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How Poetry Became Meditation in Late-Ninth-Century China

ABSTRACT:
In late-ninth-century China, poetry and meditation became equated – not just metaphorically, but as two equally valid means of achieving stillness and insight. This article discusses how several strands in literary and Buddhist discourses fed into an assertion about such a unity by the poet-monk Qiji 齊己 (864–937?). One strand was the aesthetic of *kuyin* 苦吟 ("bitter intoning"), which involved intense devotion to poetry to the point of suffering. At stake too was the poet as "fashioner" – one who helps make and shape a microcosm that mirrors the impersonal natural forces of the macrocosm. Jia Dao 賈島 (779–843) was crucial in popularizing this sense of *kuyin*. Concurrently, an older layer of the literary-theoretical tradition, which saw the poet's spirit as roaming the cosmos, was also given new life in late Tang and mixed with *kuyin* and Buddhist meditation. This led to the assertion that poetry and meditation were two gates to the same goal, with Qiji and others turning poetry writing into the pursuit of enlightenment.

KEYWORDS:
Buddhism, meditation, poetry, Tang dynasty

Sometime in the early-tenth century, not long after the great Tang dynasty 唐 (618–907) collapsed and the land fell under the control of regional strongmen, a Buddhist monk named Qichan 棲蟾 wrote a poem to another monk. The first line reads: "Poetry is meditation for Confucians 詩為儒者禪."[1] The line makes a curious claim: the practice

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[1] From "Reading the Venerable Qiji's Collection" 讀齊己上人集; see Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 et al., comps., *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960; henceforth *QTS*) 848, pp. 9609–10. This poem is also attributed to the monk Shangyan 尚顏 (ca. 830–ca. 930). It is more likely from Qichan, since the earliest extant source for it, *Tangseng hongxiu ji* 唐僧弘秀集 (SKQS edn.; specifically, Yang Ne 楊訥 and Li Xiaoming 李曉明, eds., *Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書 [Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–86]) 10, p. 6a, attributes it to him. Moreover, Qichan would have been closer in age to Qiji, whereas Shangyan was quite old by the time Qiji had become famous, and thus it is more likely that such lavish praise was written by Qiji's contemporary than by his senior. Dates for Tang poets generally follow those in Zhou Xunchu 周勛初, ed., *Tangshi dacidian xiudingben* 唐詩大辭典修訂本 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2003).

of poetry is somehow the same as the practice of meditation. That is, the two are not just analogous, but functionally the same. The main verb is not "like" (*ru* 如, which would also fit the meter). It is *wei* 爲, "to be," "to act as." It is stronger than the English copula "is"; it implies making, effecting. Poetry does what meditation does.

At the same time, poetry works in a different realm from meditation. It is "for Confucians," those elites who participate in and transmit the classical tradition that can be traced back to the sages of high antiquity. Poetry is elite verbal art. It stems from the canonical *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經). Familiarity with its forms and means of composition was required for participation in the civil service bureaucracy. By contrast, it is implied, meditation is for Buddhist monks. It is a practice which involves not just concentration and mental training, but also visualization of supernatural beings, confession of sins, and devotion to deities. Buddhism and poetry would seem to operate in separate spheres.

And yet this claim is undermined by the very fact of its stated author and its subject matter. A Buddhist monk is praising, in verse, the literary collection of another Buddhist monk. If poetry is really something "for Confucians," then the author and the audience are out of their element. They should be practicing real meditation rather than "meditation for Confucians." Nevertheless, both monks write poetry, and the speaker insists that meditation and poetry somehow work in the same way.

This claim, of the homology between meditation and poetry, was made more than once in late-medieval China. The lay poet Xu Yin 徐夤 (late-ninth to early-tenth c.), wrote in a treatise on poetry: "As for poetry, it is meditation among the Confucians 夫詩者, 儒中之禪也."[2] In fact, this would later be repeated so often that it became a critical cliché in the late-imperial period. Yan Yu 嚴羽 (1180–1235), who established the later discourse, probably owed as much to neo-Confucian habits of debate as Chan philosophy, but the metaphor soon seemed inevitable.[3]

[2] *Essentials of the Way of Elegantiae* 雅道機要, in Zhang Bowei 張伯偉, ed. and annot., *Quan Tang Wudai shige huikao* 全唐五代詩格彙考 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2002; abbreviated as *Shige huikao*), p. 439; cf. Charles Hartman, "The *Yinchuang zalu* 吟窗雜錄, *Miscellaneous Notes from the Singing Window*: A Song Dynasty Primer of Poetic Composition," in Olga Lomová, ed., *Recarving the Dragon: Understanding Chinese Poetics* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2003), p. 227. Xu Yin's manual borrows many of its categories and examples from Qiji's poetry manual, *Exemplary Forms of Feng and Sao Poetry* 風騷旨格, in *Shige huikao*, pp. 417–23.

[3] See Richard John Lynn, "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment: Wang Shih-chen's Theory of Poetry and Its Antecedents," in William Theodore de Bary, ed., *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1975), pp. 217–69. For more on the formation of the analogy between poetry and Chan (the formalized schools that later emerged out of meditative lineages) in the Song dynasty, see Richard John Lynn, "The Sudden and the Gradual in

Poetry and meditation could help explain each other, since both were rooted in acts of self-cultivation that reflected privileged insight into the world. Poetry and meditation were analogous ways of seeing.

But this equation between poetry and meditation was neither inevitable nor unchanging. It emerged in the second half of the Tang dynasty and transformed soon thereafter, as the result of specific developments in the history of literary and Buddhist practices. As Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998) once noted, Tang and Song poets held profoundly different attitudes toward the relationship between poetry and meditation. Whereas Song poets take the relationship to be metaphorical, the Tang poets who mention the relationship "all combine into one the mind of poetry and the mind of Buddhism 皆以詩心佛心,打成一片."[4] That is, during the Tang dynasty, the relationship between poetic and Buddhist practices was not metaphorical; it was equal. It is the purpose of the present essay to expand on Qian Zhongshu's offhand remark and explain exactly how several poet-monks (*shiseng* 詩僧) of the late Tang came to assert the fundamental unity of meditation and poetry.

While there have been many surveys of the relationship between Buddhism and poetry,[5] and many attempts to understand the "Buddhist thought" of lay Tang poets,[6] few have traced the internal logic of

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Chinese Poetry Criticism: An Examination of the Ch'an-Poetry Analogy," in Peter N. Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1987), pp. 381–427.

[4] Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, *Tanyi lu* (*budingben*) 談藝錄 (補訂本) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), p. 260.

[5] See, e.g., Paul Demiéville "Tchan et poesie, I" and "Tchan et poesie, II," in idem, *Choix d'études sinologiques (1921–1970)* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 274–87 and 322–29; Timothy H. Barrett, "Poetry: China (Until the Song Period)," in Jonathan Silk, ed., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 541–46; Christopher H. Byrne and Jason Protass, "Poetry: China (Song and After)," in ibid., 547–53; François Martin, "Buddhism and Literature," in John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, eds., *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two: The Period of Division (220–589 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 891–951; Charles Egan, *Clouds Thick, Whereabouts Unknown: Poems by Zen Monks of China* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2010), pp. 2–55; Kaji Tetsujō 加地哲定, *Zōhō Chūgoku Bukkyō bungaku kenkyū* 增補中国仏教文学研究 (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1979); Du Songbo 杜松柏, *Chanxue yu Tang Song shixue* 禪學與唐宋詩學 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, 2008 [1965]); Chen Yunji 陳允吉, *Fojiao yu Zhongguo wenxue lungao* 佛教與中國文學論稿 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010); Sun Changwu 孫昌武, *Chansi yu shiqing* (*zengdingben*) 禪思與詩情 (增訂本) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006); Zhou Yukai 周裕鍇, *Zhongguo Chanzong yu shige* 中國禪宗與詩歌 (Kaohsiung: Liwen wenhua chubanshe, 1994); Zhang Bowei 張伯偉, *Chan yu shixue* 禪與詩學 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1992); Hsiao Li-hua 蕭麗華, *Tangdai shige yu chanxue* 唐代詩歌與禪學 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1997); and Zhang Jing 張晶, *Chan yu Tang Song shixue* 禪與唐宋詩學 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2003).

[6] See, e.g., Arai Ken 荒井健, "Sho-Tō no bungakusha to Bukkyō: Ō Botsu o chūshin to shite" 初唐の文学者と仏教, 王勃を中心として, in Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司, ed., *Chūgoku chūsei no*

the equation between poetry and meditation. Those who have examined it in detail have usually done so from the perspective of the Song dynasty (960–1279) period,[7] after Chan 禪 Buddhism had developed into a full-fledged institution and many assumptions about poetry had changed.[8] Those who have focused on the Tang period tend to see it either as building toward this Song culmination,[9] or as fundamentally incapable of positing a serious reflection on the relationship between Buddhism and literature.[10] This essay, by contrast, takes seriously the claims of poet-monks who lived through the collapse of the Tang and

shūkyō to bunka 中国中世の宗教と文化 (Kyoto: Jinbun kagaku kenkyūjo, 1982), pp. 575–88; Jingqing Yang, *The Chan Interpretations of Wang Wei's Poetry: A Critical Review* (Hong Kong: Chinese U.P., 2007); Burton Watson, "Buddhism in the Poetry of Po Chü-i," *The Eastern Buddhist* 21.1 (1988), pp. 1–22; Luo Liantian 羅聯添, "Bai Juyi yu Fo Dao guanxi chongtan" 白居易與佛道關係重探, in Zhongguo Tangdai xuehui 中國唐代學會, ed., *Tangdai yanjiu lunji* 唐代研究論集 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1992) 4, pp. 407–63; Chen Yunji, *Fojiao yu Zhongguo wenxue lungao*, pp. 183–545; Chen Yinchi 陳引馳, *Sui Tang Foxue yu Zhongguo wenxue* 隋唐佛學與中國文學 (Nanchang: Baihuazhou wenyi chubanshe, 2002), pp. 43–180; and Sun Changwu, *Chansi yu shiqing*, pp. 64–94 and 167–94.

7 See Lynn, "The Sudden and the Gradual"; Jason Protass, "Buddhist Monks and Chinese Poems: Song Dynasty Monastic Literary Culture," Ph.D. diss. (Stanford University, 2016); Christopher Byrne, "Poetics of Silence: Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091–1157) and the Practice of Poetry in Song Dynasty Chan *Yulu*," Ph.D. diss. (McGill University, 2015); Ding-Hwa Hsieh, "Poetry and Chan 'Gong'an': From Xuedou Chongxian (980–1052) to Wumen Huikai (1183–1260)," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 40 (2010), pp. 39–70; and Beata Grant, *Mount Lu Revisited: Buddhism in the Life and Writings of Su Shi* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1994). Du Songbo takes a synchronic approach to the poetry–meditation question: drawing from nearly every corner of the classical tradition of poetry criticism, he nevertheless favors the Song and later periods because of the relative scarcity of materials in the Tang (Du, *Chanxue yu Tang Song shixue*, pp. 611–728).

8 I follow T. Griffith Foulk, Robert Sharf, and others in understanding that Chan 禪 did not exist as a full institution until the Song dynasty, nor as an abstract principle (modern English "Zen") until much later. See Foulk and Sharf, "On the Ritual Use of Ch'an Portraiture in Medieval China," *CEA* 7 (1993), pp. 149–219; Foulk, "The Ch'an *Tsung* in Medieval China: School, Lineage or What?" *The Pacific World* NS 8 (1992), pp. 18–31; Foulk, "Chan Literature," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, pp. 692–722; and Sharf, "The Idolization of Enlightenment: On the Mummification of Ch'an Masters in Medieval China," *History of Religions* 32.1 (1992), pp. 1–31. On the institutionalization of Chan in the 10th and 11th cc., see Benjamin Brose, *Patrons and Patriarchs: Regional Rulers and Chan Monks during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2015); Morten Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen: The Dispute over Enlightenment and the Formation of Chan Buddhism in Song-Dynasty China* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2008); and Sun, *Chansi yu shiqing*, pp. 350–81.

9 John Jorgensen's unpublished dissertation, e.g., explores Tang poems and meditation texts as background for understanding debates between Song Buddhists and neo-Confucians on theories of insentience and nature ("The Sensibility of the Insensible: The Genealogy of a Ch'an Aesthetic and the Passionate Dream of Poetic Creation," Ph.D. diss. [Australian National University, 1989]); there are also elements of this Song teleology in Hsiao Li-hua 蕭麗華, *"Wenzi Chan" shixue de fazhan guiji* "文字禪" 詩學的發展軌跡 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 2012).

10 Stephen Owen, for example, has repeatedly dismissed the possibility of a serious reflection on the relationship between Buddhism and poetry in the Tang even as he has recognized that Buddhist monasticism may have served as a formal model for the idea of the poet's vocation; Owen, "How Did Buddhism Matter in Tang Poetry?" *TP* 103.4–5 (2018), pp. 403–5;

its aftermath. It traces how, in the late-ninth century, several strands in literary and Buddhist discourses converged to create a new understanding of poetry.

