducted in North America on the early stirrings and later developments of Chinese frontier poetry; to date, the only major resources available has been research conducted by Marie Chan , Ronald Miao and Tsung-Cheng Lin in his forthcoming publication on the relationship between frontier poetry and knight-errantry. The research contained herein thus had to incorporate numerous Chinese language secondary source materials to form a solid analysis of frontier poetry's origins, prime concerns and blossoming in the High Tang period that could be accessible to those who are unable to read Chinese.

The key issues in part two of the thesis, that of explaining intertextual patterns of focalization found in Cen Shen's frontier poetry where the thermal, hibernal and distant landscapes feature prominently, were more specialized than those discussed in the first three chapters. It was also in this second part, in particular chapters five and six, that the thesis endeavoured to make its strongest contribution to research in classical Chinese poetry by exploring focalization in Cen Shen's poetry. Such an undertaking first required a theoretical model appropriate for the task, a framework which provided consistency and clarity in analyzing and elucidating perceptual and psychological facets common to Cen Shen's poet-narrators in their focalization of the thermal, hibernal and distant frontier landscape. Using aspects of Manfred Jahn's, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's and Mieke Bal's writings on focalization, a unique and unimposing theoretical apparatus was created to assist in demonstrating how the poet-narrators of each type of frontier setting shared similarities in their manners of focalization. The conclusions reached by such an application found that despite the separation between poems which feature one particular type of frontier setting, the poems' poet-narrators nonetheless focalized such settings in highly coordinated manners that echoed across the boundaries of individual texts. The suggestion drawn from such realizations was that an underlying method of focalization linked disparate texts through idiosyncratic methods of focalizing thermal, hibernal and distant frontier scenes.

Analyzing Cen Shen's frontier poetry with attention to the poet-narrators' modes and facets of focalization invites an opportunity to appreciate the mechanics of perception operating in the poetry, both at the level of *what* is perceived and *how* the world of the poem is perceived. Such a reading immediately, intimately and sensually draws the reader into experiencing a poetic space often lost in allegorical or biographically driven exegeses. While certainly worthwhile angles of approach in their own right, the traditional motivation of “reading the poem to know the poet”, for instance, often neglects explicating the subtleties involved in the poet-narrator's process of conveying the world of the poem, and at times his own emotional state through such conveyances, and chooses instead to devote attention towards identifying the product – the poet's supposed feelings and attitudes – of perceptual processes and not the manner of each process itself. But when an exegetical effort is made, as has been done in the second part of this thesis, to look at both emerging patterns of perception repeated across different texts, and how in some instances (as discussed in chapter six) acts of perception themselves bespeak certain emotional states, the pleasure of reading the multifaceted processes of perception itself within the poems becomes possible while a stronger evidential foundation also forms for arguing a particular mindset of the poet-narrator as communicated through a poem's focalization.

Possibilities

In short, this thesis began with a discussion in chapters one through three of the historical, literary and experiential factors involved in the evolution of frontier poetry during the Tang period, and then refined its analysis to revealing intertextual patterns of focalization in a selection of Cen Shen's frontier verse. The theoretical model used in this thesis to investigate focalization in Cen Shen's poetry may have further applications when researching the relationship between perceiving agents (focalizers) and the perceived (focalized) in poems concerned with perception itself. Whether it is poems replete with shifts between imaginary and ordinary modes of perception, or works where the world described

alternates between that which the body's senses can apprehend and that which only the mind can envision, delving into poetry with an eye towards its focalization is certain to yield many new realizations.

Furthermore, the benefit of approaching these characteristics of a poem within the framework of focalization is that it affords a steady and consistent theoretical apparatus capable of addressing several issues through a single analytical system. For example, should one wish to explore “modes of perception [existing] beyond ordinary human bounds”¹ in Li He's 李贺 poetry, or the complex intricacies of focalizer-focalized relations in Chinese landscape poetry (shanshui shi 山水诗) in which the scale of focalization and intensity of the focalizer's psychological facet often fluctuate in tandem with levels of subjectivity in the experience of nature itself, the theory of focalization has a well stocked toolkit to assist reader and researcher alike. As with the uncovering of concordant patterns of focalization in Cen Shen's frontier poetry, equipping oneself with a model of focalization and actively entering other poetic worlds could very well disclose templates of perception in classical Chinese poetry heretofore undiscovered.

¹ Robert Ashmore, “Heptasyllabic Regulated Verse (Qiyān Lvshī)” in *How to Read Chinese Poetry*, pp. 181-198, especially p. 189.

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Appendix I: Cen Shen's "Thermal" Poems

热海行送崔侍御还京	Song of Hot Lake: Sending Off Censor Cui On His Return to the Capital
侧闻阴山胡儿语 西头热海水如煮	I overheard the <i>Hu</i> people of <i>Yin</i> mountain ¹ say that at the end of the Western frontier lies Hot Lake; its waters seem to boil.
海上众鸟不敢飞 中有鲤鱼长且肥	Flocks of birds don't dare fly overhead, In the lake carp are long and fat.
岸旁青草常不歇 空中白雪遥旋灭 蒸沙烁石燃虏云 沸浪炎波煎汉月	Green grasses on the shore grow for a long time and don't wither, Snow at a distance overhead swirls and then melts. Steaming sands and shining rocks burn the <i>Lu</i> clouds, ² Boiling billows and heated waves boil the <i>Han</i> moon.
阴火潜烧天地炉 何事偏烘西一隅?	Fires burn underground in Heaven and Earth's furnace, why does its combustion incline towards the Western corner?
势吞月窟侵太白	The force of the steam's heat swallows moon caves ³ and attacks Venus, ⁴
气连赤坂通单于	Vapours continue into the <i>Chi</i> Pamirs ⁵ and through <i>Xiongnu</i> lands.

¹ Zhang Hui 张辉 notes that Yin Mountain (Yinshan 阴山) actually refers to the Tian Mountain (Tianshan 天山) range in the border region of today's Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and not the Yin mountain range traversing parts of Inner Mongolia (Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen Biansai shixuan*, p. 56).

² Meaning "frontier clouds".

³ "In ancient tradition and in Tang poetry the moon was pitted and honeycombed, like a volcanic rabbit warren. From Han times at least we hear of 'moon dens' or 'moon burrows' (yueku 月窟)...In one sense it refers to the dank and gloomy hiding place of the moon at the western verges of our world...It follows naturally that the expression also symbolizes the cold and remote lands of the western barbarians..." See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 187.

