Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Art, Design and Social Sciences
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

Deploying Method According to the Title: On the Techniques of Examining the Title in Qing Poetics of the Examination Poem

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Abstract. After the twenty-second year of the Qianlong reign, the five-character eight-rhyme examination poem was gradually introduced into the imperial examinations at every level, and examining the title became a core issue in the poetics of the examination poem. Drawing on the examination-poem commentary and the writings on poetic method by Ji Yun, Ye Bao, Liang Zhangju and others, the techniques of examining the title that Qing writers summed up can be sorted out along three dimensions: the meaning of the title, the eye of the title, and the types of the title. Examining the meaning of the title requires investigating the original intent of the source of the poem title and weighing what to keep and what to discard in light of the context of the examination; discerning the eye of the title lies mainly in clarifying which words on the surface of the title are primary and which are secondary, and in attending to how the meaning of the title blends with the scene of the poem; dividing the types of the title turns individual experience of writing into a general pattern that can be referred to. This technical system of "deploying method according to the title" both reorganized the experience, found in earlier poetics, of conceiving meaning and arranging layout, and reflected the deep influence of the examination system on the form of poetic knowledge in the Qing, and it provides a reference for understanding how poetics and the examinations acted on each other.

Keywords: examination poem, Qing poetics, techniques of examining the title, deploying method according to the title

1. Introduction

The examination poem was set by the authorities together with a fixed rhyme, its titles were mostly taken from the classics, the histories, the philosophical writings and the collected works, from lines by earlier poets, and from institutions and current affairs, and the writing had to follow the title. But what is called fitting the title does not mean copying the original intent of the source; one should rather move from the surface of the title to an analysis of the meaning of the title, and weigh and adjust the original intent of the source within the limits of the form of examination composition, so as to settle what the whole poem should say. Qing discussions of the examination poem also, through discerning the eye of the title, explained where in the title one should begin to write, and

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DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

divided poem titles into different categories, summing up methods that could be used for reference. This paper takes the examination-poem commentary and the discussions of poetic method by Mao Qiling, Ji Yun, Ye Bao, Liang Zhangju and others as its main material, examines how Qing writers examined the title and explained the title, sums up their concrete techniques, and shows how the understanding of a poem title was carried into the writing of examination poems.

2. Examining the meaning of the title: the original intent of the source and examination composition

The examination poem was written to a set title for the examinations and had to keep close to the title, but when Qing writers discussed examination poems they further distinguished "the surface of the title" from "the meaning of the title". "The surface of the title" is what the words of the title present; "the meaning of the title" is the significance that the poem should develop around that title. In his *Shilü Conghua* Liang Zhangju has remarks criticizing the writers of his time, who often "sought the surface of the title and did not seek the meaning of the title", and he points out that "if the meaning of the title is not attended to, the surface of the title is exhausted in a couple of couplets" [1]. To lay out only the surface of the title without clarifying the meaning of the title makes it hard to organize material, and the poem easily slips into padded lines. Therefore, moving from the surface of the title to seek the meaning of the title is an important basis for settling the conception of the whole poem and for arranging one's writing. Jiang Yin, discussing Ji Yun's commentary on examination poems, also points out: "The title is the first factor, and holding to the title is the most urgent task." [2]

For a poem title taken from the original text of a classic, the writer must first establish the source and work out its original intent, and from the context of the source text clarify what the words in the title refer to and how they relate to each other, and then bring out implications that the surface of the title does not state openly. In the explanatory notes to his *Tangshi Guanlan Ji*, Li Yinpei says: "As for examination poems, they mostly speak of antiquity, and without added commentary one opens the page in confusion and has no way of knowing the poet's design." [3] Establishing the source is therefore also a precondition for understanding the poem's conception. For example, Zhang Mo's *Autumn Moon Shining on Cold Water*, recorded in the *Gengchen Ji*, takes its title from Zhu Xi's *Poems on Feelings Aroused While Dwelling in Retreat*, "reverently I think of the mind of a thousand years, the autumn moon shines on cold water". Ji Yun points out: "Water and moon are the surface of the title; the mind of a thousand years is the meaning of the title." [4] If one writes only from the words of the title, this title seems to be nothing more than a scene of water and moon on an autumn night; once the source text is connected, one learns that what these words sing of concerns the transmission of the Confucian "Daotong", figured as the purity of the mind of the Way and the manifestness of heavenly principle. Zhang Mo's poem uses "the cleared sky is boundless and pure" and "no clouds at all to dot it" to write the clarity of water and moon, quietly suggesting the purity of the mind of the Way; when it comes to "the night air clears the remaining dregs, the source of the mind gains a still view", it carries on the sense of "purity" and moves from the scene before the eyes into the source of the mind. The description of scene in the earlier part already contains the meaning of the title, and so the explicit statement in the later part has something to follow from. Ji Yun's praise, that the poem "is skillful in that everywhere it writes in a blended manner it still holds the original intent, and so does not split into two halves", is precisely an approval of the poet's lodging principle within the description of water and moon, letting the description of scene and the exposition of principle run through one another, and not letting scene and principle be cut apart into "two halves" [4].

