



# Using Poetry as a Context: On the Imaging of Poetic Context in Wang Changling's Poetry

Chang Lu

College of Humanities, Xi'an Shiyou University, Xi'an, China

Email: 1870649491@qq.com

**How to cite this paper:** Lu, C. (2024) Using Poetry as a Context: On the Imaging of Poetic Context in Wang Changling's Poetry. *Open Access Library Journal*, 11: e12273. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1112273>

**Received:** September 9, 2024

**Accepted:** October 27, 2024

**Published:** October 30, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

Words and images are two completely different forms of artistic expression, and there are distinct differences between them. Wang Changling, as the “Holy Hand of Qijue”, broke the boundaries between text and image with his keen creativity and unique aesthetics of Qijue. In the history of Chinese poetry, “using poetry to manipulate the lens” is not only seen in Wang Changling. However, Wang Changling's poetic images are the perfect practice of his theory of physical environment, situation and artistic conception in his work “Shi Ge”. Based on the construction of Wang Changling's visualized poetic environment, this paper analyzes the application and performance of the visualized poetic environment in Wang Changling's poetry, and probes into the significance of the visualized poetic environment to Wang Changling's poetry creation.

## Subject Areas

Culture

## Keywords

Wang Changling, Qijue, Poetic Images, Visualization

## 1. Introduction

Wang Changling is a scholar who has made great achievements in both literary works and literary theories in Chinese history. He has a reputation as the “Sage of Qijue” and “poet and master”, and he is the author of the largest number of Qijue poems that have been handed down to the present day. Whether they are the poems from the military border, the poems of the Palace, or the poems of Friends, Wang Changling's poems have a clear sense of picture and plot, and are linked together by a roughly framed shot, which brings infinite space to the imagination of the readers. In the field of literary theory, Wang Changling divides the realm of

poetry into three categories in his poem “Shi Ge”: “There are three levels of poetry. The first is the description of natural scenery, such as landscape poetry, which mainly expresses the artistic conception of spring stone and cloud peaks. By observing and feeling the natural scenery, the poet expresses it vividly in his poetry, so that the reader can feel the beauty and sense of reality of the scenery. The second is to express life experience and life feelings, to express their own joys and sorrows through emotions and experiences. The third kind of imagination and fantasy, which let the reader feel the same, is the true meaning of poetry” [1]. It tells about his experience and skills in poetry creation. It can be seen that Wang Changling achieves the artistic conception of his poetry creation by using the image-based method of constructing a poetic landscape.

To put it simply, the idealized expression of Wang Changling’s poetry is to use the poem to create scenery, paintings, and environments. At present, the research on the image-based expression of poetry mainly centers on the combination of poetry and painting and the film and television adaptation lens of poetry. In particular, the study of the combination of poetry and painting focuses on the analysis of the works of poets such as Wang Wei, combining poetry and painting in depth. For example, in her study, Zhang Dan argues that Wang Wei’s accomplished works of pictorial art cannot be separated from the Zen imagery that can be seen in Wang Wei’s poetry [2]. At the same time, many researchers have taken Su Shi’s idea that “there are paintings in poems and poems in paintings” as an entry point to analyze the poetic works of a particular poet, a particular period of time, or a particular category of poems. For example, Jiang Yin believes that Wang Wei’s poetry is characterized by anti-modeling and anti-planar features in painting [3]. These studies have brought the appreciation of ancient Chinese poetry into the modern perspective, not only drawing on excellent literary theories but also combining real life with poetry appreciation, making great contributions to the revitalization of ancient Chinese poetry. Here, the author combines poetry with lens, which involves both the color and composition of painting art and the angle and distance of film lens, expecting to find a new perspective of poetry appreciation.

### **The origin of Wang Changling’s Visualized Poetic Environment**

The origin of Wang Changling’s visualized poetic environment can be traced from the maturity of Sheng Tang’s stanzas and his own keen sense of composition and unique aesthetic insights.