⁴ See chapter one, footnote 24. Venus was the quintessence of metal (Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 212) while metal's directional equivalent has traditionally been that of the western regions. See *CSJJZ*, p. 92. "In general it [Venus] was a baleful star...and the mild associations that Venus has for us are almost totally lacking in Chinese imagery, for whom white [Venus in Chinese being "great white"(taibai, "great 太白)] is the colour of the ghost world and, in its most lustrous phase, of the flash of deadly weapons". See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 214.

⁵ Located in Yang county 洋县, Shaanxi 陕西 province. See *CSJJZ*, p. 170.

送君一醉天山郭
 正见夕阳海边落
 柏台霜威寒逼人
 热海炎气为之薄⁷

Seeing you off drunk at a small town on *Tian* Mountain,⁶
 I just happen to see the evening sun setting in the corner
 of the lake.
 The official's cold and freezing severity intimidates
 the people;
 the scorching steam of Hot Lake is cooled by this.

⁶ The *CSJZ* notes that reference here is to Luntai, which was located north of Tian mountain.

⁷ *CSJZ*, p. 169-170.

火山云歌送别

Parting: Song of Fire Mountain Clouds

火山突兀赤亭口
火山五月火云厚

Fire Mountain towers over the entrance to Chiting,⁸
Fire Mountain in the fifth month, fire clouds are thick.

火云满山凝未开
飞鸟千里不敢来
平明乍逐胡风断

Fire clouds fill the mountain, dense they do not break;
Flying birds within a thousand *li* do not dare come by.
At daybreak the clouds are suddenly dispersed, severed
by *Hu* winds;

薄暮浑随塞雨回

Near dusk they return accompanying the frontier rain.

缭绕斜吞铁关树

Curling, coiling and all aslant they swallow the trees
at Metal Pass,⁹

氛氲半掩交河戍

A hazy mist half covering the garrison barracks
at Jiaohe.

迢迢征路火山东

The journey's road leads far away to the east of
Fire Mountain,

山上孤云随马去¹⁰

Above the mountain a single cloud follows the departing
horse.

⁸ Refers to an area south-west of modern day Hami county 哈密县, the location in Tang times of the Chiting (赤亭, literally “vermilion pavilion”) Defence Detachment (shouzhuo 守捉), “an early T’ang generic term for military units along the northern frontier too small to be considered armies (jun 军), each commanded by a Commissioner (shi 使). See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, p. 432). See also p. 93 of the *CSJJZ* for background to *Chiting*.

⁹ Located between Yanqi 焉耆 and Kuerle 库尔勒, Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

¹⁰ *CSJJZ*, p. 171.

经火山

Passing Fire Mountain

火山今始见 Fire Mountain¹¹ today seen for the first time,
 突兀蒲昌东 Towers to the east of Puchang.¹²
 赤焰烧虏云 Red smoke scorches the *Lu*¹³ clouds,
 炎氛蒸塞空 Blistering vapours steam the frontier emptiness.
 不知阴阳炭 How do the coals of *Yin* and *Yang*
 何独燃此中 Burn alone in the midst of this place?¹⁴
 我来严冬时 I arrived when the year was at its coldest,
 山下多炎风 Below the mountain many scorching winds.
 人马尽汗流 Men and horses drenched in flowing sweat,
 熟知造化功¹⁵ Who knows of the exploits of nature's invention¹⁶?

¹¹ “The mountains lie on a major fault line dividing the Turpan [basin], which is itself a fault trough north of the Qurug Tag Mountain. At its lowest point, the trough descends to some 505 feet below sea level while surrounding areas bordering the Tarim River and Lop-nor Lake are between 2,000 and 3,000 feet above sea level. The area has great climatic extremes” (Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 81).

¹² County whose borders are equivalent to today's Shanshan county 鄯善县 in Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

¹³ Referring to the northwestern frontier

¹⁴ An allusion to Jia Yi's 贾谊 (201-169 BCE) “Rhyme-Prose on the Owl” (“Funiao fu” 鹏鸟赋).

¹⁵ *CSJJZ*, p. 79.

¹⁶ This final line resonates with two previous exclamations of near ineffable amazement over the ability of nature's creative forces to rattle the senses and confound the mind. Lines nine and ten of Li Bai's “Gazing Upon the Waterfall at Lu Mountain” (“Wang Lushan pubushui sanshou” 望庐山瀑布水二首), “Look up and observe the strength of its shifting power/So strong, the exploits of nature's invention” 仰观势转雄, 壮哉造化功 (*QTS* 180.837), are a near verbatim precedent to Cen Shen's call to the power of creation itself in his description of Fire Mountain. In the final couplet of an even earlier work by Zhang Jiuling 张九龄, “Zhen Yang Gorge” (Zhenyangxia” 浞阳峡), the interrogative aspect of Cen Shen's statement can be found: “Saddened that such things arise far away and remote/Who knows the mind of nature's invention?” 惜此生遐远, 谁知造化心? See *QTS* 48.590.

使交河群

Mission To Jiaohe Commandery

群在火山脚,其地苦热无雨雪. 献封大夫

The commandery is located at the foot of Fire Mountain. The land there is bitterly hot and without rain or snow. The poem is to be presented to General Feng Changqing.

奉使按胡俗
 平明发轮台
 暮投交河城
 火山赤崔嵬
 九月尚流汗
 炎风吹沙埃
 何事阴阳工
 不遣雨雪来
 吾君方忧边
 分阃资大才
 昨者新破胡
 安西兵马回
 铁关控天涯
 万里何辽哉
 烟尘不敢飞
 白草空皑皑
 军中日无事
 醉舞倾金罍
 汉代李将军
 微功今何哈²³

Ordered on a mission to inspect the customs of the *Hu*¹⁷,
 At dawn setting out from Luntai.
 In the evening staying at Jiaohe,
 Fire Mountain red and lofty.
 In the ninth month and still sweating,
 Scorching winds blow sand and dust.
 Why is it that the workman of yin and yang¹⁸
 Not allow rain and snow to arrive?
 My lord, worried about the situation on the borders,
 appoints a man of great talent to the position of general¹⁹.
 Not long ago the *Hu* were defeated,
 and the Anxi military forces returned.²⁰
 From Iron Gate Pass reaching towards the edge of the sky,
 Ten thousand *li* – oh how far!²¹
 The smoke of battle dares not fly,
 Frontier grasses waste their whiteness.²²
 In the army camp days pass with nothing to do,
 Drunken dancing, pouring wine into golden goblets.
 General Li of the Han dynasty –
 Oh how his small achievements are laughed at today!