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With *An Awl in a Bag*, one has to work out what the surface of the title leaves unsaid through the figurative relation in the source of the title. The title comes from the story of Mao Sui recommending himself in the "Biographies of Lord Pingyuan and Yu Qing" in the *Shiji*, where the point of an awl piercing through the bag figures a worthy man who, once he gets his opportunity, will show his outstanding quality. Commenting on the poem recorded in the *Gengchen Ji*, Ji Yun states clearly: "'In the bag' is the surface of the title; 'showing the point' is the meaning of the title." Although the title takes only the situation of an awl placed in a bag, what has to be written is the sense that it will reveal itself because of its sharpness. The poem by Zhen recorded in the *Gengchen Ji* opens with "the divine awl at the bottom of the bag shows itself, meeting its time the plan is soon fulfilled", first making clear the sense of showing the point when the time comes. Ji Yun also comments on it, saying that "the first four lines first make the meaning of the title clear, the next four lines write the surface of the title directly, the next four lines draw out the meaning of the title, and the end closes with a remaining idea", and he says that its "arrangement is best" [4]. Clarifying the sense of "showing the point" from the source settled the intent of the whole poem, and also gave a basis for the alternating layout of the surface and the meaning of the title.

The meaning of the title arrived at from the source still has to be brought out by means of the surface of the title. Commenting on *The Golden Brake* recorded in the *Gengchen Ji*, Ji Yun says: "This is a title of principle, not a title on an object. To be stupid enough to describe the shape of the golden brake is certainly wrong, and to set out the general idea emptily also fails through emptiness." This title comes from the "Gou" hexagram of the *Yijing*. According to the commentary quoted in the *Gengchen Ji*, the golden brake is here explained as the thing that stops a wheel from turning, and this poem uses that braking function to set out the sense of stopping restlessness and holding to what is right. To write only the shape of the object does not bring out the principle lodged in it; to leave the golden brake aside and discuss stopping restlessness and holding to the right in general terms again easily becomes empty. The lines "holding fast it can confine things, braking it guards against following evil" connect the firm braking of the golden brake with the sense of holding to the right and guarding against evil, and they fit what Ji Yun calls "keeping closely to the image in the *Yijing*, drawing out in full the reason why it stops the carriage, with the proper sense and the comparison both at work, every word closely fitted" [4].

Mao Qiling, commenting on *Clear as Ice in a Jade Pot*, likewise judged the poem by the figurative sense of the source. He points out that Bao Zhao's original line "was originally a comparison with a person's brightness and purity", and he says of Lu Lun's poem that "taking the person as the main thing is how the word 'like' shows" [5]. To write only the shape and colour of the jade pot and the ice still does not necessarily bring out the figurative sense of "clear as"; only when one clarifies what is being compared does one know what should be made the main thing and how to organize the description of the surface of the title.

But a piece written for the examinations does not necessarily follow the sense of the original classic in every respect; one still has to combine the particular surface of the title with the conventions of the examination hall and weigh which meanings in the classic can be carried over and which contents need not be laid out, and when necessary the writer may give the surface of the title another explanation. For example, Huang Tao's *White Clouds Return to the Imperial Village* takes its title from the *Zhuangzi*, "riding those white clouds, arriving at the imperial village". Ji Yun quotes Guo Xiang's commentary "when the breath disperses there is nowhere it does not go", and holds that this title "clearly speaks of ascending far away, and is very hard to put into writing", and so he approves this poem for "treating the title by the title, taking the imperial village directly as the capital" [6], using the white clouds returning to the capital to write of his own going to the capital

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

for the examination. The closing couplet "the traveller follows the day of reckoning, and laughs at himself for being counted among the hemp robes" again lets the white clouds and the candidates in hemp robes going to the capital set each other off. Although this poem does not take up the sense of ascending far away that Ji Yun mentions, it still keeps close to the surface of the title, of white clouds returning to the imperial village, and unfolds from it.

