

# “Lin Daiyu on the Long, Pretty Lady of War”—Ms. Yuexia’s Poetic Creation

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**Abstract**—As a local poet of Gansu during the war period, Ms. Yuexia’s poems have become an integral part of the literary scene in Gansu during this period. Since her creative works were concentrated in the early period of the Anti-Japanese War, Ms. Yuexia’s poems present a somber beauty like the war situation, with distinctive wartime experience and sense of confusion and disillusionment in terms of subject matter, imagery, and emotion. Through Ms. Yuexia’s poetry, we can not only observe the process of learning and absorbing the old and new poetic styles in the debate and competition in the early 1930s, but also understand the real picture of Gansu’s literary world in the period of the Anti-Japanese War on the basis of her poetry.

**Keywords**—Ms. Yuexia, antiwar, Gansu’s literary

## I. INTRODUCTION

Starting from the local anti-Japanese resistance in the early 1930s, as the wartime situation in the eastern part of the country became more and more serious, many colleges and cultural figures chose to “move west”. Lanzhou, as one of the “landing places”, became the center of modern literature development in Northwest China. At the same time, poetry, with its short, concise and easy-to-recite and read characteristics, became an important part of the development of modern literature in Northwest China. During this period, the development of poetry in Gansu showed an upward spiral, and under the dedicated exploration of many Gansu poets (including foreign and local poets), the development of poetry in Gansu during the war period was in a favorable situation. Based on the newspapers and periodicals published in Gansu during the war period, and on the basis of collecting the poems of Ms. Yuexia, a local poet, this paper is also devoted to sorting out the poetic activities and phenomena before and after the transition, and to analyzing the internal reasons for the “transition” as well as the external manifestations of the “transition”. By analyzing the development of poetry in this region, it will help us to further understand the modern literary landscape of Gansu during the war period, and enrich the study of the overall situation of poetry creation in the country during the war period.

It should be emphasized that two transformations took place in Gansu poetry during the war period. The first transformation took place before and after the Lugou Bridge Incident in 1937. Before that, the poetry world continued the creative concept of “art for art’s sake” in the 1920s, and aesthetic and decadent poetic styles prevailed for a while, with representative works such as Zhi Cheng’s “Night Journey” and “Question”, and fewer works full of national passion; after that, the war had already burned to the interior of the country, and the cry of full-scale war united all walks of life, and many writers gradually abandoned the lowly and

superficial creative styles of the early days of the war. After that, the war had already burned inland, and the cry of total resistance united people from all walks of life. Many writers gradually abandoned the creative style of the early days of the war, and carried out the dual quenching of survival and spirituality. However, as the transition was still in the exploratory period, the poetry of this period also suffered from low artistic level and roughness.

The second transformation took place after 1939. The fact that Chen Jingrong and Sha Lei began editing the Gansu Republican Daily’s Grassland Literary Supplement may have been an important opportunity for the birth of this transformation. Since then, poets no longer regarded poetry as a mere propaganda tool as they did in the early days of the war, but returned to poetry and turned to exploring and discussing many issues of the art of poetry itself, such as the “metrical problem of poetry” and the “phonological problem of poetry”, “The creators also reached a consensus on the future of poetry development in Gansu, that is, “the development of poetry should take the road of nationalist literature and art! The creators also reached a consensus on the future of poetry development in Gansu, that is, “the development of poetry should follow the path of nationalist literature and art.

Ms. Yuexia’s poetry is a combination of both: she has a feminine and tender side, but in the face of national crisis, she is brave enough to explore, thus showing a male chivalrous side as well.

## II. MS. YUEXIA ON THE LITERARY SCENE

Ms. Yuexia, formerly known as Zhao Yuexia (1906–1938), once known as Zhao Juying, Lintao, Gansu (formerly known as Didao). Looking through the major newspapers of the Republic of China period, poems with the pen name “Ms. Yuexia” always come to mind, “Xia”, “Yuexia”, “Ms. Xia” or similar “Ju” or “Ju”. “Xia”, “Yuexia”, “Ms. Xia”, or similar pen names such as “Ju”, “Juying”, etc. are also common.