¹⁷ While on the staff of general Feng Changqing, Cen Shen was appointed by the government to the post of Investigating Censor (*jiancha yushi* 监察御史). Investigating Censors were “generally empowered to gather complaints from the people, to review the handling of prisoners, [and] to impeach any official for misconduct”. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, pp. 145-146.

¹⁸ An allusion to Jia Yi's 贾谊 (201-169 BCE) “Rhyme-Prose on the Owl” (“*Funiao fu*” 鹏鸟赋).

¹⁹ The talented man being Feng Changqing 封常清. See *CSJJZ*, p. 153.

²⁰ At the time, Feng Changqing was also the Anxi Military Commissioner (Anxi *jiedushi* 安西节度使). In the fifth month of the fourteenth year of Tianbao era (天宝十四载), or about 755, Feng Changqing set out on a campaign and the next month returned after receiving the surrender of enemy forces. See Zhang Hui ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 79.

²¹ Feng Changqing's renown has boundlessly spread across the empire. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 79.

²² Without the encroachment of nomadic non-Chinese tribes, the white grasses of potential frontier pasture land go to seed. See *CSJJZ*, p. 153.

²³ *CSJJZ*, p. 152.

Appendix II: Cen Shen's "Hibernal" Poems

白雪歌送武判官归京

Song of White Snow: Sending Off Administrative
Officer Wu on His Return to the Capital

北风卷地白草折
胡天八月即飞雪

The north wind rolls up the ground, white grasses¹ snap,
In the eighth month snow already flies throughout the
Hu sky.²

忽如一夜春风来
千树万树梨花开

Suddenly as if in one night the Spring wind arrives,
On tens of thousands of trees pear flowers bloom.³

散入珠帘湿罗幕
狐裘不暖锦衾薄

Scattering through beaded curtains and soaking silk drapes,
Fox fur clothing does not keep in the heat, resplendent
blankets are thin.

将军角弓不得控
都护铁衣冷难著

The general's horn bow cannot be pulled,
The protector-general's armour is freezing and difficult to
put on.

瀚海阑干百丈冰

Vast desert, railings of ice criss-cross a hundred meters
thick,

愁云惨淡万里凝

Sorrow clouds and gloom condense over ten thousand *li*.

中军置酒饮归客

At the army camp wine is laid out and drunk to the
departing guest,

胡琴琵琶与羌笛

Hu songs are strum on *pipas* along with *Qiang* flutes.

纷纷暮雪下辕门

Evening snow falls pell-mell over the military camp's main
gate,

¹ The famous white grasses of central Asia are a stock image of frontier poetry. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 147 and Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 359.

² Meaning the frontier sky.

³ Bidirectional comparisons between snowflakes and pear/plum blossoms was a very common conceit in Chinese poetry "where the visual similarity of plum and pear blossoms and snowflakes was strengthened by the fact that a "flake" (hua 花) of snow is in Chinese a "flower" (hua 花) of snow". See Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 377 and Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 96. Of the numerous examples, there is the first half of Lu Zhaolin's 卢照邻 (636-695) "Plum Blossoms Fall" ("Meihua luo" 梅花落): "When the blossoms first emerge on plum ridges, /The snow has yet to open on Heaven Mountain, /Places of snow seem filled with flowers, /Where flowers are snow seems to swirl". Modified version of Stephen Owen, tr., *The Poetry of the Early T'ang*, p. 96. 梅岭花初发,天山雪未开. 雪处疑花满,花边似雪回. See *QTS* 41.513.

风擎红旗冻不翻

The wind pulls the red flag; frozen it does not flap.

轮台东门送君去
去时雪满天山路
山回路转不见君
雪上空留马行处⁵

Seeing you off at the east gate of Luntai,⁴
At your departure snow fills the road of Tian Mountain.
The mountain curves, the road turns, I can not see you:
In the snow empty hoof prints are left behind.

⁴ “Luntai was a city in central Asia about one hundred kilometres southeast of modern day Kuche 库车. The Eastern gate would have marked a journey back toward China while Tian mountain lies directly north”. See Stephen Owen, *Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 377.

⁵ See *CSJZ*, p. 163.

天山雪歌送萧治归京

Song of Snow on Tian Mountain: Sending Off
Xiao Zhi on His Return to the Capital

天山雪云常不开
千峰万岭雪崔嵬

Snow clouds never break on Tian Mountain,⁶
Tens of thousands of lofty peaks and ranges are covered
in snow.

北风夜卷赤亭口
一夜天山雪更厚

The night's north wind rolls over Chiting Pass;
As night passes, the snow is thicker on Tian Mountain.

能兼汉月照银山
复逐胡风过铁关

The snow both reflects the *Han* moon and shines on
Yin Mountain⁷
And again chases the *Hu* wind through Iron Gate Pass.⁸

交河城边鸟飞绝
轮台路上马蹄滑

At the edge of Jiaohe birds in flight disappear;
On the Luntai road horses' hooves slip.

晦霭寒氛万里凝
阑干阴崖千丈冰

Gloom cold clouds freeze everything over a distance of
ten thousand *li*,
Railings upon shaded cliffs are a thousand meters of ice.

将军狐裘卧不暖
都护宝刀冻欲断

The general's fox skins do not keep the bed warm,
The protector-general's sword is frozen and about to break.

正是天山雪下时
送君走马归京师
雪中何以赠君别
惟有青青松树枝⁹

Just when it snows on Tian Mountain
I send you off as you set forth for the capital;
In the midst of snow what can I give you when we part?
Only a green pine branch.

⁶ Tian Mountain, which also went by the names White Mountain 白山 and Snow Mountain 雪山 in ancient times, is located north of the Tarim basin at the borders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

⁷ Located near modern day Kumushen 库木什, southwest of Turpan 吐鲁番 Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

⁸ A pass southwest of Yin mountain

⁹ See *CSJZ*, pp. 168-169.