The handling of the title *Spring Grass in Emerald Colour* is also like this. This title comes from Jiang Yan's *Fu on Parting*, "spring grass in emerald colour, spring waters in clear waves, seeing you off at the southern shore, what grief is like this", whose feeling is sorrowful and which is not suited to a piece written for the examination hall. Ji Yun points out: "But this kind of title need not be bound by its source." [6] Once spring grass and emerald colour have been cut out, they can already form a relatively independent title for describing scenery, and so the grief of parting in "seeing you off at the southern shore" need not be carried into the examination poem.

At times the changes that the set title makes in the original line, and the requirement of a fixed rhyme, also affect what is kept and what is discarded in the meaning of the title. Liang Zhangju's *Shilü Conghua* records one case: in the Daoguang period there was once a title like this:

In the "Biographies of the Favorites" in the *Shiji* a proverb is quoted: "working hard at farming is not as good as meeting a good year, being good at office is not as good as meeting with favour." It happened that at the court examination of the wuxu year of the Daoguang reign the title "working hard at farming, meeting a good year" was set with the rhyme character feng, and the whole hall did not know where it came from; only the compiler Niu Songquan, because he had annotated by hand his teacher Minister Li Zhiling's examination poems, in which this title appeared, remembered it in full detail. But the surface of the title is easy to return, the meaning of the title is hard to match, and the source of the title is also hard to set out clearly, and besides, the rhyme is fixed to the character feng, so it seems right to write only the surface of the title and not insist on fixing the meaning of the title. The compiler's opening couplet says: "the proverb is recorded in the historian's work, taking a part to praise the plentiful year." In only ten words every side is covered, and after that one may write the surface of the title freely, and certainly need not entangle oneself again in the meaning of the title. With such a quick mind and a good hand, standing out above his time, even his teacher Zhiling was convinced; it is fitting that he won the ruler's regard above, and that as soon as he had climbed to the highest degree he was repeatedly put in charge of the direction of literary affairs [1].

The saying "working hard at farming is not as good as meeting a good year, being good at office is not as good as meeting with favour" was originally explaining the relation between success and failure in human affairs and the luck of the times, and its original sense carries the negative implication that human effort is not as good as the luck of the times. The set title deleted the words "not as good as" and so on, and the surface of the title no longer directly presents a comparison between human effort and the luck of the times. In Liang Zhangju's view, this title is not hard to approach from the words, and what is hard is both attending to the sense of the luck of the times behind the proverb and arranging the source and the rhyme character feng properly; and since the examination poem takes praise as its form, once one insists on restoring the original sense that human effort is not as good as the luck of the times, one is instead tied hand and foot. Niu Songquan's opening couplet uses only ten words to account for the source, but does not inquire deeply into its original meaning; after that he lays out the surface of the title freely, "working hard at farming" and "meeting a good year", and closes in praise of the plentiful year. Liang Zhangju's remark that in this title "the surface of the title is easy to return, the meaning of the title is hard to match" is precisely because, if one insists on recovering the original intent of the source, one falls instead into the difficulty of not fitting the form and having nowhere to put the brush.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

There is another kind of title whose original intent in the source has nothing improper about it, but which, because the thread of the original classic is too involved, is not suited to being traced through step by step in an examination poem. For example, *It Has Rained and the Clearing Is Also Fine* comes from Du Fu's *Rejoicing in Clear Weather*, "August heaven has long sent no rain; now it has rained and the clearing is also fine". The original line continues from rejoicing in rain after a long drought; it rejoices both in getting rain and in the new clear weather; if one were to trace back the drought that came before, one would have to start writing from before the title. Ji Yun therefore says: "In this line of Du Fu's poem the words 'already' and 'also' originally follow from rejoicing in rain after long drought, but to turn back and seize the thread that leads here is very hard to put into writing. There are titles that cannot be wholly bound by their source, and this kind is one of them." [4] This poem concentrates on depicting the new clearing after rain, and does not trace back the earlier cause of the long drought.

It can be seen that the meaning of the title of an examination poem has to be settled by combining the surface of the title, the original intent of the source, and the requirements of the examination. The original intent of the source can reveal what the surface of the title does not state openly, but when the original meaning is not suited to being carried over, one may also give another explanation based on the surface of the title. However the adaptation is made, the poem still has to fit the surface of the title. Once the meaning of the title is clear, one still has to distinguish which words in the title are primary and which secondary, which are weighty and which light, and settle where one should apply force and where one need only make a passing reference, so as to avoid laying everything out evenly and slipping into vague singing. The Qing analysis of "the eye of the title" is precisely a further explanation of how to grasp what is crucial in the title, and of how to arrange the writing of the whole poem accordingly.

