

## §28. Rosy-Fingered Dawn

Soon as the sun went down, and the darkness settled upon them,  
all at the moorings, along by the stern, they laid them to slumber.  
Soon as the dawn appeared, rosy-fingered daughter of morning,  
all for the high seas launched and the wide war-camp of the Argives . . .

– *Iliad* 1:475-478

Mention fixed phrases at your next party, and you are very likely to hear,<sup>1</sup> “Oh, yeah, like “rosy-fingered dawn,” and all will chuckle at the poet’s expense – a wretch so barren of invention that he uses the same old line over and over. The actual history of “rosy-fingered Dawn” is somewhat different.

The whole line, ἤμος δ’ ἠριγένεια φάνη ροδοδάκτυλος Ἥως, occurs in *Iliad* 1, not at the beginning, but in the middle *within* the story of the return of Chryseis. It recurs once, at *Id* 24:788, again not at the beginning of the book, but near the end, as the sun rises on the last day of mourning for Hector:

Soon as the Dawn appeared, rosy-fingered, daughter of morning,  
first with sparkling wine they extinguished the flames of the pyre,  
all of it, far as the fury of fire had extended, and later . . .

The usage too does not open a book, but marks a narrative stage *within* a book. Was this a fixed line which Homer received from tradition, and himself used sparingly? Both times in what may be called sacrificial contexts? That would be anyone’s first thought. But the matter is complicated: both the Return of Chryseis in *Id* 1 and all of *Id* 24 are later interpolations<sup>2</sup> – later interpolations with linguistic features which are otherwise characteristic of the *Odyssey*.

Then, so far from being a Homeric formula, our fixed line is more precisely an *Odyssean* formula, and has been introduced into the *Iliad* from that source.

And where did the *Odyssey* poet get it? Something like it is in *Id* 9:175, but in a passage also suspect (the mention of writing, in the story of Bellerophon). Safer textually is 9:707, said by Diomedes at the end of the failed Embassy:

“Soon, however, as rosy fingered Morning appeareth,  
marshal the host with all speed well out in front of the galleys.”

Depending on how one takes the inconclusive Duel of Diomedes and Glaucos in *Id* 6, the “rosy-fingered Dawn” phrase (which fits the end of a hexameter line) was used for convenience once or twice by Homer, but developed from that beginning, into a full-fledged cliché only in the *Odyssey*.

Such seems to have been the history of this “formula.” And how did the *Odyssey* poet use what, in her hands, indeed became a fixed line?

<sup>1</sup>Or from the experts; see Austin *Archery* 5, who takes it as the prime example.

<sup>2</sup>See, respectively, p11 and §14.

She used it always appropriately, chiefly to mark a scene division, and more rarely to ornament the beginning of a book. Here is a complete account of those usages. All but two are identical. Here are the identical ones, with the book-initial ones emphasized:

- 2:1** Telemachus summons the Ithakan *assembly*  
 3:404 Nestor and his wife arise from sleep; second day of T's visit  
 3:491 T and Pisistratus set out for Lakedaimon  
 4:306 Menelaos gets up and goes to talk to T  
 4:431 a day in the adventures of M; he will meet Proteus  
 4:576 dawn of next day; Proteus has foretold immortality for M  
 5:228 Odysseus wakes to begin his *departure* from Calypso  
**8:1** Alkinoos rises; he and O go to the Phaiakian *assembly*  
 9:152 land of the Cyclops; goats turn up for breakfast  
 9:170 O holds *assembly* of his men  
 9:307 Cyclops awakes and begins milking his flock  
 9:437 the male sheep are leaving the cave; O escapes  
 9:560 O and his men cast off to *depart*  
 10:187 O holds *assembly* of his men  
 12:8 O sends men to bring back the body fo Elpenor  
 12:316 O and men land on the Isle of the Sun  
 13:18 Alkinoös and sailors rise, and stow O's gifts aboard ship  
 15:189 T and Pisistratus *depart*, returning to Pylos  
**17:1** Telemachus *leaves* Eumaios' hut for town.  
 19:428 sons of Autolycus *leave* for the hunt  
 [21-24] [*no occurrences of this line*]

There are some repeated scenes, but this is merely to say that these lines are entirely apposite to context, none is meaningless; all have their function as separators. Further, our line is predominantly used in story-telling, and not at all in the final climactic Ithakan books, Od 21-24.