The flourishing Tang Dynasty was a period when the art of quatrains was fully mature and had its own typical style. “From the perspective of the history of poetry itself, it is the same as the formation of the whole style of poetry in the Tang Dynasty, that is, through the method of restoring and innovating poetics” [4]. Wang Changling was in such a period of vigorous development and imminent maturity of quatrains, so he naturally absorbed and innovated the poetic resources of the previous generation. On the one hand, it is manifested in Wang Changling’s inheritance and application of Yuefu style. Many of Wang Changling’s famous poems are in Yuefu style, such as “Autumn Poems of Changxin”, “Spring Complaints

of the West Palace”, “Autumn Complaints of the West Palace”, “Girl complaints”, “The Silk Lady”, “The Army” and so on. It is obvious that Wang Changling is good at describing objective things or scenes. He is a true representative poet, placing himself outside the lens of the scene described, and then using key things to build the frame of the picture, just as the literati of the Six Dynasties are good at drawing scenes from real life to create Yuefu style verses. Wang Changling created one framed shot after another with his subtle conception. On the other hand, Wang Changling revolutionized the form of Qijue of his predecessors. Compared with the old forms of picaresque and couplets [5] that his predecessors were happy to use in composing their Qijue, while Wang Changling wins in high concentration and typical generalization [6]. Use as simple language as possible to grasp and summarize things, to achieve the artistic realm of “cage the world in the form, frustrating everything in the pen” [7].

Everyone can describe the scene of the shot, but Wang Changling can arrange the frozen shot perfectly, combine it skillfully, switch it flexibly, and achieve the narrative purpose with short sentences. Such as “Traveling alone”, “Hearing the flute on the river”, “Mountain travel into Jingzhou” and so on. All of these require the poet to have a unique mind and superb aesthetic taste. In “Hearing the Flute on the River”:

*Hengdi complaining river moon, where to find a boat.*

*The sound is long outside the mountain, and the curve is deep around the Hu Guan.*

*Thousands of miles away, distant heart of this night.*

*There are few pockets of cold water and secluded woods.*

*I wonder who is playing the old tune.*

*The sleeves of the rowers were covered with frost.*

*The emaciated horses were going north, and the walkers sighed mournfully.*

*The grass turned white and the letter could not reach the long city [8].*

The poet breaks the barriers of time and space with words from a moving perspective of looking on, and depicts a map of the river and forest on a moonlit night. The lens has both a long distance and a close shot, and the vision and hearing change back and forth between the onlookers and the passengers, creating a depressed atmosphere of longing and attachment. It is as if the reader is also standing by the river under the moonlight, hearing the melodious sound of the flute and witnessing their tears of longing. This is all due to Wang Changling’s gifted lens sense and aesthetic perception. Between the image and the words, Wang Changling immerses the reader in his own unique way. But even such an excellent lens cannot completely show the cause and effect of the matter, in which case it can bring the reader unlimited space for imagination.

## 2. Specific Manifestations of Visualization in Wang Changling’s Poetry

Wang Changling is like an excellent cameraman who creates images with words

and records the world he has seen or imagined. Wang Changling's image characteristics in his poems can be seen in his grasp of the distance of the lens, his capture of the color of the lens, and his switching of the lens perspective.

## 2.1. Grasp of Lens Distance

According to the size of the range of objects in the camera lens, the lens is roughly divided into five categories: telephoto, panorama, medium view, close-up, and close-up. The size of the object in the photographic lens in the scope of a certain degree affects the composition of the frame and the viewer's aesthetic experience, and even affect the plot cognition in the narrative lens. In his Qijue, Wang Changling depicts many scenes of characters and landscapes. The different lens distances and the proportion of pictures have an invisible influence on our reading of poems.

For example, a large number of distant shots appear in Wang Changling's poems, most of which do not have characters, and are dominated by far-reaching and vast landscapes, creating an atmospheric background and rendering an emotional environment for the whole poem. The fourth "Joining The Army" [8] said: the cloud on Qinghai Lake meets Qilian Snow Mountain. The seventh "Joining The Army" [8] said: layer after layer around the mountain that can not see the end. Such a long shot makes the whole poem filled with profound and empty, suggesting the natural environment of the border and the heart of the people. "Spring Complaints of the West Palace" [8] said: lonely night there are late clouds and the moon, the shade of the tree under the Zhaoyang Hall, how should the women here spend the cold, long night? These are the shots that capture the mind.

There are also a large number of panoramic shots in the poem, which show the whole picture of the characters and the landscape in the poem, highlighting the characters' actions in a particular scene, and serving as a complete narrative, and are also a relatively complete kind of shots. The first "Joining The Army" [8] said: on the border stood a hundred-foot-high beacon fire tower, and the soldiers sat alone on the garrison upstairs at dusk, feeling the evening wind blowing from the northwest lake. The seventh "Joining The Army" [8] said: The garrison soldiers always keep an eye on the beacon fires burning in the distance in order to prepare for any situation that may occur at any time. The panoramic shots in these two poems completely depict some fragments of the life of the border guards and play a good narrative role. "Autumn Complaints of the West Palace" [8] said: under the clear light of the bright night there is a beauty holding the fan lovingly. Later generations have further interpreted the relationship between the moon and the beauty from this complete image: the beauty who cannot wait for the king's favor is like the moon hanging in the night sky [9].