The most important of these strands was the aesthetic of *kuyin* 苦吟 ("bitter intoning" or "painstaking enactment of verse"). *Kuyin* featured an intense devotion to poetry, to the point of physical and mental suffering. The legacy of Jia Dao 賈島 (779–843) was crucial to establishing and popularizing this particular sense. At the same time, an older layer of the literary theoretical tradition, which saw the poet as one who sent his spirit to roam the cosmos, was also given new life in the late Tang as it mixed with the *kuyin* aesthetic and Buddhist meditation. This ultimately led to the assertion that poetry and meditation are not just analogous (as asserted in the Song), but fundamentally the same – two gates to the same goal. The poet-monk Qiji 齊己 (864–937?), the recipient of Qichan's poem, discussed above, articulated this view most clearly, a view that had roots in one of his heroes of nearly a century earlier, namely, the ex-monk Jia Dao. By asserting this fundamental unity, Qiji and others could turn the writing of poetry into a means of understanding the fundamental nature of all reality, on par with Buddhist enlightenment.

THE PAINSTAKING COUPLET

The ninth century saw the ascent and flourishing of the tradition of Buddhist poet-monks (*shiseng*). This term initially referred to members of a specific community of literary-minded monks based in the Jiangnan 江南 area and centered around the monks Lingyi 靈一 (727–762), Jiaoran 皎然 (720?–797?), and others.[11] Although originally seen as

idem, *The Late Tang: Chinese Poetry of the Mid-Ninth Century (827–860)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), p. 91; and idem, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T'ang* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1981), p. 282. A rare exception to this attitude in Anglophone scholarship is Nicholas Morrow Williams, who has shown how meditation techniques informed the eclectic style of poet-monk Jiaoran's 皎然 (720?–797?) poetry treatise, *Paradigms of Poetry* 詩式 ("A Taste of the Ocean: Jiaoran's Theory of Poetry," *Tang Studies* 31 [2013], pp. 1–27).

[11] The first extant reference to a poet-monk can be found in Jiaoran's poem, "Replying to 'Parting with Shaowei, Poet-monk of Xiangyang' (In the poem, I respond to the significance of the venerable monk's dream of going home)" 酬別襄陽詩僧少微 (詩中答上人歸夢之意) (*QTS* 818, p. 9217, which displays text in parentheses as small-character auto-commentary). For more, see Ichihara Kōkichi 市原亨吉, "Chū Tō shoki ni okeru Kōsa no shisō ni tsuite" 中唐初期における江左の詩僧について, *THGH* 28 (1958), pp. 219–48. For this reason, it is anachronistic to use the term "poet-monk" to refer to versifying monks of the Six Dynasties or early Tang, as in Demiéville, "Tchan et poesie"; Burton Watson, "Buddhist Poet-Priests of the T'ang," *The Eastern Buddhist* 25.2 (1992), pp. 30–58l; and Bao Deyi 包得義 et al., *Nanchao shiseng yanjiu* 南朝詩僧研究 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2012).

oddities for combining interests in Buddhism and poetry, they became an established part of the literary scene as their fame spread beyond their homeland, to the capital, and to the rest of the Tang empire. The reasons for the ascendance of poet-monks are many. Among the most significant are the following: the migration of literati to Jiangnan following the An Lushan Rebellion of 755–763, the flourishing of Buddhism under emperors Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805–820) and Xuanzong 宣宗 (r. 846–859), the development of Bodhidharma lineages to become the doctrinally innovative schools of Chan, and the cultural and political uncertainty created by the Huang Chao 黃巢 Rebellion (874–884) and collapse of the Tang (907). By the time that the major representatives of this poetic tradition, Guanxiu 貫休 (832–913) and Qiji, were active in the late-ninth and early-tenth centuries, the poet-monk had become a respected role in medieval Chinese literary culture, and literati and monks alike had established elaborate genealogies for them, found their precursors in the early-medieval period (220–589), and sung their praises in verse and prose.[12]

At the same time a new trend in poetry was emerging in the valorization of *kuyin*, particularly in a certain sense of that term that crystallized around Jia Dao. Abundant evidence for this trend can be found not only in poetry of the late Tang (to be discussed below) but also in poetry manuals written at this time. These manuals (*shige* 詩格, literally "poetry frameworks" or "poetry standards") originated in the sixth century but reached their heyday in the tenth. They are comprised mainly of exemplary couplets classified by various poetic techniques and principles, which may or may not be accompanied by prose explanations. Many were written by poet-monks or their associates,[13] and they obsess over Jia Dao.[14] In the poet-monk Xuzhong's 虛中 (late-ninth to early-

[12] On the establishment and development of the poet-monk tradition, see Thomas J. Mazanec, "The Invention of Chinese Buddhist Poetry: Poet-Monks of Late Medieval China (c. 760–960 CE)," Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 2017), pp. 33–177; Wang Xiulin 王秀林, *Wan Tang Wudai shiseng qunti yanjiu* 晚唐五代詩僧群體研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008); Zha Minghao 查明昊, *Zhuanxingzhong de Tang Wudai shiseng qunti* 轉型中的唐五代詩僧群體 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008); Sun, *Chansi yu shiqing*, pp. 316–349; and Zhou Yukai, *Zhongguo Chanzong yu shige*, pp. 38–45. On Guanxiu specifically, see Kobayashi Taichirō 小林太市郎, *Zengetsu Daishi no shōgai to geijutsu* 禪月大師の生涯と藝術 (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1947). Some of Kobayashi's views on Guanxiu have been summarized in Edward H. Schafer, "Mineral Imagery in the Paradise Poems of Kuan-hsiu," *AM* NS 10 (1963), pp. 73–102; and Jorgensen, "The Sensibility of the Insensible," pp. 196–213.

[13] Zhou Yukai and Hsiao Li-hua have also noted the close relationship between poet-monks, poetry manuals, and late-medieval currents in Buddhist thought (Zhou, *Zhongguo Chanzong yu shige*, pp. 147–54; Hsiao, "*Wenzi Chan*" *shixue*, pp. 69–97).

[14] See Yugen Wang, "*Shige*: The Popular Poetics of Regulated Verse," *Tang Studies* 22 (2004), p. 85; Hartman, "The *Yinchuang zalu*," p. 215; and Zhou Yukai 周裕鍇, "Jia Dao ge shige yu Chanzong guanxi zhi yanjiu" 賈島格詩歌與禪宗關係之研究, in I Lo-fen 衣若芬 and

tenth c.) *Handmirror of Streams and Categories* 流類手鑑, Jia Dao is the most frequently quoted of any poet.[15] Qiji, in his *Exemplary Forms of Feng and Sao Poetry* 風騷旨格, cites Jia Dao more often than anyone besides himself.[16] In the *Essentials of the Way of the Elegantiae* 雅道機要 by Xu Yin, Jia Dao is cited third-most (8), after two other self-described *kuyin* practitioners, Qiji (14) and Zhou He 周賀 (11).[17] Li Dong 李洞 compiled an entire manual from only Jia Dao's couplets.[18] Another manual, titled *Secret Meanings of the Two "Souths"* 二南密旨, was attributed to Jia Dao. Although almost certainly not written by the master himself, it was likely compiled by one of his many admirers at the start of the tenth century and attests to the high regard for his name at the time.[19]

The central concern of the poetry manuals is the art of the individual couplet and its achievement via *kuyin.* The term first gained a technical sense in the work of Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814).[20] To Meng, *kuyin* was the vocal recitation of one's own verses during the process of composition and revision, a process undertaken for the sake of personal success in the imperial bureaucracy, often via the examination system 科舉). His concept of *kuyin* as the painstaking preparation for the exams, which functioned as a test of one's ability to contribute to the greater good, dominated as long as there was general faith in the examination system.

Stirred at Night, Dispelling My Sorrow 夜感自遣[21]

Meng Jiao 孟郊

夜學曉未休 Studying at night, still haven't stopped by dawn,

Liu Yuanru 劉苑如, eds., *Shibian yu chuanghua: Han Tang, Tang Song zhuanhuanqi zhi wenyi xianxiang* 世變與創化, 漢唐, 唐宋轉換期之文藝現象 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiusuo choubeichu, 2000), p. 429.

15 *Shige huikao*, pp. 417–23.

16 *Shige huikao*, pp. 397–416.

17 *Shige huikao*, pp. 424–49.

18 This manual is listed in the Song dynasty's imperial catalogue but no longer survives. See Toqto'a 脫脫 et al., comp., *Songshi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977) 209, p. 5410.

19 *Shige huikao*, pp. 370–83. This is listed as *Jia Dao's Secret Exemplars of Poetry Standards* 賈島詩格密旨 in the Song imperial catalogue in *Songshi* 209, p. 5409.

20 The following discussion draws on Li Jiankun 李建崑, *Zhong-Wan Tang kuyin shiren yanjiu* 中晚唐苦吟詩人研究 (Taipei: Xiuwei zixun keji gufen youxian gongsi, 2005); Wu Zaiqing 吳在慶, "Lüelun Tangdai de kuyin shifeng" 略論唐代的苦吟詩風, *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 2002.4, pp. 29–40; and Li Dingguang 李定廣, *Tangmo Wudai luanshi wenxue yanjiu* 唐末五代亂世文學研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2006), pp. 77–109.

21 Han Quanxin 韓泉欣, ed. and annot., *Meng Jiao ji jiaozhu* 孟郊集校注 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1995) 3, p. 118; *QTS* 374 p. 4203; cf. Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1975), p. 57; Owen, "Spending Time On Poet-

苦吟神鬼愁	As I *kuyin*, the gods and ghosts worry.
如何不自閑	How is it I can't rest?
4 心與身爲讎	My mind and body are enemies.
死辱片時痛	Disgrace in death is pain for a short while;
生辱長年羞	Disgrace in life is humiliation for many years.
清桂無直枝	The pure osmanthus has no straight branches,
8 碧江思舊遊	By the sapphire river, I think of my old travels.

The central preoccupation of this poem is personal success via the examination system: breaking off an osmanthus branch is a symbol of passing the examinations, and the fact that none of these branches is "straight" or "upright" causes the speaker much consternation (line 7). How is it, the speaker wonders, that the unworthy passed, while an upright poet like himself lingers in obscurity? Poetic composition was tested on the exams and valued by high officials. Consequently, circulating a brief scroll of one's verse 行卷 among the capital elites was a crucial first step in establishing one's reputation at the outset of a bureaucratic career.[22] It was therefore necessary to have a perfectly polished collection to succeed in mid-Tang political and literary life. This led to an inflated rhetoric of intensity. To prove his worth, Meng Jiao describes how he never rests (line 3), and even comes to consider his tiring body the enemy of his mind (line 4). The logic is a strange reversal of the high-mindedness often found in medieval literature, in which one's historical legacy is more important than success in this life. Instead, Meng Jiao states that success in this life matters more than one's reputation after death, since the pain of deathbed regret is over quickly, while the suffering of lifelong humiliation lasts decades (lines 5–6).[23] Examination poetry, as the hallmark of personal success, is more important than life itself.

ry: The Poetics of Taking Pains," in Lomová, ed., *Recarving the Dragon*, p. 169; Shang Wei, "Prisoner and Creator: The Self-Image of the Poet in Han Yu and Meng Jiao," *CLEAR* 16 (1994), p. 20.

[22] On this practice, see Victor H. Mair, "Scroll Presentation in the T'ang Dynasty," *HJAS* 38.1 (1978), pp. 35–60; Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, *Tangdai keju yu wenxue* 唐代科舉與文學 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1986), pp. 247–86; and Christopher M. B. Nugent, *Manifest in Words, Written on Paper: Producing and Circulating Poetry in Tang Dynasty China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), pp. 214–35.

[23] Stephen Owen suggests that the phrase "disgrace in death" in this poem implies suicide (*The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, p. 57). Searching through *QTS* and *QTW*, I cannot find concrete evidence to support this reading. Most references to "dying in disgrace 死於辱" and its opposite, "dying without disgrace 死無辱, or 死不辱" refer to an individual acting or failing to act with loyalty or bravery.

Such stakes meant that it was necessary to constantly revise one's poems until each line was phrased perfectly. Liu Deren 劉得仁 (early- to mid-ninth c.), also working through the night, describes the process.

From "Events on a Summer Day" 夏日即事[24]

到曉改詩句	Fixing lines of a poem until morning,
四鄰嫌苦吟	My neighbors dislike my *kuyin.*

Liu Deren sat for the examinations multiple times over a twenty-year period but extant evidence implies that he never passed. Despite his repeated failures, he felt the compulsion to keep working at it, to keep going over his writings, reading them aloud until they sounded just right. In one poem, he describes how he "cuts to the bone in search of new lines 刻骨搜新句."[25] Elsewhere, he is ashamed for not having achieved anything despite how weary those same bones have grown.

Presented to Vice-Director Cui on Taking the Examinations: 2 of 4 省試日上崔侍郎四首 (其二)[26]

Liu Deren 劉得仁

	如病如癡二十秋	Like being sick or stupid for twenty autumns –
2	求名難得又難休	Seeking a name, it's hard to achieve one, but it's even harder to rest.
	回看骨肉須堪恥	Looking back at my flesh and bones, I should surely be ashamed:
4	一著麻衣便白頭	I'm cloaked in coarse-hemp robes yet my head is white.