走马川行奉送出师西征	The Ballad of Running Horse River: Presented Upon Seeing Off the Troops on a Western Campaign
君不见走马川行雪海边 平沙莽莽黄入天	Have you not seen Running Horse River ¹⁰ on the banks of the Sea of Snow, ¹¹ Level sands vast and wide all yellow entering the sky.
轮台九月风夜吼 一川碎石大如斗 随风满地石乱走	Luntai in the ninth month winds at night howl, A river of broken rocks big as dippers Follow the winds covering the ground, rocks tumble helter-skelter.
匈奴草黄马正肥 金山西见烟尘飞 汉家大将西出师	Xiongnu grasses yellow, horses well fed and sturdy, ¹² West of Jin mountain ¹³ one sees smoke and dust flying, The general of the House of Han ¹⁴ sets off west with his army.
将军金甲夜不脱 半夜军行戈相拨 风头如刀面如割	The general does not remove his coat of armour at night, The army sets out at midnight, halberds rub against each other, The crest of winds like knives; faces seem sliced.
马毛带雪汗气蒸 五花连钱旋作冰 幕中草檄砚水凝	Horse coats covered in snow; their sweat steams and rises, Dappled spots like linked coins suddenly turn back into ice, Inside the army tent the inkstone's water for writing documents denouncing the enemy has frozen.
虏骑闻之应胆慑 料知短兵不敢接	<i>Lu</i> cavalry hearing of this must certainly panic, One would presume that they would not dare cross swords with us,

¹⁰ Sun Yingkui 孙映逵 speculates that “Running Horse River”, its exact coordinates unknown, is either a river bed without its aquatic element or is a swathe of the frontier plains. The argument for the second supposition rests on reading 川 (chuan) not as river, the character's most common reading, but on its less frequent reference to “plains” (pingyuan 平原). See Sun Yingkui 孙映逵, “Censhen biansaishi diming qianshi 岑参边塞诗地名浅释” in *Tangdai biansaishi yanjiu lunwen xuancui* 唐代边塞诗研究论文选粹, pp. 229-251, especially p. 246.

¹¹ An area west of Tian mountain's main peak and within the administrative area of the Anxi commandery. See *CSJJZ*, p. 147 and Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 52. The area was so named for its “perennial falling snow” 春夏常雨雪. See *Xin Tang shu* 新唐书 221(下), p. 5 in *SKQS*. See also Cen Shen's “Seventh Month at Luntai”, translated in chapter three of this thesis, for another appearance of this geographic entity.

¹² Indicative of an opportune time for the Xiongnu to harass the Tang armies. See *CSJJZ*, p. 149.

¹³ A main peak of Tian mountain. See Zhang Hui 张辉, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishi xuan*, p.53.

¹⁴ General Feng Changqing 封常清.

车师西门伫献捷¹⁵

At Jushi's¹⁶ western gate we await the presentation of the
spoils of victory.

¹⁵ See *CSJZ*, p. 148.

¹⁶ Jushi 车师 was the Han dynasty name of Beiting Protectorate (Beiting duhufu 北庭都护府) administered Tingzhou 庭州. The former Tingzhou camp is located north of modern day Jimusa'er 吉木萨尔. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishi xuan*, p. 54.

Appendix III: Cen Shen's "Distance" Poems

初过陇山途中呈宇文判官 Passing Through *Long Mountain*¹ for the First Time:
Presented to Administrative Assistant Yuwen

<p>一驿过一驿 驿骑如星流 平明发咸阳 暮到陇山头 陇水不可听 呜咽令人愁 沙尘扑马汗 雾露凝貂裘 西来谁家子 自道新封侯 前月发安西 路上无停留 都护犹未到 来时在西州 十日过沙碛 终朝风不休 马足碎石中 四蹄皆血流</p>	<p>Postal stop after postal stop, Postal horse like a meteor; At dawn set out from Xianyang,² At dusk arrive at <i>Long Mountain</i>. Can't listen to the waters at <i>Long Mountain</i>,³ Sobbing sounds cause sorrow! Sand and dust fly at the horse's sweat, Wet fog settles on marten skin coat. Who is it that comes West? He himself said he was just enfeoffed as a marquis; Last month he set out from Anxi,⁴ And he hasn't stopped at all on his way to rest. Protector-General Gao⁵ still hasn't arrived; When he does, it will be in Xizhou;⁶ Ten days passing through the desert; Throughout the mornings winds never rest! Horses move over shards of rock, All four hooves bleeding;</p>
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- 1 Long Mountain is located northwest of today's Long county 陇县 Shaanxi province. In many poems, Long Mountain and its waters were a point of egress on the journey to the borderlands for those travelling from central China , a geographic locale marking the division between China proper and the frontier where one said goodbye, often lachrymously, to his hometown in the east (Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, personal correspondence, January 2013).
- 2 Reference to Chang'an 长安. Xianyang was the capital of the Qin 秦 dynasty; its present coordinates are east of Xianyang county 咸阳县, Shaanxi province. See *CSJZ*, p. 74.
- 3 Ever since their appearance in the *Yuefu* poem "Song of Long Mountain" ("Longtou geci" 陇头歌辞), the sounds of the waters of Long Mountain have been catalysts of feelings of separation from home (See Yan Fuling, "Han-Tang biansaishi zhuti yanjiu", p. 44): "The flowing waters of Long Mountain,/Flow out from below the mountain./I think of my entire life./Tumbling about the open wilds./In the morning setting off from Xincheng./At dusk staying at Long Mountain./So cold I cannot speak;/My tongue rolls back into my throat./The flowing waters of Long Mountain,/Murmur and whimper deeply./Gazing far off towards the rivers of Qin/My heart is about to break" 陇头流水,流离山下.念吾一身,飘然旷野.朝发欣城,暮宿陇头.寒不能语,舌卷入喉.陇头流水,鸣声幽咽,遥望秦川,心肝断绝. See *YFSJ* 25.371.
- 4 Guizi 龟兹 in today's Kuche county 库车县, Xinjiang Autonomous Region. Guizi was the seat of the Anxi Commandery.
- 5 Military Commissioner Gao Xianzhi 节度使高仙芝
- 6 An administrative division roughly equivalent to today's Turpan basin 吐鲁盘 area. The seat of government was located in Gaochang 高昌, a town equivalent to modern day Dakeanusu 达克阿奴斯城 southeast of Turpan.