Does the poet then overdo her line? Matter of judgement, but we think not. It is common but not obtrusive, and it is always suitable to the situation.

And here are the two instances which use only the phrase; one in reference to a divine love, the other of Penelope and Odysseus together in bed.

- 5:121. This when Orion was chosen by Morning, the roseate-fingered,  
 23:241 Yea, on their weeping had risen the morning, the roseate-fingered.

Are these less hackneyed versions, not appropriate to their higher context?

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We conclude by reprinting an article from a Sinological journal, which shows how individual lines in a growing poetic corpus can be reused, and even become clichés, without ever quite losing either meaning or relevance.

First is freshest, but reappearance adds its own dimension; gives a line more weight more resonance, than it may have had at first. And it lends that greater weight and resonance to the poem in which it recurs.

## Some Common Lines in the Shī<sup>3</sup>

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A notable feature of the Shī 詩 is the line which recurs identically in other poems. Such lines have been thought to prove the “oral-formulaic” character of the Shī, or illustrate its poetic homogeneity. But do they? The claim would be stronger if the pattern of recurrence suggested local bardic practice, but common lines rarely recur within one section of the local Fvng; they more often repeat between different Fvng, or between the Fvng and the courtly Yǎ. This suggests literary imitation. I here consider the probable directionality of five of these common-line groups, hoping to demonstrate the analytical value of the common line as one way to gain an idea of how the Shī repertoire was formed.<sup>4</sup>

**Data.** Identifying common lines is difficult due to text variants and near-identical lines. I recognize 253 lines or couplets. These occur in a total of 213 poems, or 70% of the Shī.<sup>5</sup> The rarity of common line links *within* a Fvng section is seen in Jōu-nán: of those 11 poems, only Shī 6 and 9 are linked by the line 之子于歸, which also occurs in other Fvng sections (Shàu-nán in the east, Bèi in the center, Bīn in the west). Shī 3 and 4 are linked solely, and Shī 10 principally, to Yǎ poems. No Fvng section is linked more often to itself than to other Fvng sections, or to the Yǎ and Sùng.

**Typology.** The minimal common line links two poems, as 陟彼高岡 (Shī 3C1 and 218D1). These poems form a *group*, since neither is linked to other poems by other common lines. The commonest common line is 心之憂矣, found in 11 poems (26E3, 27AB3, 63ABC, 109AB3 and 109AB9, 150ACC3, 183B7, 192H1, 197ACDEF7, 27ABC7, 233A3, 264FGH3). I will call “promiscuous” those poems with eight or more common lines: Shī 162 (8 common lines), 167 (12), 168 (16), 178 (8), 192 (12), 197 (10), 209 (11), and 212 (8) in the Syǎu Yǎ section; 256 (9), 258 (8), and 260 (11), in the Dà Yǎ; and 290 (8), in the sacrificial Jōu Sùng.<sup>6</sup> It will be seen that these poems tend to occur closely together. They raise special problems, and I will not deal with them as wholes in this preliminary survey.

<sup>3</sup>From *Warring States Papers v2* (2020) 45-50, slightly abridged for inclusion here.

<sup>4</sup>The analytical potential of the common line, first noticed by Tswēi Shù, was developed by Péi Pǔ-syén, 裴普賢. 詩經相同句及其影響. 三民 1974, who informs me (personal communication, 2011) that her work has not so far been followed up.

<sup>5</sup>That is, 93 Shī poems have *no* common line; each forms a “group” of its own.

<sup>6</sup>The Fvng poem with the most common lines is Shī 154 (Bīn 1), with 7. All the contacts of Shī 154 are with Yǎ and Sùng poems; none link it to other Fvng poems.

I will call poems sharing a common line a *series*,<sup>7</sup> irrespective of other linkages. Thus, the series defined by the line 陟彼高岡 contains 2 poems, and the 心之憂矣 series has 11 poems. Neither of these series constitutes a closed *group*, however, since some poems in both series are linked by other lines to poems outside the series. Thus Shī 3 is linked to Shī 218 by one common line and to Shī 225 by another. Shī 218 in turn is linked by other common lines to three further poems (one of them twice):

3C1 陟彼高岡 = 218D1 陟彼高岡  
 225E6 云何吁矣 = 3D4 云何吁矣  
 218D4 其葉漙兮 = 214A4  
 218D6 我心寫兮 = 173A4, 214A4-5  
 218E3 四牡駢駢 = 162AB1

Nor do the relationships end there: The “promiscuous” Shī 162 has 8 links, and 7 of those poems lead to still other poems. The resulting group includes 110 poems, an analytically unwieldy tangle. I will consider two of its strands.