When one's sense of success is based on obtaining an official career after passing the examinations (politely referred to as "achieving a name 得名," line 2), failure is devastating. Shame and poverty follow (lines 3–4). The poet, whether out of modesty or hyperbole or rhetorical norms, describes himself as a pitiable old man, ruined by his own bull-headed attempts to make a name for himself. To Liu Deren and many others in the early- and mid-ninth century, official success was a measure of self-worth. At best, failure meant remaining on the margins of elite culture; at worst, it meant an utter negation of one's very purpose in life.

[24] *QTS* 544, p. 2685–86; cf. Owen, "Spending Time on Poetry," p. 171; Owen, *The Late Tang*, p. 93.

[25] "Baring my Feelings, Presented to One Who Knows Me" 陳情上知己 (*QTS* 544, p. 6291).

[26] *QTS* 545, pp. 6303–4. Vice-Director Cui: Cui Yu 崔璵 (mid-9th c., younger brother of chancellor Cui Gong 崔珙 (d. 854?).

This strain of *kuyin* – associated with Meng Jiao and success in officialdom – continued into the tenth century, but it did not become the dominant one. Rather, it was Meng's associate Jia Dao who became most fully identified with the *kuyin* aesthetic. The *New Tang History*'s assessment of Jia Dao, for example, refers explicitly to *kuyin* as part of his legacy.[27] His very person is defined by this term, as attested by many of the poems memorializing him.[28] In his own verse, Jia Dao, too, identified his very self with *kuyin*.

The Last Day of the Third Month, Sent to Judge Liu 三月晦日贈劉評事[29]
Jia Dao 賈島

	三月正當三十日	In the third month, right on the thirtieth day,
2	風光別我苦吟身	In the breeze and sunlight, you part with me, a *kuyin* person.
	共君今夜不須睡	Together with you tonight, we need not sleep –
4	未到曉鐘猶是春	It's still spring before the coming of the morning bell.

Here, *kuyin* describes Jia Dao's very being. It is not just a stage in his life, the discomforting time between preparing for an official career and achieving it. It is his entire life. Although Jia did take the examinations (and failed) soon after laicizing in 812,[30] he rarely used the rhetoric of *kuyin* to talk about a path to officialdom. Rather, he effectively separated it from the narrative of a successful career. Like earlier *kuyin* poets, Jia frequently complained of poverty,[31] but the cause of his poverty was different. It was his commitment to poetry as an end in itself, not as a means to an end, that caused this suffering.

[27] Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Song Qi 宋祈, comps., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 176, p. 5268.

[28] See, e.g., Zhang Pin 張蠙 (*js.* 895), "Grieving Jia Dao" 傷賈島 (*QTS* 702, p. 8084); Kezhi 可止 (860–934), "Weeping over Jia Dao" 哭賈島 (*QTS* 825, p. 9292); Xue Neng 薛能 (817?–880s), "At Jialing Station, Seeing One of Jia Dao's Old Inscriptions" 嘉陵驛見賈島舊題 (*QTS* 560, p. 6499); and Li Ying 李郢 (*js.* 856), "Grieving Jia Dao and Wuke" 傷賈島無可 (*QTS* 590, p. 6853).

[29] Qi Wenbang 齊文榜, ed. and annot., *Jia Dao ji jiaozhu* 賈島集校注 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2001) 10, pp. 513–14; Li Jiankun 李建崑, ed. and annot., *Jia Dao shiji jiaozhu* 賈島詩集校注 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2002) 10, pp. 415–17; *QTS* 574, p. 6687.

[30] On the date and circumstances of Jia Dao's laicization, see Bai Aiping 白爱平, "Jia Dao weiseng ji huansu shijian didian kao" 賈島爲僧及還俗時間地點考, *Tangdu xuekan* 唐都學刊 22.3 (2006), pp. 11–13.

[31] See, e.g., "Morning Hunger" 朝饑 (Qi, *Jia Dao ji jiaozhu* 1, pp. 6–8; Li, *Jia Dao shiji jiaozhu* 1, pp. 5–7; *QTS* 571, p. 618); and "Singing My Feelings" 詠懷 (Qi, *Jia Dao ji jiaozhu* 10, pp. 487–88; Li, *Jia Dao shiji jiaozhu* 10, pp. 395–96; *QTS* 574, p. 6684).

Jia Dao fundamentally changed the meaning of *kuyin* by dissociating it from official success and tying it to the writing of poetry itself. The poverty, suffering, and failure in his life are presented not as an ironic contrast to his obsession with poetry, but as precisely *the result of* his commitment to poetry.[32] This comes through in the way Jia lets his readers know that he has put an enormous amount of effort into his lines. One poem, for example, contains the following, seemingly unremarkable couplet:

From Jia Dao 賈島, "Seeing off the Venerable Wuke" 送無可上人[33]

獨行潭底影	Traveling alone: shadows at the bottom of a pool,
數息樹邊身	A few breaths: a person beside the trees.

To these lines is appended an annotation in verse supposedly written by Jia himself 自注:

二句三年得	These two lines were attained after three years:
一吟雙淚流	As soon as I intoned them, a pair of tears fell from my eyes.
知音如不賞	If the one who knows my tone does not appreciate them
歸臥故山丘	I will go back to lie down in my old hills.

The claim to intensity (measured by time rather than physical breakdown) is used to prove the sincerity of the poet's pursuit of aesthetic truth, with a recognition of his worthiness.[34] One thinks of the stories of bodhisattvas pursuing enlightenment over countless eons of rebirth. The poet is the ascetic, willing to put aside material comforts in order to attain a long-term benefit.[35] By reorienting the *kuyin* rhetoric of passion toward poetry itself, and away from official success, Jia Dao fundamentally wrote new ideals for the late-ninth and tenth-century poets to strive for.

[32] On the connection between suffering (*ku* 苦) and purity (*qing* 清) in Jia Dao's aesthetic, see Xiao Chi 蕭馳, *Fofa yu shijing* 佛法與詩境 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), pp. 207–33.

[33] Qi, *Jia Dao ji jiaozhu* 3, pp. 119–22; Li, *Jia Dao shiji jiaozhu* 3, pp. 100–1; *QTS* 572, p. 6633; cf. Owen, "Spending Time On Poetry," p. 162.

[34] For more on *kuyin* poetry as a return on a temporal investment, see Owen, "Spending Time On Poetry."

[35] A spurious anecdote, which nonetheless captures the deeper truth (as a myth often does), tells us how, "at the end of the year, Jia Dao would take out the poems he finished that year and make an offering of food and ale to them, saying: 'I have strained my spirit. With these I restore it' 賈島常以歲除取一年所得詩, 祭以酒食曰: '勞吾精神, 以是補之.'" The story is preserved in *Yunxian zaji* 雲仙雜記, sometimes attributed to late Tang, but likely dates to the mid-Song. See Zhou Xunchu 周勛初, ed., *Tangren yishi huibian* 唐人軼事彙編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), vol. 1, *j.* 20, p. 1114.

Kuyin covered a range of phenomena and approaches to poetry, and these referents shifted over the course of the late Tang and afterward. The Jia Dao strain, which separated *kuyin* from a bureaucratic career, became especially widespread in the late-ninth and tenth centuries,[36] in part due to the literati's waning faith in political stability and, hence, in officialdom and the examination system.[37] If getting a *jinshi* 進士 degree was not a sure path to success, if talented poets routinely failed, and if the unworthy were promoted due to corruption and factionalism, why bother with officialdom at all? Thus, by the very end of the ninth century, the idea of poetry as an end in itself – rather than as a means to a successful career – became much more popular than it had been.[38]

At the center of the term *kuyin* are two interrelated concepts: the intensity of one's devotion to poetry, especially its details, and the resulting toll on the body of the poet. The physical pain of *kuyin* came from the intensity with which poets worked on their craft. Multiple poets claimed that the process of composing poems ruined their hair.[39] Such an intense passion for poetry meant an attention to detail. The tenth-century poet Liu Shaoyu 劉昭禹 reportedly likened careless composition to murder, saying: "A pentametric poem is like forty worthy men. If you misplace one character, you're a butcher 五言如四十箇賢人, 亂著一字, 屠沽輩也."[40]

Many poets, like Jia Dao, identified themselves with *kuyin*. Some even went so far as to proclaim that the writing of poetry was the very purpose of life. Du Xunhe 杜荀鶴 (846–904), another member of the elite who failed the exams many times, portrays himself this way repeatedly. In the opening of one poem he announces: "My Way is in

36 If extant records can be trusted, Jia Dao was by far the most popular poet of the 9th–10th cc. See Thomas Mazanec, "Networks of Exchange Poetry in Late Medieval China: Notes Toward a Dynamic History of Tang Literature," *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 5.2 (2018), pp. 338–42.

37 See Oliver Moore, *Rituals of Recruitment in Tang China: Reading an Annual Programme in the* Collected Statements *by Wang Dingbao (870–940)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 72, 91; and Xu Lejun 徐樂軍, *Wan Tang wenren shijin xintai yanjiu* 晚唐文人仕進心態研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2014), pp. 252–58.

38 On this point, see Li, *Tangmo Wudai luanshi wenxue yanjiu*, pp. 78–87, 100–1; and Tao Qingmei 陶慶梅, "Tangmo shige gainian de xinbian" 唐末詩歌概念的新變, *Tang yanjiu* 唐研究 11 (2005), pp. 215–16.

39 See, e.g., Fang Gan 方干 (d. 885?), "Given to Yu Fu" 贈喻鳧 (*QTS* 648, p. 7444); Lu Yanrang 盧延讓 (*js.* 900), "*Kuyin*" 苦吟 (*QTS* 715, p. 8212); Li Pin 李頻 (late-9th c.), "Going Back after Passing the Exams" 及第後歸 (*QTS* 587, p. 6819); Pei Yue 裴說 (*js.* 906), "Sent to Cao Song" 寄曹松 (*QTS* 720, p. 8261).

40 Ruan Yue 阮閱, *Shihua zonggui* 詩話總龜 (SKQS edn.) 10, p. 6. Compare the similar passage in Huang Che 黃徹 (1093–1168), *Gongxi shihua* 䂬溪詩話 (SKQS edn.) 7, p. 6.

pentameter 吾道在五字."[41] That is, the path that he sees himself as following, the principle that structures his life, is poetry. He elaborates on this theme in a poem on *kuyin*.

Kuyin 苦吟[42]

Du Xunhe 杜荀鶴 (846–904)

	世間何事好	Within this world, what is the finest?
	最好莫過詩	Nothing is finer than poetry.
	一句我自得	When I attain a line on my own,
4	四方人已知	Everyone already knows it around the world.
	生應無輟日	In life, we should have no days of rest,
	死是不吟時	For death is when we shall no longer intone.
	始擬歸山去	I prepare to go back to the mountains,
8	林泉道在茲	The path to the woody spring is right here.

In this poem, the *ku* of the title clearly means "intense devotion" rather than "suffering" or "bitter." The first couplet states explicitly that the speaker regards poetry as the "finest 好" thing in the world. Therefore, to get the most out of life, one must spend every possible moment writing (line 5). Like his contemporary Cui Tu 崔塗 (*js.* 888), Du Xunhe seeks to "intone in the morning and intone at dusk 朝吟復暮吟."[43] Poetic practice has changed from a means to an end in itself, at least in Du's self-presentation. Death is to be loathed not because it is an evil, but because it provides no more opportunities for creating and reciting poetry (line 6). Poetry is his very *raison d'être*. It is the meaning of his life.

THE POET-MONKS' EFFORT

The poet-monks of the late Tang and Five Dynasties were as enthralled with the *kuyin* aesthetic as anyone.[44] Given how well connected they were with the literati, it is no surprise to find them drawing upon the Meng Jiao strand of *kuyin* when writing poems of encouragement

[41] "Thinking of My Old Residence on Mt. Jiuhua on an Autumn Day" 秋日懷九華舊居, in *QTS* 691, p. 7941.

[42] *QTS* 691, pp. 7944–45.

[43] From another poem titled "*Kuyin*" 苦吟, in *QTS* 679, p. 7771.

[44] It is important to note that Guanxiu and Qiji were not the only poet-monks who promoted the *kuyin* aesthetic. Guiren 歸仁, a relatively unknown poet-monk of the late-9th to early-10th cc., also writes in a poem: "Every day I suffer for poetry 日日爲詩苦" and "If I'm satisfied with a single couplet, / I forget all my ten thousand worries 一聯如得意, 萬事總忘憂" ("Diverting Myself" 自遣, in *QTS* 825, p. 9293). My focus on Guanxiu and Qiji in what follows is due to their large extant literary collections.

to examination candidates.[45] But the Jia Dao strand was more attractive, for it proffered ideals similar to Buddhist monasticism: living in poverty and austerity, toiling away at a self-cultivation practice, and sacrificing one's body out of intense devotion to a text.[46] The *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* 大乘起信論, a text that Guanxiu studied and preached on for three years, also advocates a practice of zeal similar in kind to that expected in *kuyin* discourse – a person's resolution and effort are crucial to Buddhist soteriology, just as they are to one's literary reputation.[47] So did the *Treatise on the Essentials of Guarding the Mind* 守心要論, a set of practical instructions on meditation attributed to Hongren 弘忍, in which the patriarch says:

> Make effort! Make effort! Although it may seem futile now, [your present efforts] constitute the causes for your future [enlightenment]. Do not let time pass in vain while only wasting energy. The sūtra says: "[Foolish sentient beings] will reside forever in hell as if pleasantly relaxing in a garden. There are no modes of existence worse than their present state." We sentient beings fit this description. Having no idea how horribly terrifying [this world really] is, we never have the intention of leaving! How awful![48] 努力努力. 今雖無用, 共作當來之因. 莫使三世虛度, 枉喪功夫. 經云: "常處地獄, 如遊園觀. 在餘無惡道, 如己舍宅." 我等眾生今現如此, 不覺不知, 驚怖殺人, 了無出心. 奇哉.