In Wang Changling's poems there are also some close-up shots, which take the view of a specific thing or a part of a thing and play a special emphasizing role. The Song of Ganquan said: "Last night deep cloud worship early moon, ten thousand years of Manna crystal plate" [8]. This close-up of the crystal plate implies

the story of Emperor Wudi taking the crystal plate to become a fairy.

Middle and close shots are not obvious in Wang Changling's poems.

## 2.2. Capturing the Color of the Lens

Both poetry and photography do not ignore the important element of color, and both need color to attract the eye, satisfy the aesthetics, and give the work a stronger expressive power. Wang Changling was undoubtedly a photographer with a keen eye for color. In "Two Songs of Exit from the Plug" (two of them), he wrote: "The white jade saddle on the bay horse is new, and the moon is cold when the battle is over" [8]. The red horse is as full of passion and power as the hot-blooded man who fights in the battlefield, and the color collision between the red horse body and the black iguana hair and tail hair and white saddle renders the fierce and cruel atmosphere of the battlefield.

In some special verses, Wang Changling does not mention a specific color, but enables the reader to imagine the color depicted. In the poem "Sending Dou Qi", he says: "The moonlight on the clear river is evening and autumn, and the waves are flickering as I look at a boat" [8]. The poet did not mention any color, but people can imagine that under the moonlight, the river is flooded with silvery waves. The Lotus Picking Song (Part II) says: "Lotus leaves are cut in one color, hibiscus opens to both sides of the face. The lotus leaves are cut in a single color, and the hibiscus blooms on both sides of the face" [8]. He did not directly say that the color, only that the lotus leaves and the skirt of the same color, hibiscus flowers and lotus picker's cheeks of the same color, so the boat into the flowers but it is difficult to find the trace, only heard the song of the lotus picker to know that there are people to come. The green dress and sweet cheeks of the lotus picker make the whole poem full of vitality, with unconscious relaxation and idleness. At the same time, these two lines also show the appreciation of the appearance of the lotus-picking woman from the side, "The woman who picks the lotus is of the same color as the lotus, and it is only when she hears the song that she realizes that there is someone there, and she highly praises her appearance" [10].

## 2.3. Lens Perspective Switching

The creation of Wang Changling's objects, situations and moods cannot be separated from the description of the switching between lenses. For example, the parallel conversion of lenses, the switching of lenses' perspectives or the lenses of different angles of the same thing, etc. An independent lens may show the characteristics of the scene, express the author's feelings, and create a common object or situation. However, the different camera scenes not only play a narrative role but also create a clever mental space, which has reached the poetic artistic conception pursued by many poets.

The four sentences in "Changxin Autumn Ci Five Poems" (one of them) [8] all describe the situation in the autumn Changxin Palace, capturing symbolic typical things (yellow Indus leaves, frost wind entering the house because of not dropping the curtain, luxurious smoked jade pillow in the palace, lonely palace woman),

layer upon layer, belonging to the parallel switch between different shots. “Changxin Autumn Ci five” (the fifth one) [8] says: “Changxin palace autumn moon Ming, Zhaoyang Hall has the sound of banging clothes. The White Dew hall is overgrown with weeds and desolate, and the Red Luo tent has endless words of affection.” These two poems are the transformation of parallel lenses. They achieve the same result by different methods.

The classic representative of perspective switching undoubtedly belongs to “The Complaint of the Boudoir” [8]; “The young woman in the boudoir does not know how to be sad; she goes up to the jade tower in the springtime with her make-up on her face. Suddenly she sees the color of the willow on the street, and regrets that she should not have let her husband join the army and become a military commander.” First of all, from the perspective of the onlooker to create a lens, depicting a young lady innocent and unaware of the taste of sorrow, in the bright spring day to enjoy the scenery. Then the perspective naturally shifted to the lady here, she saw the new budding willows on the roadside, the mood underwent a subtle change, and suddenly regretted letting her husband join the army and become a military commander. The Angle of view lens transition is extremely natural, and the expression of this complaint is graceful.