3. Discerning the eye of the title: the primary and secondary on the surface of the title and the arrangement of writing

Once the meaning of the title is clear, how to put brush to the surface of the title still needs further weighing. Although not one word of the surface of the title may be left out, the words differ in being primary or secondary, weighty or light, and one should not apply force evenly to every word in the title. Examining the title is to clarify the structure of the surface of the title, to clarify which is the core and which is subordinate, which is the object the whole poem attends to with emphasis and explains again and again, and which need only be given a slight reference.

Whether a word in the title is weighty or light depends on the role it plays in the whole title. Commenting on Lu Zhi's *Passing the Southern Palace at Dawn and Hearing the New Music of the Grand Director of Music*, Ji Yun sets it against *Candidates for the Examinations Visit the Former Teacher and Hear the Refined Music* and says of the latter: "In 'candidates visit the former teacher and hear the refined music', the former teacher is the master of the title and certainly cannot be left out. In 'hearing music at the southern palace', the southern palace has no further significance, and it may be passed over with a single touch. Each word has its proper place; it is only a matter of being good at examining the meaning of the title." [6] The two titles both write of hearing music, but visiting the former teacher sets the purpose of the ritual music activity; if the former teacher were left out, what was written would easily become an ordinary poem about hearing music, and the point of the candidates' visit would have nothing to attach to. In the other title "the southern palace" mainly marks the place where the music is heard, and once the place is indicated, the response to the sound of the music can still become the focus of description. What Ji Yun calls "each word has its proper place; it is only a matter of being good at examining the meaning of the title" means that one

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

must connect it with the meaning of the title before one can settle which should be laid out with attention and which should be passed over with a single touch.

Since the weight of the words in the title must be clarified from the intent of the whole title, the arrangement of writing should correspond to it. In the title *Rain Hats and Cloaks Gather on the Eastern Fields*, the rain hat and the cloak are rain gear used by farmers at work, and can also be used to show the farmers' activity. But in commenting on Wang Taiyue's poem Ji Yun puts the emphasis on "gather on the eastern fields", saying that "rain hat and cloak" may be "passed over with a single touch", and also saying that "only by writing from the word 'gather' is the weight most clearly distinguished" [4]. Wang's poem does not make the rain gear an object to be sung about; it uses only the couplet "the sound of hats passes with the morning rain, the shadow of cloaks is held in the evening sun" [4], touching it from the side through sound and shadow, and then closes at once. The main thread of the whole poem, meanwhile, always runs around "gathering"; it writes the scene of people gathering on the eastern fields, working together at farming and finally going home together, and it both takes care of the surface of the title, "rain hat and cloak", and does not let the description of the object push the host into the guest's place, and so it can be "most clearly distinguished in weight".

The one or two words on the surface of the title that are most crucial and able to carry up the whole title are called by Qing writers "the eye of the title". In Ji Yun's comments on poems he often uses such expressions as "the eye within the line", "the title weighs on such and such a word", "paying attention to such and such a word" [6]; although he did not give them the single name "the eye of the title", he had already clearly noticed the guiding role that the key words in a title play in writing. Commenting on *Wind and Light Floating above the Grass* he says: "The eye within a line is always a tempered empty word, and when such a word is used to set a title, one must also depict from that empty place; this is what is meant by 'conveying the spirit in a portrait lies exactly in this'." [6] The "empty words" here are spoken mainly in contrast to concrete things and objects, and concern the actions, states and mutual relations of the images in the poem. Ye Bao took over Ji Yun's view and turned it into a more workable method for the examination hall. He says: "My humble note: the poem titles of the examination hall are mostly taken from the set phrases and lines of earlier poets, and what is valued is resembling the spirit, and often much carving is done to seek refinement. Now since the title sets down one or two words and carves them with attention, the writer who grasps the intent should also apply his mind to depicting those words to which attention is directed, so as not to fail the feeling of the title." [7] The eye of the title is exactly the place where the spirit of the original line is most concentrated; it is what the feeling of the title hangs on, and it is also the focus of the carving that seeks refinement.

Ji Yun, commenting on his own *A Piece of the Sound of Peace and of Ya and Song*, also used a key word in the title to fix the meaning of the whole title. This title refers to the sound of chanting in the examination hall; he criticizes the way of comparing the poems and fu written in the hall to Ya and Song and matching them line by line, and he puts the emphasis of the whole poem on the word "sound" [8]. "Ya and Song" therefore cannot be laid out separately from the word "sound", but must be brought into the situation of chanting in the examination hall. To distinguish the weight of the words in a title, one also has to clarify on this basis what each word refers to in the whole title and how the words are connected.