万里奉王事
 一身无所求
 也知塞垣苦
 岂为妻子谋
 山口月欲出
 光照关城楼
 溪流与松风
 静夜相飕飕
 别家赖归梦
 山寨多离忧
 与子且携手
 不愁前路修⁷

I came a thousand *li* to serve his majesty
 Wishing nothing in return.
 I know of the bitterness of the frontier
 Let alone thoughts of my wife and child.
 The moon about to rise at the mountain pass
 Shines first on the sentry buildings.
 Flowing creek and pine winds
 Babble and blow together through the still night.
 Relying on dreams to return home;
 The frontier mountains are full of the sadness of departure!
 Holding your hand,
 There is no despair on the long road ahead.

经陇头分水

Passing the Height of Land at *Long* Mountain Where the
Waters Part

陇水何年有
潺潺逼路旁
东西流不歇
曾断几人肠⁸

In which year did the waters of Long mountain come to be,
Gurgling so close beside the road?
Flowing east or west without resting,
How many hearts has it broken?

8 CSJZ, p. 75.

西过渭州见渭水思秦川

Passing West Through Weizhou: Seeing the Wei River
I Think of the Qin waters⁹

渭水东流去
何时到雍州
凭添两行泪
寄向故园流¹¹

The waters of the Wei river flow east,
When will they reach Yongzhou?¹⁰
I add to the waters two streams of tears,
And send them flowing towards my home.

9 Weizhou was an administrative division of China whose seat of government was at Xiangwu 襄武, southwest of today's Longxi county 陇西县, Gansu province. The Wei river 渭水 starts at Niaoshu mountain 鸟鼠山 Weiyuan county 渭源县, Gansu province, flows through Longxi, Gangu 甘谷县, and Tianshui 天水县 counties and then passes through Shaanxi before eventually meeting up with the Yellow river 黄河. The Qin waters (qinchuan 秦川) refers to the area around Chang'an. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansai shixuan*, p. 8.

10 Reference to Chang'an.

11 *CSJJZ*, p. 75.

过燕支寄杜位

Passing Yanzhi Mountain: Sent to Du Wei¹²

燕支山西酒泉道
北风吹沙卷白草

West of Yanzhi mountain there is the road to Jiuquan,¹³
The north wind blows sand and rolls up the white frontier
grasses.

长安遥在日光边
忆君不见令人老¹⁴

Chang'an is far away by the shining rays of the sun,
Remembering you and not being able to meet makes
one old.¹⁵

12 Yanzhi mountain is located east of today's Shandan county 山丹县, Gansu province. Du Wei was Du Fu's 杜甫 younger male cousin. See *CSJJZ*, pp. 76 and 45.

13 Name of a Tang dynasty commandery. The local seat of government was at today's Jiuquan county 酒泉县, Gansu province.

14 *CSJJZ*, p. 75.

15 The concluding line echoes the final lines of the first of the "Nineteen Ancient Poems" 古诗十九首: "Thinking of you makes me old;/Years and months suddenly go by./Abandoned, I will say no more;/Pick up your strength and eat more!" 思君令人老, 岁月忽已晚. 弃捐勿复道, 努力加餐饭. See original and translation in Kenneth P.H. Ho, tr., *The Nineteen Ancient Poems* (Hong Kong: Kelly & Walsh, 1977), pp. 38-39. "The *Nineteen Ancient Poems* are traditionally considered the earliest extant examples of pentasyllabic verse...As well as establishing the basic *shi* 诗 meter of five [characters] per line, the *Nineteen Old Poems* also announced themes and techniques which were to reappear in Chinese poetry throughout the centuries...The poems are characterized by two dominant perspectives, that of the lonely woman in her room longing for her faraway lover and that of a man who, forced to travel away from home, sees his life as a continual journey". See William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 489-490.

过酒泉忆杜陵别业

Passing Jiuquan I Recall My Villa at Duling¹⁶

昨夜宿祁连
 今朝过酒泉
 黄沙西际海
 白草北连天
 愁里难消日
 归期尚隔年
 阳关万里梦
 知处杜陵田¹⁹

Last night I stayed at Qilian,¹⁷
 This morning I passed through Jiuquan.
 Yellow sands reach west into the great desert,
 White grasses extend north to the sky.
 In sorrow I pass the days with great difficulty,
 The date of return is still separated by years.
 In dreams of ten thousand *li* at Yang Pass,¹⁸
 I know that I am at Duling's fields.

16 Duling 杜陵 was located southeast on the outskirts of Chang'an.

17 Name of a mountain west of Zhangye county 张掖县, Gansu province.

18 Located southwest of today's Dunhuang county 敦煌县, Gansu province. Along with Jade Pass (Yu guan 玉关), Yang Pass was a common conduit for those heading out to the western frontier. See *CSJJZ*, pp. 76-77.

19 *CSJJZ*, p. 76.

逢入京使

Encountering a Commissioner²⁰ on His Way to the Capital

故园东望路漫漫
 双袖龙钟泪不干
 马上相逢无纸笔
 凭君传语报平安²¹

Gazing east towards home, the road goes on and on;
 Both sleeves soaked with tears that do not dry.
 We encounter each other on horseback, no paper or brush;
 I depend on you to pass along word that I'm doing well.

20 Commissioner (shi 使), “lit., sent as a representative, was one of the most common Chinese titles, almost invariably found with a prefix suggesting his function or designating the agency he headed...In Tang times, the term was used almost solely for duty assignments (chai qian 差遣) of officials with regular status elsewhere in the officialdom”. See Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, p. 421.

21 *CSJJZ*, p. 77.

题铁门关楼

Written on a Sentry Building at Iron Gate Pass²²

铁关天西涯
 极目少行客
 关门一小吏
 终日对石壁
 桥跨千仞危
 路盘两崖窄
 试登西楼望
 一望头欲白²⁴

Metal Gate Pass at the edge of the western sky,
 The limits of sight reveal few travellers.
 At the gate of the pass there is a sub-official functionary,²³
 All day long he faces a rock wall.
 The bridge spans a height of a thousand meters,
 The narrow road twists along both sides of the precipice.
 Attempting a climb of the west building and gazing out:
 One look will turn your hair white.

22 A mountain pass southwest of Yin mountain 银山, Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

23 “小吏(xiao li) was a somewhat deprecatory variant of 吏(li, subofficial functionary)...a category of state employees who performed the clerical and more menial tasks in all governmental agencies at all levels and had no ranked civil service status...”. See Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, pp. 236 and 302.