The exertion of effort, fighting against deluded complacency, becomes here the basis of salvation. It is through striving that one achieves en-

[45] See, e.g., Guanxiu's "Seeing off a Friend to Lingwai" 送友人之嶺外 (Hu Dajun 胡大浚, ed. and annot., *Guanxiu geshi xinian jianzhu* 貫休歌詩繫年注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011) 13, pp. 627–28; *QTS* 831, p. 9375) and "Seeing off Liu Ti to His Appointment at Min" 送劉逖赴閩辟 (Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 12, pp. 588–89; *QTS* 831, p. 9370); Shangyan's "Seeing off 'Sure to Succeed' Liu" 送劉必先 (*QTS* 848, p. 9600); Qiji's "Seeing off Scholar Zhu to Min" 送朱秀才歸閩 (Wang Xiulin 王秀林, ed., *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 齊己詩集校注 [Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011]) 6, p. 327; Pan Dingwu 潘定武, ed. and annot., *Qiji shi zhu* 齊己詩注 (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2014) 6, pp. 338–39; *QTS* 843, p. 9533); and Muyou's 慕幽 (mid-10th c.) "A Response Matching Something Sent by a Friend" 酬和友人見寄 (*QTS* 850, pp. 9624–25).

[46] On Chinese Buddhist ascetic ideals, see John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1997), pp. 16–50. Stephen Owen has also noted similarities between the poet's and the monk's sense of self-denial ("How Did Buddhism Matter," p. 405).

[47] See *The Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* 大乘起信論, in *T* no. 1666, vol. 32, p. 582A; English translation in Yoshito S. Hakeda, *The Awakening of Faith, Attributed to Aśvagoṣa* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1967 [rpt. 2006]), p. 90.

[48] Chinese text is based on the critical edition compiled from seven Dunhuang manuscripts, as well as a few other sources, by John McRae in *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1986). This passage appears on the page labeled "八 (eight)" in the Chinese-text section, at back of book. The translation is ibid., pp. 126–27.

lightenment. Passion is required. Passion for poetry could bleed into the territory of religion, as in the case of the poet Li Dong worshipping a "Jia Dao Buddha." Likewise, the attention to detail espoused in the *kuyin* aesthetic – as in its precursor Jiaoran – is reminiscent of Mazu Daoyi's 馬祖道一 (709–788) notion of insight through attention to detail.[49] But above all, poet-monks like Guanxiu and Qiji portray themselves as having a passion for the art itself.

Guanxiu's writings on *kuyin* share many themes with his contemporaries'. He often describes poetic composition as *ku*: hard, bitter, painstaking. As one poem has it, "Endless is the bitterness (*ku*) of seeking lines 無端求句苦."[50] Elsewhere, he writes that "In writing, one should exhaust one's energy 文章應力竭."[51] Discussing the experience of his poetic practice, he says, "My mind labors bitterly (*ku*), but the flavor's not bitter 心苦味不苦,"[52] that is, his mind works hard but he becomes so absorbed in the process of composition that it does not feel laborious to him. Poetry, rather, is his life's work. As he directly states in the opening of another poem, "What really is my purpose? / *Lau-lau* – I love only intoning 我竟胡爲者, 嘮嘮但愛吟."[53] When he discusses the physical and spiritual toll of poetic composition on the poet, as well as the importance of individual lines, he sounds like nearly any other *kuyin* poet.[54]At times, Guanxiu explicitly posits his *kuyin* ideal as a continuation of earlier masters. In this case, he sees himself as laboring for the sake of Jia Dao and Liu Deren:[55]

49 On Li Dong's "Jia Dao Buddha," see See Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, ed. and annot., *Tang caizi zhuan jiaojian* 唐才子傳校箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987–1995), vol. 4, *j.* 9, p. 213. On Jiaoran's attention to detail and its similarity to Mazu's "*samādhi* of the oceanic imprint 海印三昧," see Williams, "A Taste of the Ocean," pp. 25–26.

50 "Autumn Gazing, Sent to Commissioned Lord Wang" 秋望寄王使君 (Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 15, pp. 710–11; *QTS* 832, pp. 9387–88). Commissioned Lord Wang refers to Wang Zao 王慥, one of Guanxiu's frequent addressees and magistrate of his hometown of Wuzhou 婺州 from 878 to 880.

51 "On Hearing that Supernumerary Li Pin Died" 聞李頻員外卒 (Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 12, pp. 603–4; *QTS* 831, p. 9372). Although Guanxiu is ostensibly describing Li Pin's practice, it is clear that they agree on this view of literature.

52 "On a Winter's Night, Sent to Executive Assistant Lu: 2 of 2" 夜寒寄盧給事二首 (其二) (Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 12, pp. 569–71; *QTS* 831, p. 9367).

53 "Written Lakeside" 湖上作 (Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 15, p. 731; *QTS* 832, p. 9391).

54 See his poem "*Kuyin*" 苦吟 (Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 22, pp. 968–69; *QTS* 836, p. 9423).

55 Beyond Jia Dao and Liu Deren, Guanxiu is quite taken by the idea that previous poets strained themselves with their hard (*ku*) thought. For example, he describes Miu Duyi 謬獨一, a contemporary mentioned several times by Guanxiu but not otherwise known, by saying, "His thinking is hard (*ku*) like mine 思還如我苦" ("Thinking of Miu Duyi" 懷謬獨一, in Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 14, pp. 668–69; *QTS* 832, p. 9382).

Reading the Poetry Collections of Liu Deren and Jia Dao: 2 of 2 讀劉得仁賈島集二首其二[56]

Guanxiu 貫休

役思曾衝尹	Laboring in thought, you once bumped into the governor.[57]
多言阻國親	Often you spoke of blocking closeness with the state.[58]
桂枝何所直	How can one put a price to an osmanthus branch?[59]
4 陋巷不勝貧	From lowly alleys, you never rose above poverty.
馬病難湯雪	With a sick horse, it's hard to turn snow into boiling water.[60]
門荒劣有人	When gates have been deserted, few are the people there.
伊余吟亦苦	Mine own chanting, too, is bitter:
8 爲爾一眉嚬	I knit my brows for you.

As with most poems about two people, this one begins by alternating between its two topics, with line 1 about Jia Dao and line 2 about Liu Deren. These are allusions to anecdotes about the two. In each case, the stories tell us how complete absorption in craft paradoxically leads to political power: Jia Dao once bumped into Han Yu while contemplating the best word for a line of poetry, leading to Han's patronage of Jia; and Liu's reclusion made him seem so authentically committed to purity that a prince once devoted enormous state resources to finding him. The middle couplets contrast this with the poverty and loneliness characteristic of the *kuyin* poet, pairing concrete imagery (osmanthus

56 Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 7, pp. 368–71; *QTS* 829, p. 9340.

57 This refers to a well-known anecdote about Jia Dao, in which Jia is so absorbed in his choice of words for a couplet (whether to say "pushing 推" or "knocking on 敲" a door) that he wanders oblivious through the streets of the capital and runs into the metropolitan governor Han Yu, who finally tells him to pick "knock." For the original anecdote, see He Guangyuan 何光遠, *Jianjie lu* 鑒戒錄 (SKQS edn.) 8, p. 6; for a translation and discussion, see Owen, *The Late Tang*, pp. 97–98.

58 This line refers to an anecdote related to Liu Deren, in which Liu, despondent after failing the examinations for twenty years, decided to hide away in the mountains. When word got out, an imperial scion sent a thousand chariots to find him, but none was successful. See Fu, *Tang caizi zhuan jiaojian*, vol. 3, *j.* 6, pp. 184–85.

59 Osmanthus branch: symbol of success in the examinations. This line is meant to embody Liu Deren's attitude toward his own craft.

60 This line refers to Liu Deren's difficulty in finding a government job due to his lack of connections with the imperial court. "Turning snow into boiling water 湯雪" had been a metaphor for the difficulty of overcoming obstacles since at least the 4th c. See, e.g., Fan Ye 范曄, comp., *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965) 711, pp. 2302–3: "Dissolving strongholds is harder than turning snow into boiling water 消堅甚於湯雪."

branch, boiling water on snow) with more general abstractions (poverty, "few are the people"). The final couplet shifts its linguistic approach, using first- and second-person pronouns instead of implying them. In doing so, the speaker is stating his connection to the poets as directly as possible. Guanxiu can best honor their legacies by getting down to work and writing with the same dedication to craft.

Against the increasingly common *kuyin* ideal at the turn of the tenth century, Qiji wrote his own response poem on "Cherishing Intoning." While Qiji himself was as committed as anyone to the *kuyin* aesthetic, one can imagine that he wrote this poem in order to rethink the dying metaphor, or perhaps to put a little non-dualism into practice.

Cherishing Intoning 愛吟[61]

Qiji 齊己

正堪凝思掩禪扃	Will I truly be able to fix my thoughts and shut the gate to meditation?
又被詩魔惱竺卿	This Indic adherent is once again vexed by the poetry demon.[62]
偶憑窗扉從落照	Leaning for a moment against the shutters, I follow the falling light;
4 不眠風雪到殘更	Unable to sleep, gusts of snow continue until the last watch.
皎然未必迷前習	Jiaoran need not have been deluded by his earlier tendencies;
支遁寧非悟後生	Zhi Dun would've been better off had he not been aware of his future lives.
傳寫會逢精鑒者	Their writings, passed down, have met an essential mirror[63]
8 也應知是詠閒情	Who ought to understand this feeling of idle singing.

Poetry here is seen not as an investment, a craft which requires ultimate devotion, but rather as a distraction. It is an outside force, made manifest as the "poetry demon 詩魔" – a metaphor comparing the desire to write poetry to the demon Māra who attempted to break Śākyamuni's concentration under the Bodhi tree, a metaphor which

[61] Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 7, pp. 385–86; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 7, pp. 387–88; *QTS* 844, p. 9546; cf. Protass, "Buddhist Monks and Chinese Poems," p. 101; Jorgensen, "Sensibility of the Insensible," p. 217.

[62] "Indic adherent" refers to a Buddhist monk.

[63] "Essential mirror" refers to one with great discernment. In this case, Qiji is referring to himself as one who understands Jiaoran and Zhi Dun.

first gained currency in the middle years of Tang.[64] The use of "poetry demon" is precise here. Qiji's desire to write poetry interrupts his attempts at meditation; thus, Māra succeeds here where he failed with the Buddha. The poet's gaze traces the last lights of dusk as they reach out from the horizon, his mind is filled with thoughts of past poet-monks, keeping him from sleep. He cannot focus. The poem is not his life's purpose, but the distraction from the tasks of his everyday life – meditating, sleeping. This everyday life is described as one of "idleness 閒," that is, not engaged in the business of serving the state. In doing so, Qiji adopts the terms of mainstream political discourse, not the terms of the poetic outsider. He is just a lazy writer after all.

But the consequence of this rhetorical move is that Qiji thereby justifies his own idleness. He is unproductive in his normal affairs not because he is simply lazy, but because he has been attacked by an outside force. His desire to write poetry is not self-motivated love of fame; it is the result of a haunting. He cannot control it. This portrayal of poetry reflects the fine art of the couplet found in *kuyin* discourse, wherein lines are things that are "sought 求" and "attained 得": poetry is external, and the poet, whether "affectionate 愛" or "painstaking 苦" in his pursuit of it, is at the mercy of larger forces.

Nevertheless, when Qiji writes about the composition of poetry, he normally adopts the common terms of post-Huang Chao poetics and stresses the kind of craftsmanship and intensity associated with *kuyin.* In a eulogistic poem written upon Guanxiu's death, he praises the older monk for precisely this quality.

From Qiji, "Hearing that Guanxiu Parted from This World" 聞貫休下世[65]

吾師詩匠者 My master is a craftsman of poetry,
真個碧雲流 Who truly flows like a cloud in the sapphire.

The term used here for craftsman, *jiang* 匠, literally means "carpenter" and implies that the poet brings to language the same kind of attention to shaping linguistic details as a carpenter does to wood. Writing is a specific kind of labor, the kind of painstaking crafting and polishing performed by an artisan. Elsewhere, Qiji stresses the intense devotion and physical breakdown of the *kuyin* ideal.

64 The earliest uses of the term "poetry demon" are by Liu Yuxi (772–842) and Bai Juyi (772–846). On the trope of the "poetry demon" more generally, see Protass, "Buddhist Monks and Chinese Poetry," pp. 96–102.

65 Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 2, pp. 94–96; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 2, pp. 102–3; *QTS* 839, pp. 9464–65.