According to the author’s statistics, there are more than fifty of her poems, mostly in the form of group poems, which are scattered in various publications issued in Gansu during the wartime, such as Gansu Republican Daily and Northwest Daily. These poems can be categorized into ancient and modern genres, and were written and published between 1930 and 1938.

It was not by chance that Ms. Yuexia started her career in the literary world, but rather, it had an important connection with her upbringing, educational background, and life experience:

On the one hand, she was nurtured by poetry. Ms. Yuexia’s

hometown has been known as “Lanzhou backyard garden”, the Taohe River through the city, a small city born in the water, so there is “Lintao”. Has the living water the place easy to breed also is suitable to feed the talent, Lintao since ancient times for the northwest famous euphony, the ancient silk road main road, the edge of this special geographic position Lintao has become the border fortress, the battlefield symbol.

The Tang Dynasty poet Wang Bo, Wang Changling, Li Bai, Gao Shi, Cen Sen and so on had successively come to Lintao, wrote hundreds of Lintao and Lintao-related border poems, according to the “Dingxi County Records” record, here also appeared the highest peak of the cattle, Ah Xin and other famous poets. More importantly, Lintao local government since the Xinhai revolution to local education support is bigger, can be said to get modern enlightened education sound first.

From establishes the Di Dao (now Lintao) the county to establish the primary female school to the upgrading to the provincial women’s teacher’s school, Lintao area unceasingly conveys the fresh blood for the literary world at that time, Ms. Yuexia is among them the important member.

On the other hand is the wartime environment influence. According to “Gansu literature and history material selection” records “the memory of Di Dao protects the law movement”, can observe that because Lintao is close to Lanzhou, so in the war period here often becomes all kinds of war activities subsidiary position, sometimes shrouded in the smoke.

Family, society and so on all kinds of reasons prompted Zhao Yuexia to run away from home, she graduated from Lanzhou Zhongshan University (now Lanzhou University) in her early years to specialize in Chinese language, and later served as the executive officer of Lanzhou City Culture Promotion Association as well as the executive director of Gansu Women’s Society and so on, also can be said to be the forerunner of Gansu women’s liberation movement.

The outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War gave the literary and art circles a new task to fight.

As Gansu was a backwater, the enlightenment and growth of the people was an important condition for the growth of the anti-Japanese national force, so during her stay in Lan, Ms. Yuexia often organized literary salons, which also contributed to her outstanding achievements in poetry.

### III. ANALYSIS OF MS. YUEXIA’S POETIC CREATION

#### *A. Choice of Imagery—The Desolation of the Long Beach Adds Sadness*

Humorous Contemplation” is one of Ms. Yuexia’s masterpieces. This poem was written in 1933 and included in “Gansu Republican Daily”, the whole poem is as follows: Holding a lost and lonely mood, I come alone in this desolate countryside. The rusty and annoying autumn colors have stirred up a tide of sad thoughts. There are no brightly colored flowers, no green grass. I’m not sure if you’re looking for a place for your dreamy youth, but I’m sure you’re looking for a place for your dreamy youth. The cold autumn wind is blowing, and the scattered fallen leaves are fluttering. The willow of the long embankment is sparse, and the broken lotus of the deserted pond is rustling; the wilderness of late

fall, the winds of a foreign land. This kind of bleak! Sleazy! Frozen clouds and miserable winds, cold smoke and grass; lonely Hong flying across the remote homeward journey, the evening colcolors send a mournful tone. The old and withered forest tops, hanging diagonally with a touch of sunset. Silence and sadness of the ancient city, there are ten thousand wisps of smoke lingering. The traveler who walks alone! The traveler who walks alone in Fujian, looking at his hometown, is a long way away.