24 *CSJZ*, pp. 80-81.

宿铁关西馆

Staying the Night at the West Inn of Iron Gate Pass

马汗踏成泥
朝驰几万蹄
雪中行地角
火处宿天倪

Horse sweat stomped into mud;
Morning, over ten thousand hooves set off.
In the midst of snow travelling to the corner of the earth,
Staying overnight where it is illuminated at the edge of
the horizon.²⁵

塞迥心常怯

The frontier is at such a great distance my heart
often recoils in fright;

乡遥梦亦迷

My hometown is so far away that even in dreams I lose
my way.

那知故园月
也到铁关西²⁶

How can I know if the moon of my garden back home
Also arrives west of Iron Gate Pass?

²⁵ The illumination of the West Inn of Iron Gate Pass. See *CSJZ*, p. 81.

²⁶ *CSJZ*, p. 81.

碛中作

Composed in the Desert

走马西来欲到天
辞家见月两回圆
今夜不知何处宿
平沙万里绝人烟²⁷

On horseback riding west nearing the sky,
Since leaving home I have seen two full moons.
Where will I be staying this night?
The broad level desert goes on for ten thousand *li*
and not a sign of human habitation.²⁸

²⁷ *CSJZ*, p. 82.

²⁸ Literally “cut off from smoke indicative of human dwellings” (jue renyan 绝人烟)

岁暮碛外寄元摛

At Year's End Beyond the Desert: Sent to Yuan Hui

西风传戍鼓
南望见前军
沙碛人愁月
山城犬吠云
别家逢逼岁
出塞独离群
发到阳关白

The western wind carries sounds of garrison drums,²⁹
Gazing south I see the army ahead of me.
In the sandy desert, men are saddened by the moon;
In a mountain town, dogs bark at the clouds.
Away from home, it's now approaching year's end;
Out on the frontier, alone and separated.
My hair, now that I have arrived at Yang pass, has turned
white;

书今远报君³⁰

In a letter sent today from afar I inform you of this.

²⁹ Used to announce the hours of the night. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansai shixuan*, p. 13.

³⁰ *CSJZ*, p. 82.

过碛

Passing Through the Desert

黄沙碛里客行迷

Among the yellow sands of the desert, lost while travelling
far from home;

四望云天直下低

Gazing in all four directions clouds and sky hang down
low.

为言地尽天还尽
行到安西更向西³¹

The earth can be said to be at its limit as well as the sky,
But to reach Anxi one still has to travel further west.

31 *CSJZ*, p. 83.

碛西头送李判官入京

In the Western Desert: Sending Off Administrative
Assistant Li on His Return to the Capital

一身从远使
万里向安西
汉月垂乡泪
胡沙费马蹄
寻河愁地尽

I took up a far off official post
Ten thousand *li* away in Anxi.
The *Han* moon, homesick tears droop;
Hu sands wear down the horses' hooves.
Searching for the river's source,³² full of sorrow at the limit
of this land;

过碛觉天低
送子军中饮
家书醉里题³³

Passing through the desert I feel the sky hanging low.
Sending you off with drinks in the army camp,
In drunkenness I compose a letter home.

³² The *CSJJZ* notes on p. 84 that this scouting conveys a feeling of western geographic extremity.

³³ *CSJJZ*, p. 83.

忆长安曲二章寄庞樵

Tune: Remembering Chang'an, Two Verses, Sent to
Pang Que³⁴

东望望长安
正直日初出
长安不可见
但³⁵见长安日

Eastward gazing, gazing towards Chang'an,
Directly facing where the sun first rises.
Chang'an cannot be seen;
I only see the Chang'an sun.

长安何处在
只在马蹄下
明日归长安
为君急走马³⁶

Where is Chang'an located?
Only beneath a horse's hooves.
Tomorrow I return to Chang'an,
For you, I hurry my horse onwards.

34 See excerpt in chapter four for a note on the “que” of Pang Que.

35 Here following the *YFSJ* version; the *CSJJZ* has 喜 for 但. See the footnote to this poem in chapter four of the thesis for more details.

36 *CSJJZ*, p. 84.

安西馆中思长安

At the Anxi Guesthouse and Thinking of Chang'an

家在日出处
朝来起³⁷东风
风从帝乡来
不异家信通
绝域地欲尽
孤城天遂穷
弥年但走马
终日随飘蓬
寂寞不得意
辛勤方在公
胡尘净古塞
兵气屯边空

乡路眇天外
归期如梦中
遥凭长房术
为缩天山东⁴⁰

My home is where the sun rises,
Morning arrives and stirs the eastern wind.
The wind arrives from the capital,
It is not different from receiving a letter from home.
In this far off land the earth nears its limit;
A solitary town, the sky here finally reaches its end.
For a full year now I've been on horseback,
All day long following the wind like a tumbleweed.
Lonely and with aspirations unrealized,
Just assiduously seeing to my work.
The ancient frontier is cleared of *Hu* dust,³⁸
An atmosphere of war still gathers within the borderland
space.
The road home stretches beyond the sky,
The date of return seems like a dream.
So far away I have to rely on Zhangfang's magic³⁹
And contract the sky and mountains eastwards.

37 The *CSJJZ* version has 喜 (xi); I have chosen instead to follow the *QTS* version to read 喜 as 起 (qi).

38 Meaning that the non-Chinese enemy has been pacified. See *CSJJZ*, p. 85.

39 An allusion to Fei Zhangfang 费长房, a Daoist trainee of Hu Gong 壶公, whose story can be found in Ge Hong's 葛洪 (283-343) *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙传, "a collection of biographies of eighty-four Daoist immortals. The text has traditionally been ascribed to Ge Hong [though] most of the biographies are extracted from earlier works, so Ge Hong is really much more an editor than an author of the *Shenxian zhuan*". William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, p. 677. The *Taiping guangji* 太平广记 notes that "Feizhang Fang possessed the magic of the gods, and could contract a land's geography. A thousand *li* would seem to exist right before one's eyes and then disappear as the land expanded back to as it was before". 费长房有神术, 能缩地脉, 千里存在目前宛然, 放之复舒如旧也。 See *Taiping guangji* 太平广记 12.4 in *SKQS*. In his pre-frontier poem "Inscribed on Daoist Adept Li's Dwelling in Shuangxi, Jingxing county" ("Ti Jingxing Shuangxi Li Daoshi suoju" 题井陘双溪李道士所居), Cen Shen uses the same allusion to express a longing for a quick return home: "Five bristle pine wine/can be found at the Daoist master's home in Shuangxi./But all I ask is that the land contract/so that I am not made to take a long road home". 五粒松花酒, 双溪道士家。唯求缩却地, 乡路莫教赊。 See *CSJJZ*, p. 25. The "wine" here suggests a drink which could extend one's life. See *CSJJZ*, p. 25.