Once the eye of the title settles where the whole poem applies its force, the circumstances and relations it contains also provide a thread for the unfolding of the poem's meaning. The action or change that the eye of the title points to can often be carried forward along what comes before and after it, so that each couplet, while keeping to the same centre of gravity, still makes its own

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advance. In Yuan Zhen's *Counting the Mingshu*, for example, Ji Yun points out: "The title weighs on the word 'counting'; it is not a poem singing of the mingshu plant." [6] The mingshu is a legendary auspicious plant whose growing and falling answers to the number of days in the month, and it can be used to count the days. The poem opens with "about to set the astronomical calendar, first observe the mingshu by the near steps", connecting the counting of the mingshu with distinguishing the seasons and making the calendar, and Ji Yun therefore calls this "the opening two lines waken the meaning of the title". It goes on with "in ten days it opens answering the moon; at five days the count follows the stars", beginning from the number of leaves, and then with "when the osmanthus is full the cluster first closes, when the toad wanes the shadow gradually thins" [6] it writes the falling of the leaves all at once and the waxing and waning of the moon. Although what is written is still the growth and change of the mingshu, it keeps its eye on how these changes show the number of days, rather than simply laying out the shape and colour of leaves and stems. "Distinguishing the seasons should have a constant; counting the intercalary month may leave some green" [6] again distinguishes the constant and the variable in opening and falling. At this point, if one went on carving the growth and falling again and again, it would be easy to repeat what has already been said, and so the poem turns to "the fallen leaves let one infer past matters, the new buds let one observe what has not yet taken shape" [6], moving to what has gone before and to the coming year. Ji Yun points out: "Again, from after it has fallen one infers its growing again in the next month, and then the days and months do not come to an end." [6] The fallen leaves allow one to infer the days that have passed, and the new buds again hint at growing again in the next month, so the counting moves from within one month to the cycle of the seasons. The closing couplet "the Yao year begins in this year, and is about to be an auspicious omen for a thousand ages" again takes up the auspicious response of the mingshu growing in the courtyard in Yao's time to make a eulogy, with "a thousand ages" taking up the sense that days and months do not come to an end. Ji Yun says that this poem "has clearly distinct layers" [6], and what he approves is precisely that there is both carrying on and pushing forward between the layers: first making clear the use of counting the mingshu, then distinguishing the constant and the variable in growth and falling within the month, then inferring to the next month, and finally closing in the eulogy of a thousand ages. The whole poem keeps its attention on "counting", but it does not repeat the same idea over and over; instead it unfolds layer by layer along the relations that counting days and distinguishing seasons contains. The eye of the title thus becomes the basis for organizing the material of the poem and for drawing out the meaning of the piece, and it lets fitting the title and variation work together. Peng Guozhong, summing up Ji Yun's overall view of examination poems, stresses that one should "settle the conception first and the lines after; pursue the thoroughgoing of the blood vessels, with no trace of a seam" [9], which also shows how important it is, after discerning the title, to make the whole poem run through as one.

Ma Baoshan's *The Wind Curtain and the Entering Pair of Swallows* is laid out along the action of entering the curtain. Ji Yun points out respectively that it "digs out the root of the word 'enter'" [4], that it writes "about to enter", that it writes the word "enter" directly, and that it carries forward the circumstances after entering. "At times because they seek their old nest, calling to each other they skim the low eaves" [4] first sets out the swallows' purpose in coming; the descriptions of carrying flowers and peeping at the window then let the action gather; and riding the wind, pushing through the door, dancing face to face, twining about each other [4] again write their state as they enter the curtain, while the later coming and going to add mud answers to the seeking of the nest. This arrangement writes entering the curtain as an event that has a cause, has a process, and is linked to what follows, and the contents of the surface of the title, the curtain and the pair of swallows, also

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

enter different levels along with it. If one only described the swallows entering the curtain again and again from various angles, the couplets would easily stay on the same level; it is by moving from the purpose in coming to what happens after entering that keeping attention on "enter" and varying the composition are made to work together.

At times the eye of the title has to be brought out together with related images, and its function is to make the various items form a relation. Commenting on Shao Duo's *Fish Play and the New Lotus Moves*, Ji Yun says: "Fish play is the reason for the lotus moving. If one speaks of the two sides separately, the spirit and flavour are reduced." [4] He also says of it that "every line is written in combination, turning and circling, so that the living interest of the title is fully revealed" [4]. The fish playing is exactly the cause of the lotus moving. "Splashing, the waves swirl and dash; uneven, the shadows cross each other" [4] writes from the fish leaping and the water moving to the crossing of the lotus shadows, weaving the activity of the fish together with the state of the lotus. Ye Bao, discussing *Spring Wind Returns to the Willow*, likewise requires that "wind and willow should be written together, with the eye on the word 'return'" [7]; if one only writes on the willow, even if the branches and the colour are written fully, it does not necessarily show the state of the spring wind returning to the willow; wind and willow must bring each other out in the description, so that the changes in the willow bring out the coming of the spring wind.