**1. Shī 3C1 and 218D1 陟彼高岡** use the common line in different ways. Shī 3 portrays the hardships of a soldier (M or male; stanzas B-D), introduced by a vignette of the wife back home (F or female; stanza A):

3A (F)	I was gathering the cocklebur, But did not fill my basket. Sighing for my loved one, I set it down on the highway. <sup>8</sup>	
3B (M)	I ascend that rocky height, My horses are tired; I pour a drink into that metal flask, That I may not have to suffer endless longing. <sup>9</sup>	
3C (M) 陟彼高岡	I ascend that lofty ridge, My horses are weary; I pour a drink into that horn goblet, That I may not have to suffer endless pain.	= 218D1
3D (M)	I ascend that prominence, My horses are hurting; My driver has fallen ill, Oh, how great the sorrow!	= 225E6

This is a sophisticated poem. The soldier’s lament is rounded off by new wording in its third stanza. The juxtaposition of the wife and the soldier unable to return is poignant: a picture of unfulfilled hope, seen from both its ends.

<sup>7</sup>Pér’s term for what I call a series is *dzǔ* 組 (see 相同句 11f).

<sup>8</sup>This action links her to the soldier husband who departed down that road.

<sup>9</sup>His longing is such that his only hope is to forget it in drink.



**2. Shī 3D4 and 225E6** 云何吁兮. Shī 3 we know. Shī 225 is a portrait of an officer and his decorously attractive lady; it concludes, in Waley's version:

225E	He did not dangle it, His sash was extra long. She did not curl it, Her hair had its own wave. I no longer see them –	
云何吁兮	Oh, how great the sorrow!	= 3D4

Who are these people? Earlier stanzas say of the gentleman that his words were full of elegance (有章), and that in his conduct he went back to the ways of Jōu (行歸于周); the masses of the people looked up to him (萬民所望). This is a lament for the virtuous officers of old. The common line 225E6 is no longer a primary emotional expression; it has become a gesture of political moralizing. The likely sequence is then Shī 3 > Shī 225. Shī 3, though itself sophisticated, seems to be primary to both the Yǎ poems with which it shares material.

I now turn to a self-contained group, with the minimum two poems.<sup>12</sup>

**3. Shī 53ABC5 and 99AB2** 彼姝者子. In 53, onlookers ask how to entertain a guest; in 99, a girl reports the approach of a lover. Despite the “woman” determinative of shū 姝, the persons described by the common line are male. Both poems are in template form; only the rhymewords vary. The respective first stanzas (adjusting Waley's plural to singular) are:

53A	High jut the pole-pennons On the outskirts of Jywn; White silk enwraps them, Fine horses, four of them; <sup>13</sup>	
彼姝者子	That elegant gentleman – What shall we offer him? . . .	= 99A2
99A	Oh, the sun in the east! <sup>14</sup> That elegant gentleman: is in my dwelling, is in my dwelling – His foot is on my doorstep . . .	= 53A5

Shī 99 is a lover's visit, with no moral dimensions; 53 welcomes a visitor. A line in 99 referring to physical beauty is used in 53 of high moral quality.

<sup>12</sup>There are 7 such groups. The others are Shī 107/203 (linked by 2 common lines), 122/133 (compare Péi 105, with whose conclusion, that 122 > 133, I agree), 129/186 (Péi 91 cites Tswēi Shū, Shirakawa Shizuka, and Granet, concluding that some points need further study), 153/227, 278/280, and 295/296 (consecutive). See further below.

<sup>13</sup>良馬四之 “fine horses, four of them” is grammatically awkward, and the horses increase in later stanzas (五之, 六之) to match the rhyme.

<sup>14</sup>In the next stanza, “the moon in the east.” Both suggest the beauty of the suitor, and are not to be taken as descriptions of the sky at the time of his visit.

