



Trinity Saint David

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Corresponding Writing Method and Emotional Deepening: The Artistic Mechanisms and Poetic Significance of the ‘corresponding writing method’ in the *Poems*

1. Introduction

In the lyrical tradition of classical Chinese poetry, ‘writing from the opposite perspective’ (often called the ‘corresponding writing method’) is a distinctive artistic technique. The poet does not speak directly of his own longing; instead, he imagines how the other person longs for him. As the Qing-dynasty scholar Bian Lianbao (邊連寶) wrote in *Du Lü Qimeng* 杜律啟蒙: ‘Whenever I long for someone, it is always more profound to say that the other person longs for me. This technique began with the *Poems Zhi Hu* 陟岵.’¹ Modern scholars have also pointed out that the corresponding writing method ‘breaks the boundaries of time and space to describe the other person’s actions and thoughts... its earliest use can be traced back to the *Poems*.’² However, most existing studies only identify the technique itself and do not offer a systematic analysis of how it works differently across *Poems*. This article selects three representative works—*Zhi Hu*, *Juan Er*, and *Dong Shan*—to examine the three basic forms of the corresponding writing method and their artistic functions. It shows how this technique deepens emotion through role-reversal experience.

2. Direct Quotation-Style Corresponding Writing: ‘Speaking My

¹ Bian Lianbao 邊連寶, *Du Lü Qimeng* 杜律啟蒙 (block-printed edition, Qianlong 乾隆 42, 1777), p. 29.

² Gao Jie 高婕, ‘Yaoyuan de xiangxiang — Shijing zhong “dui mian luo bi” de shoufa tanxi’ 遙遠的想像——《詩經》中「對面落筆」的手法探析, *Qingnian Shidai* 青年時代, 2020.

Heart Through Another's Mouth' in *Zhi Hu*

The three stanzas of *Zhi Hu* describe a soldier climbing a hill and thinking of home. He imagines in turn the instructions given by his father, mother, and elder brother. Each stanza follows the same pattern: he climbs a certain mountain, looks toward a family member, and then uses 'someone says' to introduce the imagined words of concern:

Alas! My son is on service, Day and night without rest.
Alas! My youngest is on service, Day and night without sleep.
Alas! My younger brother is on service, Day and night without a companion.³

The key point of the *Poems* is that the soldier does not say 'I miss my family' directly. Instead, he 'borrows' the voices of his family members to express their concern for him. Dai Jun'en (戴君恩) praised the *Poems* as 'using the parents' words to write one's own feelings — this is the technique of 'taking over another's body and soul'.⁴ The phrase 'taking over another's body and soul' perfectly captures the poet's skill in entering another person's viewpoint and speaking through their voice. Fang Yurun (方玉潤), in *Shi Jing Yuan Shi* 詩經原始, further explains its aesthetic value: 'If one wrote directly about missing one's family, even thousands of words could not fully express the feeling. The beauty of the *Poems* lies in imagining from the opposite side... the writing becomes more effective by being indirect, and the emotion becomes deeper by being gentle.'⁵ These four characters — 'indirect writing, gentle emotion' — reveal the core mechanism of direct-quotation corresponding writing: the roundabout path of narration brings subtlety and greater depth to emotional expression.

³ Mao Heng 毛亨, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Mao Shi Zheng Yi* 毛詩正義 (Peking University Press, 1999). (quoted passage translated by AI)

⁴ Dai Junenc 戴君恩, *Du Feng Yi Ping* 讀風臆評 (Min Qiji, [Ming dynasty], *zhu mo tao yin ben* 朱墨套印本).

⁵ Fang Yurun 方玉潤, *Shi Jing Yuan Shi* 詩經原始 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986), p. 246.

3. Subject-Splitting-Style Corresponding Writing: The Splitting and Unification of ‘I’ in *Juan Er*

The opening stanza of *Juan Er* begins with the image of picking mouse-ear without filling the basket. The next three stanzas suddenly shift to scenes of mountain climbing, wine drinking, and exhaustion of both rider and horse. Qian Zhongshu (錢鍾書), in *Guan Zhui Bian* 管錐編, describes the structure as ‘telling two stories at once,’ noting that ‘both husband and wife are characters in the *Poems*, and the poet speaks for both, so each says “I”.’⁶ The ‘I’ in the first stanza belongs to the wife longing for her husband; the ‘I’ in the latter three stanzas belongs to the husband on campaign. The two narratives share the same first-person pronoun, creating a unique ‘double I’ structure.