Sending Thoughts of Sengda, the Old Meditator of Jiangxi 寄懷江西僧達禪翁[66]

Qiji 齊己

長憶舊山日	Often I recall those days on our old mountain,
與君同聚沙	When we made sand stūpas together.[67]
未能精貝葉	Having not yet comprehended *patra*-leaves,[68]
4 便學詠楊花	You learned to sing of willow down.
苦甚傷心骨	You toiled (*ku*) until your mind and bones ached
清還切齒牙	For purity that chatters teeth.
何妨繼餘習	What's stopping you from continuing this habit?
8 前世是詩家	You were of the poets in a previous era.

Poetry composition is not just a physically and mentally exhausting activity (line 5), but also a commitment over multiple lifetimes. As the final couplet implies, Sengda has made a habit of it in his previous incarnations and shows no sign of stopping now. The poet is like a bodhisattva, spending multiple lifetimes, perhaps entire kalpas, preparing for his goal. Instead of enlightenment, the result is verse so pure that it "chatters teeth" (line 6) – a playful reversal of usual tropes having to do with *kuyin*'s physical consequences. Instead of the poem affecting the *poet's* body, it brings about a reaction in the *reader's* body. Though the reference to previous lifetimes is certainly playful, the very possibility of its deployment reveals that poetry required the same level of effort and commitment as the monastic life.

The poet-monks Guanxiu and Qiji frequently drew on *kuyin* discourse, finding in it a match for many aspects of monastic ideals. The glorification of poverty and physical suffering was just the most conspicuous of these. As we have also seen, *kuyin* implies a direct correlation between energy invested and quality of poem produced. This kind of correlation is similar to the law of cause and effect ("karma") so prominent in Buddhism, in which deeds of compassion and devotion lead to merit, while wicked deeds lead to rebirth in evil realms. By this logic, the mental and physical energy invested in poetry can be un-

66 Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 2, pp. 113–14; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 2, pp. 122–23; *QTS* 839, pp. 9469–70.

67 "Made sand stūpas" (literally "gather sand") is short for 聚沙成塔, "gather sand to make stūpas." This refers to a children's game (similar to modern children's sandcastle building) which produces merit for them. The *locus classicus* is the second chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* 妙法蓮華經 (*T* no. 262, vol. 9, p. 8c; trans. Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (the Lotus Sūtra)*, rev. edn. [New York: Columbia U.P., 2009]), pp. 38–39).

68 "*Patra*-leaves" were the material on which South Asian texts were commonly written. Here it refers to Buddhist scriptures.

derstood as a meritorious act within a different discursive system. One venerates *kuyin* masters like Jia Dao instead of Buddhas. One intones poems instead of scriptures or spells. The structures of the actions are the same; only the content is different. Both systems require complete devotion to their practice.

THE STILL POET

The attention to detail and intense devotion to poetry which coalesced in *kuyin* is also related to an ideal of absorption: a person can fully devote himself to a singular goal if he is also able to block out extraneous thoughts or sensory input. This involves a kind of mental strength beyond the abilities of most humans. Poets must have an extraordinary capacity for concentration and visualization if they are to take part in the process of fashioning 造化, of shaping and re-creating the patterns of the cosmos in their literary works. Though this idea of a poet's concentration had deep roots in the classical literary tradition, its fullest flowering came when it cross-pollinated with the practices of Buddhist meditation.

The classical precedent for the poetic ideal of absorption was Lu Ji's 陸機 (261–303) "*Fu* on Literature" ("Wen fu" 文賦). This text, anthologized in the supremely influential *Wenxuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*), would have been well known to any Tang poet.[69] Lu Ji describes how the poet takes a visionary journey in preparation for the act of composition.

其始也皆	In the beginning, [the poet] both
收視反聽	Withdraws sight, suspends hearing,
耽思傍訊	And deeply contemplates, seeks broadly,
精騖八極	Letting his spirit race to the eight limits,
心遊萬仞	Letting his mind roam ten thousand spans.
其致也	Then, at the end,
情曈曨而彌鮮	His feelings first glimmering, become ever brighter,
物昭晰而互進	And things, clear and resplendent, reveal one another.[70]

[69] Qiji, for example, praised Guanxiu's work by comparing it to the *Wenxuan*: "He strove for equality with the Crown Prince of Liang, / To be esteemed like [those poets of] the Wenxuan tower" 爭得梁太子, 重爲文選樓 (Qiji, "Hearing that Guanxiu Parted from this World" 聞貫休下世, in Wang, *Qiji shi ji jiaozhu* 2, pp. 94–96; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 2, pp. 102–3; *QTS* 839, pp. 9464–65). "Crown Prince of Liang" refers to Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), compiler of the *Wenxuan*.

[70] Xiao Tong 蕭統, comp., *Wenxuan* 文選 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986) 17, p. 763; translation adapted from David R. Knechtges, trans. and annot., *Wen Xuan, or, Selec-*

The "*Fu* on Literature," one of the great achievements of literary criticism in the mainstream tradition, here echoes parts of the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭, in which the speaker describes a spiritual journey to parts of the known world and beyond. He turns off his mundane senses to let his mind roam, revealing internal 情 and external 物 realities in ever brighter relief, at which point he can channel them into the linguistic medium of a poem.

Lu Ji's *fu* had a deep impact on literary theory and practice for centuries.[71] One popular poetry manual of the Tang dynasty, attributed to Wang Changling 王昌齡 (d. 756?), describes the process of composition in terms of a similar spirit journey, though giving the poet's mind a more active role:

> When mentally preparing to compose a poem, you must fix your mind, and your eyes will touch their objects. When you use your mind to touch them, you will deeply pierce their world. It is like climbing the summit of a high mountain: when you look down on the ten thousand things, it is like they are in the palm of your hand. When you see images in this way, you will see them clearly in your mind, and thus can they be put to use.[72] 夫置意作詩, 即須凝心, 目擊其物, 便以心擊之, 深穿其境. 如登高山絕頂, 下臨萬象, 如在掌中. 以此見象, 心中了見, 當此即用.

Before anything else can happen, the mind must reach the same state of concentration as described in Lu Ji's *fu*. Once it is settled and focused 凝, it can be used to pierce objects in a way that sight alone cannot. That is, the mind does not just *see* phenomena, it *sees through* them to get to their cosmic significance as images. The poet can then recall these images and arrange them into the world of a poem. But this only comes through mental absorption of the kind that "tires your mind

tions of Refined Literature, Volume Three: Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena, Birds and Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passions (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1996), p. 215.

[71] Its impact can be felt perhaps most acutely on the "Daimonic imagination" (*shensi* 神思) chapter of *Wenxin diaolong*, which also points out the necessity of mental stillness, the spirit journey of the imagination, the arrangement of mental objects, and the difficulty in putting all of this into poetry. See Ronald Egan, "Poet, Mind, and World: A Reconsideration of the 'Shensi' Chapter of *Wenxin diaolong*," in Zong-qi Cai, ed., *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity, and Rhetoric in Wenxin diaolong* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2000), pp. 101–26.

[72] From "A Discussion of the Poetry Mindset" 論詩意, in *Poetry Standards* 詩格, the latter attrib. Wang Changling 王昌齡. See *Shige huikao*, p. 162. Also collected in the "South" 南 section of Kūkai, in Lu Shengjiang 盧盛江, annot., *Wenjing mifulun* [*Bunkyō hifuron*] *huijiao huikao: fu Wenbi yanxin chao* 文鏡秘府論彙校彙考, 附文筆眼心抄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), vol. 3, p. 1312. Cf. Richard Wainwright Bodman, "Poetics and Prosody in Early Mediaeval China: A Study and Translation of Kūkai's *Bunkyō hifuron*," Ph.D. diss. (Cornell University, 1978), p. 371.

and exhausts your intelligence, [wherein] you must forget your person 苦心竭智, 必須忘身," as the author writes in the passage just preceding this one.[73] The mind, through the kind of toil in which one lets go his very self, can be trained to take hold of the images of the cosmos and recreate them in a poem.

As early as the late-eighth century, Tang poets began to make explicit analogies between the kind of concentration espoused in poetic theory and the increasingly popular Buddhist practices of meditation.

From Yang Juyuan 楊巨源 (b. 755), "Given to My Cousin Maoqing" 贈從弟茂卿[74]

扣寂由來在淵思	"Knocking on stillness" comes out of distant contemplation,
搜奇本自通禪智	Finding the marvelous originates in comprehending meditative wisdom.

The first line of Yang's couplet synthesizes two sections of the "*Fu* on Literature." The sort of spirit journey we examined earlier is said to be the basis of another one of the poet's activities described in Lu Ji's *fu*: "[The poet] tests the void and non-existence to demand of it existence, / Knocks upon stillness and silence, seeking a tone 課虛無以責有, 叩寂寞而求音."[75] That is, the act of poetic creation, which seems to emerge out of nothing, is in fact the product of a spirit journey. The second line of Yang's couplet draws on the jargon of Buddhism in order to come at the same point from a slightly different angle. Intense mental concentration, divorced from sensory input, is what leads to new insight.

Later writers made this same point, that poetry requires the same kind of concentration as Buddhist meditation, using the language of *kuyin*:

From Yao He 姚合 (775?–855?), "Sent to Jia Dao" 寄賈島[76]

狂發吟如哭	When madness erupts, you chant (*yin*) as if weeping,
愁來坐似禪	When sorrow comes, you sit as in meditation.

Pei Yue 裴說 [fragmentary couplet 殘句][77]

苦吟僧入定	*Kuyin*: a monk entering concentration,
得句將成功	Attaining a couplet: about to achieve success.

[73] *Shige huikao*, p. 162; Kūkai, *Wenjing mifulun* 3, p. 1309; cf. Bodman, "Poetics and Prosody," p. 371.

[74] *QTS* 333, p. 3717.

[75] *Wenxuan* 17, p. 765. For other translations, with commentary, see Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, 1992), pp. 118–19; and Knechtges, *Wen Xuan, or, Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. 3, p. 217.

[76] *QTS* 497, p. 5634.

[77] *QTS* 720, p. 8269. The earliest extant source for this couplet is the 12th-c. *Tangshi jishi*

Pei Yue's lines are the more explicit of the two, making a direct analogy between meditation and *kuyin* across the caesura, but Yao He's are the more interesting. Not only do Yao's lines come from a poem addressed to the *kuyin* paragon Jia Dao himself, but they reconcile what seem to be two opposing qualities. "Madness" (*kuang* 狂), an intense mania associated with wild calligraphers who give free reign to their imaginations, makes way for the stillness of "meditation" (*chan* 禪), a transliteration of the Sanskrit *dhyāna* and meaning "concentration." First, the intense emotion of madness overwhelms the poet, which he must let out in weeping or poetry or some combination of the two. This experience, subjective and isolating, then brings the poet to a state of sorrow, a calm in which he can enter meditation (presumably to send his thoughts forth to gather more prompts for artistic creation). Poetry can prepare one for meditation, just as meditation can prepare one for poetry.

Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842), an exiled literatus who wrote the first history of poet-monks in the early-ninth century,[78] was perhaps the first to explicitly theorize the connection between meditation and poetic concentration. On the whole, he seems to have held ambivalent attitudes toward Buddhists' attempts at writing high literature – his preface to Lingche's 靈澈 collection praised its subject precisely for transcending the category of "poet-monk." However, in the preface to a parting poem given to the monk Hongju 鴻舉, Liu suggests the possibility that a Buddhist monk with literary inclinations may be capable of writing superior verse.

> When one is able to be free of desire, the ground of his heart is empty; when it's empty, the ten thousand images can enter; once they've entered, they must come out, and so they take shape in phrases. For one's phrases to be marvelous and deep, they must adhere to tonal meter. Thus, from the recent past on down, Buddhists who are known throughout the world for poetry have come one after another. Attaining the poem-world in concentration, it is naturally pure; through their insight, they dispel [the images they have accessed] in language. In this way, their works are refined

唐詩紀事. See Wang Zhongyong 王仲鏞, ed. and annot., *Tangshi jishi jiaojian* 唐詩紀事校箋 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1989) 65, p. 1748.

[78] This first history can be found in Liu Yuxi's "Notes on the Venerable Lingche's Literary Collection" 澈上人文集紀, for which see Qu Tuiyuan 瞿蛻園, ed. and annot., *Liu Yuxi ji jianzheng* 劉禹錫集箋證 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989) 19, pp. 519–24; Dong Hao 董浩 et al., comps., *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983) 605, pp. 2113–14; translation and discussion in Mazanec, "The Invention of Chinese Buddhist Poetry," pp. 40–50.

and striking.[79] 能離欲, 則方寸地虛, 虛而萬象入, 入必有所泄, 乃形乎詞, 詞妙而深者, 必依於聲律, 故自近古而降, 釋子以詩聞於世者相踵焉. 因定而得境, 故翛然以清; 由慧而遣辭, 故粹然以麗.