At this time, the national poetry scene was in the transition period from the 1920s to the 1930s, and the poetry world was full of different colors, both the continuation of the early 1920s “Yu Dafu-style” whispering school of poetry, but also follow the left-wing revolutionary writers based on the revolution and the reality of the school.

Ms. Yuexia’s poetry belongs to the former, and “Humorous Contemplation” is one of her masterpieces. In the poem, “The cold autumn wind is blowing/the cold and messy fallen leaves are floating/the defeated willows on the long embankment are thinning/the remnants of the lotus in the deserted pond are rustling/the wilderness in the late autumn/the scenery of a foreign land/is this bleak/the returning honggs are flying over the remote return journey/the evening anvils are sending the cool tones”. In the autumn wind, the image of the poetess wandering in a foreign land jumps out on the paper [1].

Wang Fuzhi also said in “Poetry”: “The heart of a gentleman is sympathetic with heaven and earth, with fowl, fish, birds and trees, and with women and small people [2]. All of them have their own feelings, and all of them have their own way of using them.

The new poems have been in the ascendant since the birth of the new poems, and they have inherited the new poems from the new poets. Since the birth of new poetry, it has been exploring its own way on the basis of inheriting ancient poetry, but the way of expressing emotions through scenery is the same as that of ancient poetry.

Reading Ms. Yuexia’s poems carefully, one can find the sadness and expression techniques in Lin Daiyu’s poems. From the point of view of poetry generation theory, the creation of a poem is the process of feeling and expression of feelings, since ancient times, poets have been writing poems in pursuit of inner truth, that is, “rhetoric to establish its sincerity”.

Ms. Yuexia first sees “falling leaves”, “long embankment”, “defeated willows” and “deserted pond”, and through these scenes in her eyes and then in the heart stirred up feelings of sadness, “deep speech Fries Yue, like a swimming fish with a hook and out of the abyss”, and then express it in words.

What is noticeable is that the imagery of the scenery in the poem is inevitably with local characteristics, Lanzhou is located in the west, cold and dry in the fall and winter, the poem’s “flying” “falling leaves” is a common scene in the west, followed by the poet with “long embankment” “barren pond” and “long embankment”.

Immediately after the poet used “long embankment” “barren pond” these with a sense of depression sad imagery again echoed the theme of “the scenery of a foreign land is this bleak”. And then look at the “evening anvil sends a cool tone” and Li Bai’s “Chang’an piece of the moon, ten thousand households pounding clothes” have the same flavor,

the difference is that Li Bai describes the women's thoughts about their husbands outside the war, and here pouring out is Ms. Yuexia's feelings of homesickness [3].

All of the above imagery thanks to the poet focused on focusing on the sad and bleak emotional experience, taste and contemplation, and ultimately constitute an isolated and self-contained emotional world; and read the poem of others, because the imagery elements of this poem dense atmosphere of the sense of evoking their own inner experience, as the author of the same sadness, which is the new poem compared to the ancient style of poetry has a sense of permeability [4].

#### *B. Emotional Foundation—The Destruction of the Country and the Death of the Family Adds to the Sadness*

A word of pear blossom falls, talent does not live up to spring. Although Zhao Yuexia was a talented woman, she eventually failed to escape the end of her life. She had only a short life of thirty years, but lost her husband and son in her thirties, a double blow physically and mentally for a woman in the war years.

Her husband, Peng Ling, probably died in the spring of 1934, as can be learned from her eulogy, *Mourning for Her Late Husband, Peng Ling*. Peng Ling was also an intellectual, and published a critical article in *Flowers of Freedom*, "Marco Polo was not the first Westerner to travel to the East", and was also a person who had received advanced thinking.

The relationship between Peng Ling and Zhao Yuexia was very deep, otherwise Zhao Yuexia's poetic style would not have been so sad in the later period—"There are no tears in the tears of lovesickness, and the waist is thin and gradually knows that the clothes are wide.