There is also a kind of lens shift which is centered on the same thing and connects the shots of this thing in different perspectives and different time periods. Two Songs of Picking Lotus (one of them) says: “When I come, the flowers at the mouth of the Pu River welcome me in, and when I finish picking, the moon at the head of the river sends me home.” Describing the two shots of the lotus picker’s arrival and departure from a bystander’s point of view, with the lotus flowers at Pukou welcoming her on her way in, and the moon at the head of the river sending her off on her way out, it basically achieves a narrative with a beginning and an end, and it also shows the relaxing and pleasant atmosphere of the whole poem as if one could hear the lotus picker’s song and see the lotus picker’s smile, which Wang Changling did in only two shots. Two Songs Before the Temple (one of them) [8] says: “The nobleman’s makeup and combing before the temple is urged, and the fragrant wind blows into the temple later.” Taking the palace as the center, it describes two different scenes in front of the temple and behind the temple, that is, there are ladies dressing in front of the temple, and there are incense winds coming behind the temple. It can be seen that the makeup of the women in the palace at that time was rich in fragrance, which reflected the prosperity and bustle of the palace banquet from the side.

The conversion of these lenses is natural and skillful, not only plays a narrative role, but also leaves an infinite space of reverie for the poem, “the mood is not within the elephant, but outside the elephant” [11]. The language is limited, the lens display is controlled, but the poetic mood will not be lacking.

### 3. The Significance of Imaging to Wang Changling’s Poetry Creation

The grasping of the lens distance, the capturing of the lens color, and the switching

of the lens perspective are all unique aesthetic perspectives of Wang Changling, and these aesthetic factors make the language of his poems image-oriented, which invariably meets many of the requirements of modern photographic art. These imaged camera depictions, while satisfying his poetic creation to achieve physical, emotional, and meaningful situations, also become a major feature of Wang Changling's poetic creation.

Through the visualization of his poems, Wang Changling further perfected his art of "creating a realm". Wang Changling grasped the proportions of descriptive objects in the shots he took up, adjusted the distribution of colors in the shots, and then arranged and combined the shots in different ways. These ways describe the state of things, creating the most basic "state of things" of poetry; according to the state of things, people read the feelings of poetry, constructing another level of poetry, "state of mind"; the combination of the state of things and the state of mind brings endless reverie and creates a space of mind that can't be declared, which accomplishes the creation of poetry; the combination of physical and emotional environment brings endless reverie and creates a space of mind that cannot be declared in words, thus accomplishing the highest level of "mood" in poetry creation. We can regard Wang Changling's visualization of poetic language as a practical application of his theory of "three realms of poetry" in his work "Shi Ge", thus further confirming the literary theory he advocated. The interconnection and mutual promotion between the art of visualized poetry and the theory of "there are three realms in poetry" have jointly achieved Wang Changling's position in the history of Chinese Qijue.

Wang Changling is not the only poet who used visualized language to describe scenes and narrate stories in the history of Chinese Qijue. After Wang Changling, there were still some poets who used this artistic method to achieve considerable success. Wang Changling is one of the pioneers in the seven unique images. After him, "It is not uncommon to use video narration to create a time-space interlocking picture. The evolution of this method also means that the artistic conception of poetry continues to expand in depth" [5]. It can be seen that this not only deepened the pursuit of poetic conception, but also tried to break the barriers existing in the poetic genre itself through this way, and continue to move forward on the road of literary exploration.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## References

- [1] Wang, C. (1997) Poetry Style. In: Chen, Y., Ed., *Yinwang Miscellany (Volume 4)*, Zhonghua Shubu, 206-207.
- [2] Zhang, D. (2016) The Artistic Achievement of "Zen Beauty" of Wang Wei's Poetry and Painting. *Shanxi Archives*, No. 6, 132-134.
- [3] Jiang, Y. (2019) Re-Discussion of Wang Wei's "Painting in Poetry". *Journal of*

- 
- Wuhan University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, **72**, 38-47.
- [4] Qian, Z. (2008) On the History of the Occurrence of the Absolute Line and the Art of the Absolute Line in the Sheng Tang Dynasty. *Chinese Poetry Research*, **5**, 26-43.
  - [5] Xu, S. (2021) The Intersection of Text and Imagination: On the Image Narrative in Wang Changling's Seven Poems. *Journal of Du Fu Studies*, No. 3, 91-96.
  - [6] Shen, S. (1982) Discussion on the Artistic Characteristics of Wang Changling's Seven Poems. *Journal of Yan'an University (Social Science Edition)*, No. 4, 41-50.
  - [7] Yang, M., Lu, J. and Zhong, R. (2019) Ancient Chinese Masterpieces Translation and Annotation Series Wen Fu Poetry Translation and Annotation. Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House.
  - [8] Li, Y. (2020) Wang Changling Poems. Zhonghua Shuju.
  - [9] Liu, W. (1986) Tang Poetry. Guangxi People's Publishing House.
  - [10] Tang, R. (2001) Tang Poetry. Hebei University Press.
  - [11] Zhang, S. (1983) On the Aesthetic Characteristics of Context. *Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, No. 4, 50-61.