Liu Yuxi blends together the classical expressive theory of the "Great Preface" ("Da xu" 大序) to the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) with the idea of the poet as fashioner and with Buddhist concepts of quietude and emptiness. The classical discourse maintains that things stirred inside a person must be let out one way or another, whether through sigh, song, or dance.[80] But instead of saying that those things inside are emotions 情 stirred by events in the world, Liu Yuxi asserts that they are the very images 象 of the ten thousand things that make up reality, and that they will only enter into a mind that is completely still and empty. That is, the poet is no longer a passive recipient of events who responds spontaneously with an accurate, authentic reaction to the world. Instead, he is someone who must first cultivate his mind in order to prepare it for the arrival of the images. Not everyone is capable of being a poet. It is the province of those with a superior control of their mind. For this reason, Buddhists have a potentially privileged relationship to poetry. They are experts in the mind, having honed it over many years of practice, cleansing it of desire's interference. In this way, the world of their poems and the mediating perception (*jing* 境 refers to both) are also pure. Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (d. 968) once praised Guanxiu for precisely this quality: "His perceptual awareness (*jingyi*) was outstanding and unique, impossible to match 境意卓異, 殆難儔敵."[81] Monks' ability to concentrate 定, to settle their minds, can be applied directly to poetry. There is no noise distorting the images as they enter the monks' minds, nor as they come out in words. Therefore, the monks' works are "refined and striking." In modern parlance, we might say that Buddhist monks have a transferrable skill set. A calm mind, imbued with the images of the ten thousand things that constitute the entire world, is precisely what is required of poets. They are, after all, fashioners of worlds.

79 Liu Yuxi, "Introduction to 'Stopping by the Temple Hall of Dharma Master Hongju on an Autumn Day and Seeing Him off to Jiangling'" 秋日過鴻舉法師寺院便送歸江陵引 (Qu, *Liu Yuxi ji jianzheng* 29, pp. 956–58; *QTS* 357, pp. 4015–16). According to a different part of this introduction, it was written in the eighth intercalary month of Yuanhe 9 (September–October 814). Cf. Lynn, "The Sudden and the Gradual," p. 384.

80 See *Maoshi zhushu* 毛詩注疏, in *Chongkan Songben Shisan jing zhushu fu jiaokan ji* 重刊宋本十三經注疏附校勘記 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965) 1, p. 13. Translation and discussion in Stephen Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Readings, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1991), pp. 95, 108–11; and Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, pp. 41–43.

81 "Preface to the *White Lotus Collection*" 白蓮集序 (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu*, p. 619; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu*, pp. 598–99; *QTW* 900, pp. 9390–91).

THE TWO GATES

The homology of poetic concentration and Buddhist meditation, suggested by Liu Yuxi and others, came to its fullest expression in the work of Qiji.[82] Being a native of the Chu region, Qiji was familiar with monks of the Chan Wei-Yang lineage and exchanged poems with them.[83] The Wei-Yang lineage was particularly noted for its emphasis on the mutually complementary nature of religious practice, ordinary life, and sudden enlightenment, and especially how the forms of the physical world can shed light on the mind 即色明心.[84] The Buddhist communities at Hongzhou, where Qiji, Guanxiu, and other poet-monks lived for many years, similarly stressed "non-cultivation," which was in essence the possibility of turning any everyday action into meditation.[85] Texts associated with the Hongzhou communities often framed this in terms of meditating in any of the "four postures 四威儀," in which all monastic activity was performed.[86] As one sermon attributed to Hongzhou patriarch Mazu Daoyi put it:

[82] Others have recognized the close relationship between poetry and meditation in Qiji's poetry. See, e.g., Hsiao Li-hua 蕭麗華, "Wan-Tang shiseng Qiji de shichan shijie" 晚唐詩僧齊己的詩禪世界, *Foxue yanjiu zhongxin xuebao* 佛學研究中心學報 2 (1997), pp. 157–78; Jiang Yin 蔣寅, "Yi chan yu shi: yi chan yu shi de luoji yiju" 以禪喻詩, 以禪喻詩的邏輯依據, in *Gudian shixue de xiandai quanshi* 古典詩學的現代詮釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), p. 59; Owen, "How Did Buddhism Matter"; and Protass, "Buddhist Monks and Chinese Poetry," pp. 89, 99–102. My readings of Qiji differ from those of Jiang Yin and Stephen Owen in that they understand Qiji's claims to be more than metaphorical. I also differ from Jason Protass, who reads Qiji's verse as being evidence of a fundamental difference between poetry and monastic ideals, and from Hsiao Li-hua, who sees contradictions in Qiji's view of the relationship between poetry and meditation.

[83] See, e.g., "Leaving an Inscription at the Pagoda of the Master of Mt. Yang" 留題仰山大師塔院 (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 1, pp. 17–19; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 1, pp. 20–21; *QTS* 838, p. 9445), "Sent to Elder Guangwei of Mt. Yang" 寄仰山光味長者 (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 5, pp. 236–37; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 5, pp. 244–45; *QTS* 845, p. 9564), and "Sent to the Monk of Bright Moon Mountain" 寄明月山僧, which may refer to Mingyue Daochong 明月道崇, a disciple of Wei-Yang patriarch Huiji 慧寂 (814–890) (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 2, pp. 108–9; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 2, p. 117; *QTS* 839, p. 9468).

[84] Among records about Huiji in the *Jingde Lamp-Transmission Records*, one monk describes how he and the master were "discussing the Way, how form (Skt. *rūpa*) can illuminate the mind and how connections to phenomena can reveal the truth 商量道, 即色明心, 附物顯理" (*T* no. 2076, vol. 51, p. 284B–C). On these teachings of the Wei-Yang lineage, see Yin Chubin 尹楚彬, "Hu-Xiang shiseng Qiji yu Wei-Yangzong" 湖湘詩僧齊己與潙仰宗, *Hunan daxue xuebao* (*Shehui kexue ban*) 湖南大學學报 (社会科學版) 15.4 (2001), pp. 24–25; Liu Luming 劉鹿鳴, "Wei-Yangzong Chanfa gangzong chutan" 潙仰宗禪法綱宗初探, *Foxue yanjiu* 佛學研究 (2010), pp. 267–68; and Wu Xianlin 伍先林, "Wei-Yangzong de Chanxue sixiang" 潙仰宗的禪學思想, *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 3 (2014), pp. 53–57.

[85] Jinhua Jia, *The Hongzhou School of Chan Buddhism in Eighth- through Tenth-century China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), pp. 76–79.

[86] A precedent for this idea can be found in the *Treatise on Perfect Illumination* (*Yuanming lun* 圓明論), which advocates an ideal of permanently residing in meditation and wisdom, "never quitting during walking, standing, sitting, or lying down 行住坐臥, 無有癈息" (see p. "二十八 [twenty-eight]", in the Chinese-text section of McRae's book); see trans. by McRae, *The Northern School*, p. 212.

> All dharmas are Buddha-dharma, and all dharmas are liberation. Liberation is thusness, and all dharmas never leave thusness. Walking, standing, sitting, and lying – all these are inconceivable functions, which do not wait for a timely season.[87] 一切法皆是佛法, 諸法即解脫. 解脫者即眞如, 諸法不出於如. 行住坐卧, 悉是不思議用, 不待時節.

Given the fact that the ultimate and the mundane are perfectly interfused, completely dependent on one another, one need not sit in silence to meditate. Activity in any posture can give one access to the "inconceivable," that is, enlightenment which is beyond thought. The doctrine of the inseparability of principle and phenomena gave rise to the practice of non-meditation as meditation, something that came to be seen as a hallmark of the Hongzhou communities. Such doctrines left much room for an advanced practitioner to engage with the arts, and would have been convenient justification for a poet-monk.

Often, Qiji discusses poetry and meditation as the two distinct but complementary activities on which he spends most of his time. He opens several poems with lines like, "Outside of meditation, I seek poetry's wonders 禪外求詩妙,"[88] and "Outside of monasticism, the pleasure of idle chanting is purest 僧外閑吟樂最清."[89] In these lines, his Buddhist practice is portrayed as primary, his poetic practice secondary. Other times he reverses the terms. Another poem opens, "When I've no taste for chanting poems, I take up sūtras 無味吟詩即把經."[90] In exchanges with other poet-monks, he describes their activities in a similar manner: "In addition to the work of sūtras and śāstras, you also take on the task of poetry 經論功餘更業詩,"[91] he writes of the otherwise unknown Huixian 惠暹. In a quatrain to a certain "Venerable Guang," he echoes the *kuyin* language of Pei Yue.

[87] *Jingde chuandenglu* 景德傳燈錄, in *T* no. 2076, vol. 51, p. 440A; translation adapted from Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, p. 77.

[88] "On Myself" 自題 (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 6, pp. 318–19; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 6, p. 329; *QTS* 843, p. 9530).

[89] "Sent to My Brother Liao Kuangtu" 寄廖匡圖兄弟 (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 10, pp. 599–600; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 10, pp. 583–84; *QTS* 847, p. 9596).

[90] "Written by Chance at the Isles of Jing" 荆渚偶作 (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 9, p. 479; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 9, pp. 460–61; *QTS* 846, p. 9568).

[91] "Given unto the Venerable Huixian" 貽惠暹上人 (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 7, p. 397; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 7, pp. 395–96; *QTS* 844, p. 9548).

Replying to the Venerable Guang 酬光上人[92]

Qiji 齊己

禪言難後到詩言	After the difficulties of meditation discourse, you come to poetic discourse.
2 坐石心同立月魂	Sitting on stones, your mind is the same as the waxing moon's soul.
應記前秋會吟處	Recall how last autumn, when we met to intone,
4 五更猶在老松根	We were still out at the fifth watch, by the roots of the old pines.

Qiji posits a sequential relationship between religious and literary activities and makes poetry the second stage – perhaps implying temporal sequence, and perhaps implying that it is the more advanced of the two (line 1). In the second line, the Venerable Guang sits on stones, his mind pure and clear like the moon that shines overhead. This image of his physical and mental stillness could describe either seated meditation or poetry composition. The point is moot, because the two look the same. The very ambiguity of the line, as it provides a bridge to a description of poetic composition through the night, underscores a connection between these practices. Though still distinct, poetry and meditation require their practitioners' bodies to adopt similar poses. They share a repertoire.

When explaining his own approach to the composition of poetry, Qiji ties together many of the strands already mentioned. The complementary nature of poetry and meditation, the obsession with formal perfection, and the physical toll of *kuyin*-style devotion to the craft of verse are all mentioned and exemplified in one of his more self-conscious poems:

Explaining Intoning 喻吟[93]

Qiji 齊己

日用是何專	What do I focus on day to day?
吟疲即坐禪	When tired from intoning I sit in meditation.
此生還可喜	Though this life is enjoyable,
4 餘事不相便	Everything else is not related to [this enjoyment].

[92] Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 10, p. 597; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 10, pp. 579–80; *QTS* 847, p. 9596.

[93] Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 6, pp. 300–1; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 6, pp. 311–12; *QTS* 843, p. 9525; cf. Owen, "How Did Buddhism Matter," pp. 399–400.

頭白無邪裏	My head has whitened in [pursuing] "no wrong";[94]
魂清有象先	My spirit is purified before the real images.[95]
江花與芳草	Riverside flowers and fragrant grasses
8 莫染我情田	Don't pollute the field of my inner self.[96]

Qiji portrays poetry as his primary vocation and meditation as a welcome respite from it (line 2). These two activities constitute the majority of his daily life (line 1), taking pleasure in them and little else (lines 3–4). Poetry is labor, and his hard work pays off. He achieves two of the ideals described earlier: poetic perfection on par with the *Odes* (line 5) and an emphasis on the real images of the cosmos (line 6). The latter, moreover, is only possible because his spirit has attained purity and thus become capable of going on the kind of spiritual journey described by Lu Ji's "*Fu* on Literature." The poem concludes by explicitly relating his poetic and religious practices. Contrary to what one may assume, the sensuous "riverside flowers" and "fragrant grasses" often depicted in poetry do not harm his unattached mind (lines 7–8). Qiji may be subtly depicting himself as having achieved an advanced level of detachment, in which the practitioner is permitted to enjoy one's sensory experience.[97] That is to say, poetic and religious practice are not oppositional. In fact, it is precisely because of Qiji's advanced meditative practice that he may be so bold in his literary works.

In poems written to his literary hero Zheng Gu, Qiji further develops this relationship between poetry and meditation. One quatrain

94 "No wrong" refers to poetry; in *Analects* II.2, Confucius describes the *Book of Odes* as having "no wrong" in them.

95 "Real images" refers to the cosmically significant "images" that make up both the phenomenal world and the world of a poem. In his poem "Stirred by a Whim in Mid-Spring" 中春感興, Qiji equates these with the impartiality of nature: "In a single breath, unspeaking, is contained real images; / Where are the ten thousand spirits? Disappearing into the Impartial 一氣不言含有象, 萬靈何處謝無私" (Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 7, p. 405; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 7, p. 402; *QTS* 844, p. 9550). Qiji was fond enough of this couplet to list it as the example of "Great Elegantiae" 大雅 in the opening of his poetics treatise, "Exemplary Forms of *Feng* and *Sao* Poetry" 風騷旨格 (Zhang, *Shige huikao*, p. 399).