The eye of the title may be written openly, or it may be presented indirectly by means of the related surface of the title, through such means as writing in combination and setting one thing off by another. On the title *Viewing the Picture of the Eastern Feng Sacrifice of Emperor Xuanzong*, Ye Bao points out: "This title is 'viewing the picture', so the words 'viewing' and 'picture' are the eye of the title; if one writes generally on the eastern feng sacrifice, one loses the point of the title." [7] What the poem writes is not the ceremony of the eastern feng sacrifice itself, but the state of the ceremony as it appears in a picture and as it is seen by the viewer. Therefore "the eastern feng sacrifice" is only the content within the picture, and "viewing the picture" is the basic angle from which the whole poem is organized. Ma Dai's poem has "the picture of the ascent and the sacrifice is suddenly unrolled" [7] to make clear what is being viewed, but afterwards it does not write the word "viewing" directly, and instead uses its wording to show the recognizing and the associating that go on when one looks. In "the powder marks seem to be inspecting jade; the dark colour surprises one as growing moss" [7], "powder marks" and "dark colour" point to the traces of colour on the surface of the picture, while "seem" and "surprises" write how these traces become, in the viewer's eyes, as if they were real objects. The reader can both be aware that what is before him is a picture, and feel what the viewer feels because the picture is lifelike. Through the visible traces of painting and the reaction of the viewer, the lines fix "picture" and "viewing" in the description at the same time. In addition, phrases such as "the clouds are about to rise" and "the insignia seem to turn back" [7] also give the scene in the picture the viewer's surmise. The book therefore says of it that "nowhere in the piece is the word 'viewing' openly pointed to" [7], and yet that "there is no line that is not the spirit of the word 'viewing'" [7].

The three ways of unfolding described above each have their basis: carrying forward the circumstances before and after lets the action or change that the eye of the title points to form layers; connecting related content lets the relation that the eye of the title prescribes enter into a shared description; setting off and depicting from the empty side reveal the spirit of the eye of the title by striking indirectly. The three are not steps to be completed one after another, and the same poem may use more than one of them. Ye Bao, commenting on *A Single Piece of Jade from Mount Kun*, says: "If one does not set one's thinking on the eye of the title, the conception will not hit the mark; if one does not put brush on the eye of the title, the tempered lines will also lack sharpness."

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

From clarifying what is crucial to arranging the writing, the writer has to feel out how the words of the title can unfold, and then choose the poetic material and the way of writing that answer to it. The *Seven Rules on Examination-Style Poems* appended to the *Tangren Wuyan Changlü Qingli Ji* in turn assigns "writing the surface of the title directly", "drawing out the meaning of the title", "setting off from the side" and "opening and closing" to different positions within the piece [10]. What is gained from examining the title is thus turned into the basis for the layout of each couplet, so that the whole poem has layered variation around the point of the title. The eye of the title therefore both fixes where attention is directed and supplies a thread for laying out and varying; as for what method suits different surfaces of the title, and whether titles of the same kind can refer to similar methods, that further involves the discrimination of the types of the title.

4. Dividing the types of the title: from the classification of images to the summing up of methods

Clarifying the meaning of the title and what is primary and secondary on its surface helps to settle the conception of a title and where the emphasis of writing should fall. Still, the titles of examination poems are very numerous, and the things sung about and the events involved differ from one to another; if one only stops at analyzing title by title, that is still not enough to let candidates quickly grasp the way into writing each kind of title. Therefore Qing writers classified the titles of examination poems, and summed up the experience of examining individual titles into methods that could be referred to, so as to make it convenient for candidates to study them and refer to them.