From the viewpoint of ‘writing from the opposite perspective,’ *Juan Er* is even more radical than *Zhi Hu*. It does not merely let the other person appear in dialogue; it lets the distant person directly occupy the narrative subject position, with ‘I’ carrying the situation of the one who is longed for. As Gao Jie observes: ‘The more fatigue the imagined distant person suffers, the deeper we feel the woman’s worry.’⁷ This means that the husband’s hardships in the latter three stanzas — the horse growing weary, turning yellow, becoming ill, and the servant also exhausted⁸ — still serve the wife’s lyrical expression. The two subjects achieve emotional fusion through the single word ‘I’. The boundary between the one who longs and the one longed for dissolves.

⁶ Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, *Guan Zhui Bian* 管錐編 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1979).

⁷ Gao Jie 高捷, ‘Yaoyuan de xiangxiang — Shijing zhong “dui mian luo bi” de shoufa tanxi’ 遙遠的想像——《詩經》中「對面落筆」的手法探析.

⁸ Mao Heng 毛亨, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Mao Shi Zheng Yi* 毛詩正義. (quoted passage translated by AI)

4. Reality-and-Imagination-Interwoven-Style Corresponding

Writing: Multi-Layered Imaginary Space in *Dong Shan*

Dong Shan is a long *Poems* about a soldier returning home after war. On his journey home he repeatedly imagines the state of his house and his wife. In the second stanza he pictures the desolation of home: ‘The fruit of the gourd hangs from the eaves. Earwigs are in the room. Spiders are on the door.’ In the third stanza he imagines his wife: ‘The stork cries on the ant-hill; my wife sighs in the room. She sweeps and tidies the house, for my return is near.’⁹

Gao Jie points out that this imagination ‘breaks the limitations of time and space.’¹⁰ The soldier uses imagination to rebuild the present condition of his home and his wife’s waiting. The lines ‘my wife sighs in the room’ and ‘my return is near’ are placed side by side. The wife’s sigh gains meaning because the husband is coming back, and the husband’s longing grows more urgent because of his wife’s waiting. This creates a double application of the corresponding writing method: the soldier expresses his concern for his wife by imagining her sigh, and he strengthens his own desire for reunion by imagining her cleaning the house in anticipation. The alternation between imaginary and real scenes expands ‘writing from the opposite perspective’ from a single image into a multi-layered psychological drama.

5. Conclusion: The Poetic Significance of the Corresponding

Writing Method and Its Foundational Role in Tradition

⁹ Mao Heng 毛亨, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, *Mao Shi Zheng Yi* 毛詩正義. (quoted passage translated by AI)

¹⁰ Gao Jie 高捷, ‘*Yaoyuan de xiangxiang — Shijing zhong “dui mian luo bi” de shoufa tanxi*’ 遙遠的想像——《詩經》中「對面落筆」的手法探析.

Looking at these three *Poems*, the corresponding writing method in the *Poems* shows clear differences in its specific mechanisms: *Zhi Hu* achieves indirect emotional expression through direct quotation; *Juan Er* merges the one who longs and the one longed for into one through the splitting and fusion of the narrative subject; *Dong Shan* builds multi-layered imaginary space through the alternation of real and imagined scenes. Yet in emotional logic the three *Poems* are highly consistent, they do not speak of one's own longing directly but of the other missing oneself; they do not pour out emotion straightforwardly but turn it into tangible scenes through imagination.

The poetic significance of the corresponding writing method can be summarised in three mechanisms: first, externalising emotion by turning invisible longing into concrete images of the other person's words and actions; second, shifting perspective by introducing the viewpoint of 'me in the eyes of the other,' which creates an emotional loop; third, role-reversal experience, in which the lyrical subject tries to enter the other's situation and feelings, raising one-way longing to two-way shared feeling. Fang Yurun's phrase 'indirect writing, gentle emotion'¹¹ neatly sums up the aesthetic effect of this mechanism.

Bian Lianbao's statement that 'this technique began with '*Zhi Hu*' and has been widely used in later poetry'¹² accurately places the origin of corresponding writing in the *Poems*. Du Fu's 'Moonlit Night' ('Tonight the moon shines over Fuzhou; in the chamber she alone gazes') and Wang Wei's 'Remembering My Brothers on the Ninth Day of the Ninth Month' ('Everyone has inserted dogwood, but one person is missing') are classic examples of writing from the opposite perspective. Their distant roots go straight back to *Poems* such as *Zhi Hu* and *Juan Er*. The three forms of corresponding writing found in the *Poems* — direct-quotation type, subject-splitting type, and reality-imagination interweaving type — provided the basic models for the later development

¹¹ Fang Yurun 方玉潤, *Shi Jing Yuan Shi* 詩經原始, p. 246.

¹² Bian Lianbao 邊連寶, *Du Lü Qimeng* 杜律啟蒙, p. 29.

of this technique in classical Chinese poetry. They reveal the central importance of 'role-reversal experience' as a mechanism for emotional deepening in Chinese poetics.

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