I have no place to send my grief now, but the wind and the rain force me to be cold at times. I have been walking alone on the deserted path, and the lonely poplar tomb is locked in the cold smoke.

The paper ash flowers and fruits can become butterflies, and I will send my love thoughts to the nine springs." The last line of this poem is comparable to the famous poem of the Tang Dynasty, Yuan Zhen, which reads, "I still think of my old love for the maidservant, and I once sent money because of a dream. Also expressing Ms.

Yuexia's feelings of longing is "Traces of Dreams," published in December 1934, which reads, "Last night in a dream / I dreamed of Yi / lazily / stumbling in the shade of flowers/suddenly we met again/how could I withstand the madness of grief and joy? / Ten years of longing for each other / Only tonight can I tell you in detail / The breeze sent me a cool feeling / Oh, so it was in a dream / The disoriented dream marks / How can I make it up again /".

Ms. Yuexia's poetic style can also be divided into two types according to the change of her state of mind - the early part of the poem is more scenic, while the later part of the poem tends to be more elegiac and poignant.

Published on February 28, 1936, "Broken Hearted Words—Weeping Belonging to Lan'er" deeply expresses the broken heartedness of a mother when she loses her child: "I heard my child crying in my arms, and I burned the lamp to illuminate him. For whom do I mend the needle and thread in my hand, and for whom do I ask for milk when I call my mother?"

The road between the springs is so vast that I can't see my

sister. The little souls will come back early and meet your parents often." This is written by Zhao Yuexia to her late son, and in the endnote there is this record: "The eldest daughter, Little Warrior, also died of illness the year before last."

This would indicate that Zhao Yuexia's children all died of illness. In a peaceful world, the pain of losing a loved one could be eased a bit, but in a time of danger, who would have the patience to listen to this tragic mother?

Against this backdrop, Zhao Yuexia's poems become more and more sorrowful.

#### *C. Focus on the Subject Matter—Tenderness and Ambition are All in the Heart*

Zhao Yuexia's poems are not all about sadness in spring and autumn, moonlight and flowers, but there are also masterpieces that show the woman's heroic temperament, such as "Feelings of the Bandits' Rebellion in the Di River: I can't send my sadness alone, and I'm going to the creek to put my fishing rod".

The sky is filled with murderous atmosphere, and wolves invade Zisan. The guest house was heavy with tears, and the hometown was far away. The country is full of generals' hatred, and the warriors are busy with the frequent smoke of beacons. The same sentiment is also "To Occupy the Sentimental Three States", Beacon fire is forcing people to be pitiful, and the sadness of 10,000 households is no longer cooking smoke.

Tired withered bones are sprinkled on the harvest field, and heads are thrown out of the stone. These poems are all in ancient style and are in seven lines, but they are as loud as a stone. The bloodshed of these poems written by Ms.

Yuexia lies in the fact that the poet has captured the group that should be expressed the most—the people, i.e., she writes about the wounds and pains brought by the war from the perspective of the people's daily life, and once again makes people realize the interdependent and intermingled relationship between the individual and the war, and between the self and the nation.

Published on December 19, 1933, "Spiritual Light" is a work more closely related to the theme of the times: "The faint light of my life is like a little spiritual fire in the wilderness/in the silence of the cold night/floating in the darkness of the universe / shining in the darkness of the forests/cannot reveal the tragic curtain of the world/cannot illuminate the social filth / the people who have lost their way! I can't act as a street lamp / to lead you to the light / to bear / to bear / to see you groping in the dark / to see you go astray." At this time, two years had passed since the September 18th Incident, and the whole society was in a tense localized war of resistance, with most of the people suffering from both material and mental torture. In this low atmosphere of "black clouds pressing down on the city and wanting to destroy it", the social environment of the big night is unchangeable by a few people, but the sense of responsibility of intellectuals such as Zhao Yuexia is something that is looked for and advocated at that time and even nowadays.

The heavy pressure of the environment made her powerless, and she could only make the mournful sound of "the faint light of my life...can't unveil the tragic curtain of the human world, and can't illuminate the meanness of the society".