In the early Qing the awareness of classifying the titles of examination poems first showed itself in the way anthologies of examination poems were arranged. Some editors, following the main objects and events that the titles wrote of, gathered titles of the same kind together. Zang Yue's *Yingshi Tangshi Leishi* and Wang Yannian's *Tieti Leijian* arrange the pieces mainly according to the images and the human affairs that the titles involve. Zang Yue divides Tang examination poems into sixteen categories, and explains in his preface that old editions arranged Tang poems "mostly by the order of the degrees won and the earliness or lateness of official career", while he himself changed to "dividing into gates and classes, all for the sake of those preparing for the examinations, who need to study them" [11]. Wang Yannian also says: "Selecting Tang poems mostly in the order of the authors' periods is not unacceptable. Here I have put in those with similar titles in sequence, for convenience of reading through." [12] This lets candidates look up model pieces by following the title, compare the wording used on subjects of the same kind, and accumulate material that can be drawn on. Although this way of classifying by what is in the title makes it easy to search out model pieces and accumulate poetic material, it does not point towards summing up and generalizing concrete methods of writing.

Ye Bao's discrimination of the types of the title looks exactly at the connection between the features of a title and the concrete method of writing. In his *Yingshi Shifa Qianshuo* he criticizes the examination-poem anthologies sold in the bookshops, which "only list glosses and mostly do not point out the methods of poetry, so how is a beginner to get hold of them" [7], holding that besides selecting model pieces and explaining the meanings of words and allusions, one must also explain the methods of writing poems. What the *Method of Examining the Title* says, that "titles are not of one kind, and so the methods are naturally not of one kind", connects the discrimination of kinds with the methods of writing; and what it says, that "if one does not examine the openings of the title carefully, then weight and lightness are not distinguished, guest and host are not clear, and where is one to put the brush" [7], expresses the hope that the classification of set titles will be carried through into concrete methods of thinking and putting brush to paper.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

Ye Bao lists: "There are small titles, there are large titles, there are single titles, there are double titles, there are threaded titles, there are divided titles, there are narrative titles, there are blended titles." [7] After that he adds a discussion of double-reference titles. Following the difference in the nature of what a title sings of, Ye Bao divides titles into large and small, and explains the method for each. He says: "What is a small title? Titles on plants, trees, birds and other things sung about as objects are of this kind, and the method only needs to resemble the form and describe the object." Large titles, on the other hand, "either concern government and transformation, or belong to institutions and precedents, and then one must seek dignity and must not fall into a small pattern" [7]. What is called "resembling the form and describing the object" is keeping close to the image sung of and copying its shape and features, while large titles touch on political edification or on institutions and historical facts, and their conception and wording must be grave and elegant; if one only pursues delicate skill in carving a part, it is hard to show the air and the frame that the title should have. The division of large and small is thus carried through into a difference in the direction of writing, and it lets candidates choose a fitting way of writing according to the nature of the subject.

Ye Bao distinguishes single titles from double titles according to the number of objects sung of on the surface of the title. Taking *Singing of the Willow* as his example, he points out that "a poem that only writes on the willow is a small title and also belongs to the single titles". A double title is one in which "the matter belongs to two items"; for example, in *Clouds and Rosy Light at Dawn over the Sea*, both cloud and rosy light must be given some attention, and Ye Bao therefore requires that "one line should fit the cloud and one line the rosy light" [7]. Both have to be looked after, so as to avoid attending to one and losing the other.

Further, according to the difference in how the images in a title are written out, there are also divided titles, threaded titles and blended titles. These kinds of title are named by the method of writing, and the method of dividing stresses carrying out each item of content in the title separately. This method is not limited to double titles; Ye Bao says: "There are also titles that combine several items, and the middle couplets should use dividing." [7] In his concrete comments on poems Ye Bao also uses this method to analyze the way poems are made; for example, in his note on *Opening the Four Gates*: "Using separate narration in the middle makes things clear. For instance, if the six affairs of integrity is the title, the six affairs must be returned separately; if the four seasons as handle is the title, the four seasons must be returned separately; this is a fixed method." What is called "separate narration" and "returning separately" has the same meaning as "dividing"; when the surface of the title contains several items, one cannot write in a vague blended way, but should take them apart one by one in the poem and carry them out separately, so that each item in the title has its place and the thread is clear. In *Opening the Four Gates* the "four gates" contain east, south, west and north, and so the commentary points out item by item that "the east uses the matter of the eastern arrows, the south uses the matter of southern gold, the west uses the matter of the mountain sending down, the north uses the matter of the star enclosure", and the note written in the margin beside the poem, "dividing the surface of the title, apt in the precedents", affirms that it divided the surface of the title and that its precedents are fitting. In *The Four Seasons as Handle*, the "four seasons" are compressed into the couplet "the eastern and western suburbs welcome in turn, the left and right chambers are moved frequently". According to the gloss, the eastern and western suburbs answer respectively to welcoming spring and welcoming autumn; the left and right chambers correspond respectively to the first month of summer and the last month of winter, and these are the concrete points at which "the four rhymes return the four seasons separately". It can be seen that when a title contains generalizing words such as "four gates" or "four seasons", the method of

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

dividing lies mainly in "returning separately" the items in the title, so that each item in the title is attended to, neither mixed together nor left out.