40 *CSJJZ*, p. 84.

早发焉耆怀终南别业

Setting Off Early from Yanqi and Thinking of my Villa
at Zhongnan Mountain⁴¹

晓笛引乡泪
秋冰鸣马蹄
一身虏云外
万里胡天西
终日见征战
连年闻鼓鞞
故山在何处
昨日梦清溪⁴⁵

Dawn flutes draw out tears of homesickness,
Autumn ice cries under horse hooves.
I am alone beyond the *Lu* clouds⁴²,
Ten thousand *li* west of the *Hu* sky.⁴³
All day I see armies set out on campaigns,
Year after year hear battle drums.
Where is my dear old mountain;⁴⁴
Last night I dreamt of its clear streams.

41 Yanqi 焉耆 was a garrison town under the jurisdiction of the Anxi Commandery located southwest of modern day Yanqi. See *CSJJZ*, p. 86. Cen Shen's Zhongnan mountain villa was located on the outskirts of Chang'an, and was a place of reclusion for the poet when out of office. See Marie Chan, *Cen Shen*, p. 24.

42 The frontier clouds.

43 The frontier sky.

44 Meaning home/hometown (jiaxiang 家乡).

45 *CSJJZ*, p. 85.

寄宇文判官

Sent to Administrative Assistant Yuwen

西行殊未已
东望何时还
终日风与雪
连天沙复山
二年领公事

This westward travelling has yet to cease;
Gazing east – when will I return?
All day just wind and snow,
Day after day just sands and mountains.
You have spent two years dealing with bureaucratic
matters;

两度过阳关
相忆不可见
别来头已斑⁴⁷

Twice now you have crossed Yang Pass.⁴⁶
Remembering you but unable to meet,
Since separating my hair has already greyed.

46 Here following the comment that this line refers to Administrative Assistant Yuwen who in 749 and 750 was sent on missions which necessitated travel through Yang pass. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 24.

47 *CSJJZ*, p. 86.

赠酒泉韩太守

Presented to Prefect Han of Jiuquan

太守有能政
遥闻如古人

The prefect has effective governing measures;
His renown has spread far and wide, like that of
the ancients.

俸钱尽供客
家计常⁴⁸清贫

He spends all his earnings in providing for his guests,
Household accounts are often wiped clean.

酒泉西望玉关道
千山万碛皆白草

At Jiuquan gazing west – the road to Yu Pass,
A thousand mountains, ten thousand deserts – all is
white grass.

辞君走马归长安
思君倏忽令人老⁴⁹

Taking leave of you, riding back to Chang'an;
Thinking of you quickly makes one old.

48 Here following the *QTS* version which has 常 (*chang*, often) whereas the *CSJZ* has 亦 (*yi*, also). See *QTS* 199.2059.

49 *CSJZ*, p. 89.

武威春暮闻宇文判官西使还已到晋昌

At Wuwei in Late Spring: I heard that Administrative Assistant Yuwen was Sent West as an Envoy and has Already Reached Jinchang⁵⁰

片云过城头
黄鹂上戍楼
塞花飘客泪
边柳挂乡愁
白发悲明镜
青春换敝裘
君从万里使
闻已到瓜州⁵³

Clouds blow past the town,
Orioles fly above the watch towers.
Frontier blossoms flutter – a traveller's tears,
Borderland willows droop – homesick sorrows.
White headed, sighing with sadness before a clear mirror,
Green spring,⁵¹ changing my ragged clothes.⁵²
You have been sent on a mission ten thousand *li* away,
I hear that you have already reached Guazhou.

50 Wuwei 武威 was the headquarters of the Hexi Military Commissioner 河西节度使. Jinchang 晋昌, also known as Guazhou 瓜州, had its governing headquarters east of modern day Anxi county 安西县, Gansu province. See *CSJJZ*, p. 90.

51 As in nearing the end of one's youth.

52 The *CSJJZ* comments that this and the preceding line are expressive of the poet-narrator's frustration with lack of any real success or recognition. See *CSJJZ*, p. 90.

53 *CSJJZ*, p. 89.

河西春暮忆秦中

At Hexi in Late Spring and Remembering Qinzhong⁵⁴

渭北春已老
 河西人未归
 边城细草出
 客官梨花飞
 别后乡梦数
 昨来家信稀
 凉州三月半
 犹未脱寒衣⁵⁷

North of the Wei river⁵⁵ Spring is already nearing its end,
 This man in Hexi has yet to return.
 Fine grasses have sprouted up in the frontier town,
 Pear blossoms at the guesthouse are flying.
 Since leaving I often dream of home,
 Letters from home are fewer by the day.
 In the middle of the third month at Liangzhou,⁵⁶
 And still I have yet to take off my winter clothes.

54 Qinzhong 秦中 refers to Guanzhong 关 a region equivalent to modern day central Shaanxi province. See *CSJJZ*, p. 90.
 Qinzhong also functions as an indirect reference to Chang'an. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 26.

55 North of the Wei river near modern day Xi'an 西安. In the poem, the river is also a geographic gesture towards Chang'an. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 26.

56 A former name of Wuwei commandery 武威郡. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 26.

57 *CSJJZ*, p. 90.

临洮客舍留别祁四

无事向边外
至今仍不归
三年绝乡信
六月未春衣
客舍洮水聒

孤城胡雁飞
心知别君后
开口笑应稀⁶¹

Parting From Qi Le at Lintao⁵⁸ Guesthouse

No urgent matters here beyond the frontier,
I have so far yet to return.
Three years without letters from home,
In the sixth month and no Spring clothes to wear.⁵⁹
At the guesthouse the waters of the Tao river⁶⁰ grate
my ears;
A solitary town, *Hu* geese fly overhead.
My heart knows that after parting from you
It will be rare that my mouth will open with laughter.