96 "Field of my inner self" is a reference to the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記, in *Chongkan Songben Shisan jing zhushu fu jiaokan ji* 重刊宋本十三經注疏附校勘記 [Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan] 9, pp. 439–40):

> The sage kings cultivated the lever of righteousness and the sequences of ritual to put the inner selves of humans in order. Consequently the inner selves of humans were the farming-plots of the sage kings. They cultivated ritual to plough them. They laid out righteousness to plant them. They instituted learning to weed them. They rooted it in humaneness to collect them, and they employed music to give them peace. 聖王修義之柄、禮之序, 以治人情. 故人情者, 聖王之田也. 修禮以耕之, 陳義以種之, 講學以耨之, 本仁以聚之, 播樂以安之

97 If we take Qiji's connections to the Wei-Yang lineage seriously, we can see how this echoes the teachings of its founder Lingyou 靈祐 (771–853), who is said to have once preached: "At all moments, see and hear what is ordinary – it is without any twists and turns – and don't close your eyes or block your ears, but don't let your emotions become attached to phenomena 一

puts the two practices in parallel with each other, implying their fundamental unity:

Sent to Director Zheng Gu 寄鄭谷郎中[98]

Qiji 齊己

	人間近遇風騷匠	I have recently come across a craftsman of poetry in the human realm,
2	鳥外曾逢心印師	And I once met a mind-stamped master beyond the birds.[99]
	除此二門無別妙	There is nothing so singularly marvelous besides these two gates –
4	水邊松下獨尋思	Beneath a riverside pine, I trace my thoughts alone.

Poetry and Buddhism are "two gates" (line 3), that is, two approaches to the same end goal. In Buddhist writings, this phrase is often used to describe two seemingly contradictory approaches that are fundamentally interrelated and conditioned upon each other, such as the Lesser 小乘 and Greater Vehicles 大乘, or arising-and-ceasing 生滅 and true thusness 真如.[100] Qiji, in his own poetry manual, describes poetry's forty gates, which are various moods, attitudes, and realms – such as "satisfaction 得意" (no. 7), "turning one's back on the times 背時" (no. 8), "divinity 神仙" (no. 30), and "purity 清潔" (no. 40)[101] – through which the poet must enter in order to attain his couplets. They are all distinct approaches which lead to the same goal – a well-wrought poem. The gate metaphor, to Qiji, is pluralist. It stresses that there can be multiple ways to enter into something. In the quatrain to Zheng Gu, poetic composition and Buddhist meditation are two such gates. In the first couplet, they are embodied by the two guides mentioned in the first couplet, Zheng Gu (line 1) and an unspecified "mind-stamped mas-

切時中視聽尋常更無委曲, 亦不閉眼塞耳, 但情不附物" (*Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄, in *T* no. 2076, vol. 51, p. 264c). Compare this, too, to the Hongzhou patriarch Baizhang Huaihai's 百丈懷海 (720–814) highest stage of practice, in which one may indulge in the senses without risk of defilement. On this, see Mario Poceski, *Ordinary Mind as the Way: The Hongzhou School and the Growth of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2007), p. 211.

98 Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 10, p. 582; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 10, p. 563; *QTS* 847, p. 9592.

99 "Mind-stamped master"; in Chan, a person who has received the true transmission of the dharma is said to have been "stamped with the mind of the Buddha 佛心印." "Beyond the birds" means "high up in the sky." It is possible that this refers to Yangshan Huiji 仰山慧寂 (807–883), who was very influential in the western Jiangnan region where Qiji grew up and whose life overlapped with Qiji's by about 20 years.

100 On the latter, see trans. Paramārtha 真諦 (499–569), trans., *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* 大乘起信論, in *T* no. 1666, vol. 32, p. 576a.

101 *Shige huikao*, pp. 407–14.

ter" who is part of an orthodox lineage (line 2). Qiji positions himself as one who, having gone through both gates, finds himself at the same realm on the other side, where he sits in absorption, no longer with any teacher, following his thoughts as they go by (line 4). That is, poetry and meditation are two ways in to the same thing – stillness. Both gates lead to heightened mental concentration.[102]

Qiji expands on this idea of mental concentration in another poem to Zheng Gu. Here he draws on the discourse of *kuyin* to invert the normal way it conceives of absorption. Instead of being a means to achieve two different ends (religious insight and poetic creation), absorption becomes an end in itself, something attainable through either literary or religious training.

Sent to Director Zheng Gu 寄鄭谷郎中[103]

Qiji 齊己

	詩心何以傳	How could your poetry mind be passed on?
	所證自同禪	You've proven that it's the same as meditation.
	覓句如探虎	Seeking a couplet is like searching for a tiger;
4	逢知似得仙	Finding understanding is like reaching a transcendent.
	神清太古在	Your spirit is pure, antiquity resides therein;
	字好雅風全	Your words lovely, filled with the Elegantiae and Airs.
	曾沐星郎許	You were once praised as a purified starry gentleman,[104]
8	終慚是斐然	But were embarrassed that this was too ostentatious.

The language of Buddhist practice pervades these lines, even as it draws on classical discourse. Zheng Gu's poetry is imbued with "antiquity 太古" and the moral purity of the *Book of Odes* (lines 5–6). But Zheng Gu also has a "poetry mind 詩心" that can be "passed on 傳" to his followers, just like the mind of a Chan patriarch (line 1). This implies not only a sense of lineage, but also a sense that poetry is itself a practice implying a certain view of reality, like meditation, that leads to higher insights. One can cultivate one's inherent poetry mind, just as one can cultivate one's Buddha mind 佛心. It is on this basis that Qiji gives Zheng Gu the highest possible compliment he can think of:

102 For more on the Buddhist origins of the term "gate" in this sense and its influence on late-medieval poetic theory, see Zhang, *Chan yu shixue*, pp. 11–15; and Wang, *Wan Tang Wudai shiseng qunti yanjiu*, pp. 363–64.

103 Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 3, pp. 151–53; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 3, p. 158; *QTS* 840, p. 9478; cf. Owen, "How Did Buddhism Matter," p. 402; Jorgensen, "Sensibility of the Insensible," p. 215.

104 "Starry gentleman" is a nickname for those who held high office.

he has proven the deep homology between poetry and meditation (line 2). Their fundamental root is not only theoretical, but something that Qiji has witnessed in the work of Zheng Gu. He has shown that someone with a deeply cultivated poetry-mind can reach the same insights as one who has cultivated the Buddha-mind. As in the quatrain written to Zheng Gu, Qiji again asserts that poetry and meditation are two "gates" to the same goal.

The second couplet then follows logically from the first. It explains how it is possible that poetry and meditation ascertain the same thing. The enormous effort a poet like Zheng Gu must make to achieve a perfectly wrought couplet is precisely the same effort needed to reach insight through religious practice. Qiji clearly thought it a good couplet, as he included it in his own poetics treatise to illustrate "Hardship" 艱難, one of poetry's "Twenty Models 二十式."[105] The third line, moreover, draws on one of the theoretical precursors to *kuyin*, a passage from Jiaoran's *Models of Poetry* (*Shishi* 詩式):

> It is also said: "Hard (*ku*) thought is not necessary. When one thinks hard, he loses the substance of spontaneity." This too is wrong. If one won't enter a tiger's lair, how can one catch a tiger? When obtaining the poem-world, striking couplets only begin to reveal themselves when one goes to the utmost difficulty, the utmost danger. After composing a piece, observe its appearance: if it seems easy, attained without thought, this is the work of a superior hand.[106] 又云: 不要苦思, 苦思則喪自然之質. 此亦不然. 夫不入虎穴, 焉得虎子? 取境之時, 須至難、至險, 始見奇句. 成篇之後, 觀其氣貌, 有似等閒, 不思而得, 此高手也.

Lines that appear effortless or spontaneous are never what they seem. That is the illusion of a master poet. As Borges once said, "Perfect things in poetry do not seem strange; they seem inevitable."[107] Underlying this breezy surface is the solid foundation of hard work. Poetry, like meditation, requires that one braves the rocky terrain of the human mind. Only through years of training, of concentration, of labor, can one attain the sort of perceptual awareness that is the fruit of both poetic and religious practice.

105 *Shige huikao*, p. 405.

106 Jiaoran 皎然, "Obtaining the Poem-World" 取境, in Li Zhuangying 李壯鷹, annot., *Shishi jiaozhu* 詩式校注 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2003) 1, pp. 39–41. This passage also made a deep impression on Guanxiu, who alluded to it when he praised a fellow poet-monk with the line, "You once ran into a tiger while seeking lines 覓句曾衝虎" (Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 13, pp. 615–17; *QTS* 831, p. 9373).

107 Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse*, ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2000), p. 4.

Qiji elaborated this equation between poetry and meditation not only in poems written to Zheng Gu. If that were the case, one may think that he is simply adopting the terms of his interlocutor for the sake of instruction, a form of *upāya*. Instead, even in poems describing his own meditation practice, he makes the same claim:

Sitting in Stillness 靜坐[108]

Qiji 齊己

坐臥與行住	Sitting, lying, walking, and standing
入禪還出吟	I enter meditation, still intoning.
也應長日月	Over long days and months, this will
4 消得個身心	Wear down my body and mind.
默論相如少	Few things resemble silent communication;[109]
黃梅付囑深	Huangmei's address was profound.[110]
門前古松徑	On the path of old pines before my gate,
8 時起步清陰	Sometimes I get up to walk in the cool shade.

The boldest claim here is the opening: poetry and meditation may be performed simultaneously. That is, the "non-cultivation" advocated in several late-medieval Buddhist communities is limited not only to the four postures of sitting, lying, walking, and standing, but extends even to the composition of poetry itself. Qiji then proceeds using the same logic as the previous poem, drawing on the rhetoric of *kuyin*. The activity he is describing – whether that is taken to be meditation, poetry composition, or a hybrid of the two – takes a physical toll on his body.

The third couplet then draws on the technical language of late-medieval Buddhism to emphasize the complementarity of language and

108 Wang, *Qiji shiji jiaozhu* 3, pp. 143–44; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 3, p. 152; *QTS* 840, p. 9477.

109 "Silent communication," also written *moqi* 默契, is the transmission of teachings from a master to a student without using language. In the Wei-Yang lineage, this was often associated with the drawing of a circle 圓相 to indicate the fact that the Buddha-nature encompasses and pervades all reality. A verse by a later monk, Shouzhi 守芝 (11th c.), describes the Wei-Yang lineage's most distinctive emphases as "circles" and "silent communication" (preserved in Huihong [1071–1128], *Chanlin sengbao zhuan* 禪林僧寶傳, in Nishi Giyū 西義雄 et al., eds., *Shinsan dai Nihon zoku zōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1975–1989) no. 1560, vol. 79, p. 525c). See also Shanqing 善卿, *Zuting shiyuan* 祖庭事苑 (preface 1108), in Nishi, *Shinsan dai Nihon zoku zōkyō* no. 1261, vol. 64, p. 332a; as well as Liu, "Wei-Yangzong Chanfa gangzong chutan," pp. 264–64; and Wu, "Wei-Yangzong de Chanxue sixiang," pp. 57–60.

110 "Huangmei": the alternative name for Hongren 弘忍 (601–674), based on one of his places of residence, Mt. Huangmei 黃眉山. He is the putative Fifth Patriarch of Chan. His "address" refers to his teachings, most likely his advocacy of silent meditation as seen in the *Treatise on the Essentials of Cultivating the Mind* 修心要論 attributed to him (McRae, *The Northern School*, p. 127) and in his biography in the *Record of the Dharma Transmission of the True Lineage* 傳法正宗記, comp. Qisong 契嵩 (1007–1072), *T* no. 2078, vol. 51, p. 746c.

silence. In line 5, the rare teachings of a master are transferred to a disciple without using words – thus using silence to convey something normally understood through language. In line 6, the patriarch Hongren (here called Huangmei) wrote treatises on quiet meditation – thus using language to convey something normally understood through silence. The poem then concludes with the speaker rising from his meditation to stroll through a path of old pines and, presumably, write a poem about them. That is, taking his own equation of meditation and poetry writing seriously, the speaker goes out to put it into practice.

Elsewhere, Qiji uses the dialectical tension of parallelism to assert a fundamental identity between poetic and meditative practice, drawing again on the language of hardship.

Meeting a Poet-Monk 逢詩僧[111]

Qiji 齊己

	禪玄無可並	Meditation's mysteries – they cannot be equaled,[112]
	詩妙有何評	Poetry's marvels – how can they be critiqued?
	五七字中苦	You suffer in five or seven characters,
4	百千年後清	Then are purified after hundreds or thousands of years.
	難求方至理	Though hard to find, you arrive at principle,
	不朽始爲名	When you "do not wither," you'll make a name.[113]
	珍重重相見	We cherish and value seeing each other often,
8	忘機話此情	Forgetting plans and talking of these things.[114]

In each of the first three couplets, Qiji focuses on meditation in the first line and poetry in the second. The opening presents us with a paradox: things that cannot be "equaled" or "critiqued" are beyond human comprehension, yet they are precisely the poet-monk's area of

111 Wang, *Qizhi shiji jiaozhu* 5, p. 242; Pan, *Qiji shi zhu* 5, pp. 249–50; *QTS* 842, pp. 9506–7; cf. Owen, "How Did Buddhism Matter," p. 403; Jorgensen, "Sensibility of the Insensible," pp. 215–16.