Threading was originally a fairly common term in the criticism of poetic and prose method, usually referring to the first half drawing out what follows without announcing it, and the second half turning back to embrace what went before, so that the two pairs carry on from each other. What is called a threaded title is one in which the several images on the surface of the title must be tied together and written in combination, and cannot be laid out separately. In *The Moon Shines on the Clear Huai River*, for example, one should write the particular scene that the moon and the Huai water make through the word "shines on", and Ye Bao states clearly: "If one speaks of the moon apart from the Huai's flow, or of the Huai's flow apart from the moon, neither accords with the method." [7] It can be seen that whether the two items in a title are written separately still has to be decided by how they relate to each other.

For titles centred on an event, Ye Bao also uses the narrative title to explain how to arrange the levels of the composition around the event in the title. He requires that a narrative title "make the sequence clear in one line from beginning to end, with distinct levels and no disorder at all, and only then does it accord with the method" [7]. He stresses that as soon as one puts brush down one must first sort out the course of the event, and then arrange the couplets following the shape of the event, so that the days, the persons and the key actions in the title appear layer by layer. In *Receiving a Letter on the Double Ninth*, for example, the poem first writes of being in a strange place on the Double Ninth, then brings out the receiving of the letter, then unfolds the feelings after reading the letter and the scene in which they arise, and finally closes in the feeling of longing. Ye Bao points out in particular that the three words "thought has a surplus" are "the master brain of the whole piece" [7], showing that although its levels unfold from the Double Ninth and the receiving of the letter, what runs through them is still the feeling after the letter was received.

The discrimination of double-reference titles looks at the image written on the surface of the title and the meaning figured within it, and discusses how the two are unfolded in the poem. Ye Bao cites Ji Yun's account and divides the usual ways of writing a double-reference title into two patterns. The remark that "a double-reference title is the comparative mode" already shows that this kind of title rests on a figurative relation. The first pattern is used for titles whose figurative meaning is hidden, such as *Wind and Rain, the Cock Crows*, where the cock's crowing in wind and rain lodges the meaning that the gentleman does not change his integrity; here one usually writes the image on the surface of the title first, and then makes the figurative meaning clear. The second pattern is where the title openly brings out the word "like", as in *A Clear Mind Is like Water*, where the relation between the thing itself and the figure is already exposed, and so one must "first make it clear and then write in combination": first state the proper meaning that is figured, then write the two sides, mind and water, in alternation. These two patterns look at how the figurative relation is presented on the surface of the title, and arrange on that basis the order of making the proper meaning clear and laying out the image.

From Wang Yannian to Ye Bao, the development in the way titles were classified reflects that the Qing understanding of the titles of examination poems went deeper, from what is sung about to the method of writing. The kinds of title that Ye Bao lists look respectively at the level and air of the conception, at the content in the title, and at the way that content is organized, and one title may belong to several kinds at once. In discriminating kinds one therefore has to combine these aspects and weigh the choice of material, the cross-references, and the arrangement of levels. The discrimination of the kinds of title thus sums up what is gained from examining particular titles into

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7064/2026.38915

methods that can be referred to, but how these methods are to be applied still has to be judged by going back to the relation between the meaning and the surface of the particular title.

5. Conclusion

The techniques of examining the title in the discussions of examination poems give concentrated expression to the Qing understanding of writing, in which one settles the meaning from the title and applies method in accordance with the meaning. Although setting a title limits the conception and the content of the poem, it also provides the poet with a thread for thinking out and laying out the poem. The writer must first make the meaning of the title clear, analyze which parts of the surface of the title are primary and secondary, weighty and light, and then organize the language and arrange the structure. In this process, fitting the title shows itself in the way the words of the title are attended to, and it also contains the mutual passing through of image and principle, of form and content, and it lets the meaning of the title be unfolded fully within a limited length. The discrimination of the meaning of the title, the eye of the title and the kinds of the title is exactly the process by which Qing writers refined the experience of commenting on individual works into general methods of writing. Through this, the experience of conceiving meaning, choosing material and arranging layout, which was rather scattered in earlier poetics, was reorganized into techniques of poetic method suited to writing to a set title and easy to teach and to study. By examining these techniques of examining the title, one can further understand how the limits of a set title were turned into the inner basis of a poem's conception, and also the influence of the examination system on the form of poetic knowledge in the Qing.

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