58 Southwest of today's Lintan 临潭, Gansu province.

59 The *CSJJZ* notes on p. 97 that with years having passed without any messages having been delivered from home, a new change of clothes would consequently be similarly absent. This situation is opposite of that found in Xu Hun's 许浑 (791-858) "Below the Frontier" ("Sai xia" 塞下): "Evening battle north of the Sang'gan,/Half the Qin [i.e. Tang] soldiers do not return./ In the morning there is a letter from home/Sent along with new campaign clothes. 夜战桑干北, 秦兵半不归. 朝来有乡信, 犹自寄征衣. See *QTS* 538.6135.

60 The Tao river originates at Xiqing mountain 西倾山 in the Qinghai 青海 Gansu region, and flows east through Lintao before entering the Yellow River.

61 *CSJJZ*, p. 97.

赴北庭度陇思家

When Heading to Beiting and Passing Long Mountain I
Think of Home⁶²

西向轮台万里余
也知乡信日应疏

West towards Luntai⁶³ is over ten thousand *li*,
I also know that letters from home will be scarcer
by the day.

陇山鹦鹉能言语
为报家人数寄书⁶⁴

The parrots of Long mountain are able to speak:
Send word for me and inform those at home to send
more letters.⁶⁵

62 After returning to Chang'an in 751, Cen Shen returned to the frontier in 754 to serve on the staff of Feng Changqing 封常清. Beiting's 北庭 original territory is north of present day Jimusa'er 吉木萨尔 Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

63 Tang dynasty Luntai 轮台 was located in the environs of today's Miqian county 米泉县, Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

64 CSJZ, p. 141.

65 The parrots of Long mountain can be found just under six hundred years earlier in Mi Heng's 弥衡 (173-198) "Rhapsody on a Parrot" ("Yingwu fu" 鹦鹉赋). The poem is "the most important extant work by Mi Heng...an eccentric, unpredictable and sometimes arrogant young genius who lived at the end of the Han dynasty...It is ostensibly a representative example of the subgenre of the rhapsody known as 咏物赋 (*yongwu fu* "rhapsody on an object")...The first third of the rhapsody is a treatment of the background and rare properties of the parrot. It is the remaining sixty-odd lines that the poet...expresses the parrot's misery over its fate and captive state...an allegorical plea to be freed from his own captivity and allowed to return north [after having offended Cao Cao 曹操 and banished south]". See William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, pp. 625-626 and William T. Graham, Jr., "Mi Heng's Rhapsody on a Parrot", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Jun., 1979), pp. 39-54, especially pp. 42, 50. The parrots' language skills and habitat can be found early in Mi Heng's poem: "This marvellous bird from the Western Region,/Endowed by nature with unusual beauty,/Possesses the bright flames of the fire element./Intelligent and capable of speech./Clever and gifted with foreknowledge...Thus the emperor,/Attracted by its far-reaching reputation,/Admiring the beauty of its form,/Sends his forester to the Long Mountains,/Dispatches Bo Yi to the Moving Sands./Deploys archers across Kunlun,/Spreads nets about the clouds and rainbows..." See William Graham, tr., "Mi Heng's Rhapsody on a Parrot", pp. 45-46. 唯西域之灵鸟兮, 挺自然之奇姿. 体金精之妙质兮, 合火德之明辉. 性辩慧而能言兮, 才聪明以识机...于是羨芳声之远畅, 伟灵表之可嘉. 命虞人于陇坻, 诏伯益于流沙. 跨昆仑而播弋, 冠云霓而张罗. See *Wenxuan* 13.25-26 in *SKQS*.

临洮泛舟赵仙舟自北庭罢使还京

Boating at Lintao: Dismissed From Office
Zhao Xianzhou Returns to the Capital From
Beiting⁶⁶

白发轮台使
边功竟不成

White haired envoy from Luntai,
In the end your meritorious service at the frontier was
all for nought.

云沙万里地
孤负一书生
池上风回舫
桥西雨过城
醉眠乡梦罢
东望羨归程⁶⁷

This land of clouds and sand for ten thousand *li*
Let down a scholar such as yourself.
On the lake winds blow the boat about,
West of the bridge the rain falls down on the town.
In drunken sleep dreams of home dissipate;
Gazing east I envy your return journey.

66 Lintao 临洮 was a garrison town located west of today's Lintan 临潭, Gansu province.

67 CSJZ, p. 142.

敬酬李判官使院即事见呈

Respectfully Presented in Response to
Administrative Assistant Li's "Impromptu at the
Government Office"

公府日无事

Everyday passes with nothing to do at the regional
headquarters,⁶⁸

吾徒只是闲

All of us here are idle.

草根侵柱础

Grass roots are eroding the pillars' foundations,

苔色上门关

Moss is growing on the doors.

饮⁶⁹砚时见鸟

Birds are often seen drinking from ink slabs,

卷帘晴对山

Raising the curtains, the clear sky complements
the mountains.

新诗吟未足

Chanting new poems does not bring satisfaction;

昨夜梦东还⁷⁰

Last night I dreamt of returning east.

68 公府 (*gongfu*) here refers to the Beiting Protectorate's headquarters. See Zhang Hui, ed., *Cen Shen biansaishixuan*, p. 71.

69 The *Yingkuilvsui* 瀛奎律髓, a Yuan 元 dynasty compilation of Tang and Song pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic regulated verse edited by Fang Hui 方回 (1227-1306), replaces 饮 (*yin*, drink) with 映 (*ying*, reflect), a variation which produces a translation of "In the ink slab one often sees reflections of birds" 映砚时见鸟. See *Yingkuilvsui* 瀛奎律髓 42.5 in *SKQS*.

70 *CSJJZ*, p. 162.

玉关寄长安李主簿

At Yu Pass,⁷¹ Sent to Assistant Magistrate Li in Chang'an

东去长安万里余
 故人何惜一行书
 玉关西望堪肠断
 况复明朝是岁除⁷²

East to Chang'an is over ten thousand *li*,
 Old friend, oh how I treasure your letters.
 Gazing west from Yu Pass breaks my heart,
 Especially with tomorrow morning being the last day of
 the year.

71 Jade Gate Pass (Yumen guan 玉门关) located near modern day Anxi county 安西县, Gansu province. See *CSJJZ*, p. 168.

72 *CSJJZ*, p. 168.