Compared with ancient poems, although modern poems

also have the meaning of “expressing one’s will”, they are mostly straightforward and slightly crude in their expression. In the wartime environment, poetry works may be produced in the street, may also appear on the battlefield, in the national crisis erupted, the Chinese nation is facing the risk of extinction of the country, the literary works no longer pay too much attention to the artistic attainments, to the masses of the people’s emotional advocacy has become the first key to the anti-war poetry.

The meaning of Ms. Zhao Yuexia’s poems was thus sublimated, as she said, “Literary changes depend on the world’s situation, and the rise and fall of a nation depends on the order of time.

#### IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MS. YUEXIA’S POETRY

The aftermath of the 1930s is still lingering, and the trumpet of war continues to blow.

Countless benevolent men and women were running around in the wind and waves of the war, attempting to burn their aspirations with their writings; there were also some poets who were living in a remote area, murmuring and singing in their own inner worlds, and there were also some people who were creating new forms in the combination of tradition and modernity, and were thinking more about the development of local literature.

Gansu is located inland, and the Japanese invasion swept in from the coast, and because the terrain of this region is easy to defend and difficult to attack, Gansu was in a relatively stable environment during the war period, and also became a reserve soil for cultivating new forces.

As a result, the literary and artistic circles in Gansu gradually became active under the impetus of the objective environment of the big time [5].

Motivated by the anti-Japanese zeal, these young men and women left their families and schools to fight against the enemy and cultivate themselves painstakingly at the same time. With the establishment of the “All-China Literary and Artistic Community Anti-Enemy Association” in 1937, Gansu’s literary organizations and groups have also responded to the strength of the literary and artistic community was screwed together, becoming a soft power in the struggle against the enemy, literary and artistic publications have risen with the rise of literary and artistic associations around the world have become prosperous.

Counting the articles published in major Gansu publications during the war period, we can find that women’s creativity was much higher than in any other period before, as Hu Feng recounted in *The War of Resistance Against the Japanese Nation and the New Tradition of Literature and Art*: “Discovering the people is discovering the society, or rather discovering the society is discovering the people.” “The May Fourth Movement awakened the people and illuminated the world of women [6].

Most of the poems published in Gansu during the war period were written for the sake of the war, whether they were academic or literary in nature, they were generally aimed at exposing the facts, inspiring the people’s anti-Japanese zeal, and depicting the prospects of the war [7].

Sun Yutang expressed his definition of “anti-war poetry” in “Talking about ‘Anti-war Poetry’”: Although the content of poetry should encompass the whole universe and life, in a

certain era, only certain special subjects, including Thoughts, sentiments, feelings, forms, etc. are considered good poems [8], this is the “literary hobby of the age”, and the hobby of the people of an age for a kind of poetic content, we can give a name to it as the “poetic sentiment of the age”.

On the whole, however, the creations of Gansu poets in the pre-war period, such as Zhao Yuexia, were mostly in the middle of inner depression, depicting very little of the national masses, with a single choice of materials, and focusing on antiquity in terms of technique, with decorative interest and trivial carving. However, the contribution made by this group of writers to the poetry scene in Gansu at the beginning of the war should not be overlooked [9].

It is worthwhile to recognize that, for one thing, literary workers like Ms. Yuexia have made some achievements in both short lyrical poems and long narrative poems, which made the new poems become an important force to reflect the reality; for another, the anti-war poems, as a product of a specific era, often need many poets and years of attempts to form, and often appear tender and simple at the early stage of the war, and need to undergo the metamorphosis process for its development and growth.

The process of its development and growth is even more necessary to undergo a metamorphosis [10].

They tried to penetrate new themes and new phenomena in the spirit of national democratic revolution with gradually burning political enthusiasm, to publicize and educate the readers, to raise the self-confidence and self-esteem of the people and nation, and to lay the foundation for the victory of the national war of resistance.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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