We need not follow the commentary in referring *Shī* 53 to a particular Wèi ruler, but Legge's remark seems to hold: on the traditional interpretation there is great difficulty with some of the lines.<sup>15</sup> The more natural poem is probably the source of the line in the less natural poem. I conclude that *Shī* 99 > *Shī* 53.

These examples suggest that it is common for one *Shī* poem to borrow from a poem already established in the repertoire and providing familiar diction,<sup>16</sup> to which the second author contributes a perspective which is more moral, more conventional, or more in line with the current political order, than its source.

In conclusion, I consider two common-line pairs where the linked poems stand next to each other, and the later poem seems to have been meant to replace the earlier.

**4. *Shī* 77A1 and 78A1** 叔于田. In both poems, a girl misses her lover Shú, who is off hunting. *Shī* 77 is the poem with the simpler and more repetitious structure (three short stanzas, which vary only by synonym substitution).

77A	叔于田	Shú has gone a-hunting, And no one is living in our lane. How can no one be living in our lane? But they are not like Shú, Both handsome and kind . . .	= 78A1
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This is concerned only with her feelings. *Shī* 78 has a more complex structure: longer stanzas, which develop the description of the hunt. It begins:

78A	叔于田	Shú has gone a-hunting, Riding in his chariot.	= 77A1
	執轡如組	He holds the reins like they were ribbons, The outside horses seem like dancing. Shú is at the marsh, The fires break out on every side, With sleeves rolled up he braves a tiger And presents it to the Prince; Oh Shú, do not be careless, Beware lest you be hurt . . .	= 38B2 <sup>17</sup>

This presents her as solicitously concerned for him, and him as loyal to the ruler who is in charge of this higher-status hunt. In *Shī* 78, both he and she are models which the young may properly imitate. That is, the prosodically more developed poem is also the more culturally acceptable poem.

<sup>15</sup>Legge ad loc. There are surely erotic *Shī* which were later given a moral or historical interpretation, but there are also *Shī* that were *written by* moralists or dynastic apologists, and do mean what the commentaries say.

<sup>16</sup>See n11 above.

<sup>17</sup>Present space will not permit following up this second common line link, and I leave it as an exercise for the interested reader. For other aspects of *Shī* 38, see Péi 117.

I conclude that Shī 77 > Shī 78, and that the later Shī 78 was meant to supersede the earlier Shī 77, and so was placed next to it.

**5. Shī 295:5 and 296:7 時周之命.**, the last two poems in the Jōu Sùng. They are linked by one common line into a two-poem group. Each consists of a single stanza. Traditional analysis finds no rhymes in either, but Lù Jī-wéi and William Baxter agree that 295 is rhymed (if roughly), whereas 296 is not.

295	King Wín saw to it assiduously, We have accordingly received it. He spread abroad his bounties, And we must seek to secure them.	A A A B	
	時周之命 The Mandate of that Jōu – Oh, the bounties!	B A	= 296:7
296	How great is that Jōu! We ascend its high hills, Its narrow ridges, its high peaks, And we follow the River Everywhere under the Heavens, Gathering in all those who respond:		
	時周之命 The Mandate of that Jōu!		= 295:5

Shī 295, like many Jōu Sùng poems, expresses gratitude to Kings Wín or Wǔ for their efforts in founding the Jōu Dynasty, and thereafter maintaining it. Then 295 is at home in the Jōu Sùng. The second, Shī 296, goes beyond this to depict the Jou *people* spreading everywhere, gathering in all who respond to the Jōu Mandate. It is not the founding figures, as elsewhere, but Jōu itself which is here praised; a great destiny is predicted for it. This unprecedentedly expansive poem is probably later than, and meant to supersede, the more conventional one, and I accordingly reach the conclusion Shī 295 > Shī 296.

Unrhymed poems in the Jōu Sùng seem older than the rhymed ones, but here, the unrhymed 296 turns out to be later than the rhymed 295. Why? I suggest that the ancient poets also knew this distinction, and (especially when writing for future ages) were perfectly capable of simulating, to some extent, the voice of an earlier age.

### Conclusion

These Shī examples imply, not the use of a pre-existing stock of metrically convenient lines (for *all* four-word lines in Chinese are metrically convenient), but the not always adroit literary *reuse* of older poetic material in new poems. To reverse the Homeric allusion with which I began, may not the duplication of whole lines, even in the Iliad and the Odyssey, be sometimes of a literary rather than a technically “formulaic” character?