112 Some editions give *shi* 示 ("shown") for *bing* 並 ("equaled"). I follow Wang Xiulin and Pan Dingwu in reading this "*bing*," based on a majority of authoritative editions.

113 "Do not wither" is a circumlocution for "establishing oneself through words 立言." See *Zuozhuan* 左傳, in *Chongkan Songben Shisan jing zhushu fu jiaokan ji* 重刊宋本十三經注疏附校勘記 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965), Duke Xiang, year 20: "The most exalted is to establish oneself through virtue; then, it is to establish oneself through deeds; then it is to establish oneself through words, not abandoning [the task] even after a long while: this is called 'not withering' 大上有立德, 其次有立功, 其次有立言, 雖久不廢, 此謂之不朽."

114 "These things" is an idiomatic translation of 此情, which more literally means "the circumstances we are in and the inner mental and emotional responses to them." I take *ciqing* to refer to all subjective and objective experience shared by Qiji and his interlocutor, for which the first six lines of the poem are metonymy.

expertise. The word used at the end of line 1 for "equaled 並" more literally means "place side by side, in parallel with," so Qiji is saying that nothing can be put in parallel with the fruits of meditation. And yet he spends the rest of the poem doing just that: he matches poetry and meditation in parallel couplets. Thus the paradox at the heart of the poem: Qiji does what he claims cannot be done.[115]

The middle couplets present the path that the poet-monk must tread in similar terms. The goals, given in lines 5–6, are different: in poetry, one seeks to establish a reputation; in meditation, one strives for ultimate truth. Yet both promise a kind of transcendence beyond normal human life. A poet's words live on after death, and insight into Buddhist reality leads to the attainment of nirvāṇa. Both require long journeys of intense striving (lines 3–4), be it in the crafting of pentametric and heptametric lines or the countless rebirths on the bodhisattva path. Qiji stresses their similarity through a playful switch of words. "Suffering 苦" (line 3) can be understood as a technical Buddhist term (*duḥkha*) for the misery of life in saṃsāra, the First Noble Truth, but here it is used to describe *poetic* practice, drawing on the rhetoric of *kuyin*. "Purified 清" (line 4), on the other hand, is frequently used to describe austere, dignified descriptions of landscapes in poetry, but here it is used to describe the fruits of Buddhist – not poetic – practice. In this way, Qiji writes an underlying unity of literary and meditative practices into his poem, even as he denies its possibility in the first two lines. This is what poet-monks do, according to Qiji: live in the tension between the two truths of mundane and ultimate reality, use words to point to practice, practice to broach transcendent principle. The poet-monk whom he meets understands this as well, and the two become so absorbed in the conversation that they lose track of their plans (line 8).

This idea of the poet-monk as the one who understands and performs the underlying unity between poetry and meditation reaches its apex in a poem about Qiji, the one which began this article. The audacious opening unfolds into an embodiment of its claim.

Reading the Venerable Qiji's Collection 讀齊己上人集[116]

Qichan 栖蟾

詩為儒者禪	[Your] poems are meditation for Confucians,
此格的惟仙	Their form is truly transcendent.

[115] If we follow the earliest edition, *Tangseng hongxiu ji* (see fn. 1, above), in reading *shi*, not *bing*, in line 1, we come out with essentially the same paradox: poetry is used to "show" the same marvels as meditation, despite the first line's claim.

[116] *QTS* 848, pp. 9609–10.

古雅如周頌	Ancient and elegant like the Hymns of Zhou,
4 清和甚舜弦	Pure and harmonious as the zither of Shun.
冰生聽瀑句	Ice forms: your couplet on hearing the cascade:
香發早梅篇	A fragrance wafts: your piece on early plums.[117]
想得吟成夜	Contemplating them, I intone them until night,
8 文星照楚天	And your literary star lights up the heavens of Chu.

The opening line states that poetry and meditation are fully identical at their roots: the only difference is that one is primarily the task of a Confucian scholar, the other the task of a Buddhist monk. And a poet-monk is someone who translates one into the other. The practices of meditation and of writing poetry are basically the same, even if their outward manifestations are different. Both poetry and meditation involve a heightened sense of perception, a knack for ordering thoughts and objects, countless hours of hard striving toward a suddenly realized goal, and a final achievement of supramundane insight. This sense of identity is reinforced by lines 3–4, which praise Qiji's work as being modern epigones of the most ancient, most orthodox 古雅 poetry. The Hymns of Zhou are the oldest layer of the *Book of Odes*, and the zither of Shun is the instrument that the most righteous sage-king created to accompany his singing of the southern airs. Qiji's work is poetry personified.

Furthermore, the very structure of the poem demonstrates the "perceptual awareness 境意" (a concept discussed, above, toward the end of the section "The Still Poet") that is cultivated in meditation, the powers of observation for which Sun Guangxian praised Guanxiu in the preface to Qiji's works. It proceeds through the six sense-fields (Ch. *liujing* 六境; Skt. *ṣaḍ viṣayāḥ*) systematically. The six fields are sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought. After line 1 states the process of meditation, line 2 begins with *shape* or *form* 色 (the field of sight), focusing on the poem's "structure" or "grid 格." Lines 3–4 attend to *hearing* 聲, comparing Qiji's works to exemplary classics of music. Line 5 proceeds to *touch* 觸, as some of Qiji's best lines are said to have the coldness of ice, while still linking back to the sound emphasized in the previous couplet. Line 6 stresses *smell* 香 and *taste* 味, alluding to a poem which seems to exude the sweet smell and taste of the plums it describes: we must remember that "fragrant 香" was applied as often to delicious food

[117] Lines 5 and 6 refer to Qiji's two most famous poems, "Listening to a Wellspring" 聽泉 and "Early Plums" 早梅. They have received much critical attention over the centuries and were called "the most pre-eminent poems on objects" 詠物之矯矯 (Zhou Ting 周珽, *Tangshi xuanmai huitong pinglin* 唐詩選脈會通評林, quoted in Chen Bohai 陳伯海, ed., *Tangshi huiping* 唐詩匯評 [Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995] vol. 3, p. 3120).

as it was to pleasing fragrances. Line 7 concludes with *thought* 法, the sensory field which integrates the other five, corresponding to the mind. Together, these six senses make up the totality of human experience. In this way, the poem mirrors some of the practices described in earlier meditation manuals translated from Indic languages, those which formed the basis for later practices.[118] The *Śūraṃgama sūtra* (which the pioneering poet-monk Guanxiu referred to as the "marrow of meditation 禪髓") proceeds through the six sense-faculties in the same way.[119] As Qichan methodically proceeds in his own poem through all six senses in the course of meditation, he enacts the claim of line 1, that "poetry is meditation for Confucians."

Qiji in these works brings to its fullest expression the assertion of a deep homology of religious and poetic practice. If one takes for granted the interfusion of ultimate and mundane reality, if one believes that enlightenment is the realization of this interfusion, and if one assumes that one may therefore practice meditation in the midst of any other activity, then Qiji's assertion makes perfect sense. It is a small step to go from saying, "wearing clothes, eating food, talking and responding, making use of the six senses – all these activities are dharma-nature 著衣喫飯, 言談祇對, 六根運用, 一切施爲, 盡是法性," to saying that poetry may serve a soteriological purpose.[120] Qiji is merely bringing well-established practices into his own favored realm of activity – the writing of poetry. But this is not just a casual act of mindfulness; it is an act of asceticism. Both poetry and meditation require an intense concentration which may lead to physical suffering, but the fruit of both is a profound, salvific insight into the very nature of reality. From this

118 The *Dharmatara-dhyāna sūtra* 達摩多羅禪經, for example, proceeds through the six senses, likening each to an animal which must be leashed (*T* no. 618, vol. 15, p. 322c, trans. Buddhabhadra 佛陀跋陀羅 at Mt. Lu in early-5th c.). The *Candraprabha-samādhi sūtra* 月燈三昧經 takes a different approach, systematically deconstructing the six organs 根, their corresponding senses 情, and consciousness 識 of them for 105 lines (*T* no. 641, vol. 15, pp. 624c–25c, trans. Xiangong 先公 mid-5th c.). Interestingly, the order of the senses given by this text (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thought) is very close to that presented by Qichan in the poem (sight, sound, *touch*, smell, taste, and thought).

119 *T* no. 945, vol. 19 pp. 114c–15c, trans. attributed to Pramiti 般剌蜜帝 in 705. It is now commonly accepted that the *Śūraṃgama sūtra* was produced in 8th-c. China (see Benn, "Another Look at the Pseudo-*Śūraṃgama sūtra*"). Although this text only became widely influential on literati culture in the Northern Song, it was in fact explicitly recommended to the literatus Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (836?–910) by Guanxiu, for which see "Matching 'Lying at Ease,' Shown to Me by Minister Wei" 和韋相公見示閑臥 (Hu, *Guanxiu geshi* 2, p. 12, pp. 606–11; *QTS* 831, pp. 9372–73).

120 These words are attributed to Mazu Daoyi in 1036; see Li Zunxu 李遵勗, comp., *Tiansheng guangdenglu* 天聖廣燈錄, in Nishi, *Shinsan dai Nihon zoku zōkyō* no. 1553, vol. 78, p. 449a; trans. Jia, *The Hongzhou School*, p. 76.

perspective, the very term "religious poetry" is redundant, for religion and poetry are different paths to the same goal.

CONCLUSION

The homology between meditation and poetry came to its fullest expression in the work of a tenth-century poet-monk (Qiji) after it had been hinted at for much of the ninth century. The insight that these two practices are the same is the culmination of multiple arcs in the history of Chinese poetics. On the one hand, the classical tradition, from Lu Ji's "*Fu* on Literature" on down, stressed the importance of the poet's concentration and mental focus in the process of composition. On the other hand, the *kuyin* aesthetic, especially as it came to represent an ideal of pure poetry with Jia Dao, emphasized the importance of effort and intense devotion to the detail of couplet craftsmanship. When these two strands came together in the late-ninth century, and poet-monks who had spent much of their lives devoted to meditation practices encountered them, the match was obvious. Poetry and meditation became two gates which led to a greater perceptual awareness. And precisely this, the awareness of phenomena and their deeper significance as images, is the trigger which may lead one to a sudden insight into the emptiness of all things, otherwise known as enlightenment.

This is an understanding of poetry radically different from that usually stated by scholars (and poets) of Tang China. To Qiji and other poet-monks, poetry is a verbal art, certainly, as well as a linguistic exercise – a social practice, an expression of one's mind, and all the other functions we normally attribute to poetry. But it is not only that. It is also a religiously significant practice. Moreover, Qiji avoids putting poetry and religion in a hierarchical relationship, in which one is subordinate to the other. While religious goals are seen as primary, both meditation and writing are seen as legitimate ways – gates – to that goal. One may even suppose that, since poets cultivate their practice without knowledge of their religious goals, they may be considered better Buddhists. A poet cannot become attached to the idea of enlightenment if he is unaware that he is pursuing it. Poetry is meditation, and meditation poetry.

This idea of poetry's and meditation's fundamental unity would not last. The poet-monks who championed this claim – and had the most at stake in it – soon fell out of favor. The "nine monks" (*jiuseng* 九僧) of the late-tenth century, though well known in their day, were not as stylistically bold as Guanxiu or Qiji. Literary tastes of the early-elev-

enth century shifted away from *kuyin*. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), and other poetic innovators of the Northern Song period saw *kuyin* – which they referred to as the "Late Tang style" ("*Wan Tang ti* 晚唐體") – as nothing more than frivolity.[121] They also dismissed the ex-monk Jia Dao and his poet-monk followers for the religious flavor of their verse, saying that it had an "air of vegetables and bamboo shoots 蔬筍氣,"[122] even though some of these later critics used Buddhist terminology in their own discussions of poetry.[123]

On the Buddhist side, the institutionalization of Chan beginning in the middle of the tenth century meant more codified rules, formal structures, and competing schools. With this came a deeper suspicion of *belles-lettres*, even as more monks wrote and preached on didactic verse (which their students wrote down in the rising genre of "recorded sayings," or *yulu* 語錄). Several Buddhist sources single out Guanxiu and Qiji in particular for criticism, implying that their pursuit of poetic excellence lured them away from a true understanding of the Dharma.[124] The poet-monks were condemned by poets and monks alike. In the process, their equation of poetry and meditation devolved first into metaphor, then into cliché.[125] Despite the popularity of Chan Buddhism among Song literati and the use of verse by Chan monks, poetry and meditation operated in separate spheres. It is not even clear that Juefan Huihong 覺範慧洪 (1071–1128) and others who used the phrase "lettered Chan 文字禪" sought the fundamental unity of poetry

121 The "Late Tang style" would not find a prominent champion again until Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127–1206). See Li Dingguang 李定廣, "Lun 'Wan Tang ti'" 論 "晚唐體," *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 (2006.3), pp. 49–60.

122 See, e.g., Chen Shidao's 陳師道 (1053–1102) "Epistle on the Occasion of Seeing off Canliao 送參寥序," in which it is reported that "our era has low regard for the works of Guanxiu and Qiji 貫休、齊己, 世薄其語" (*Houshan ji* 後山集 [SKQS edn.] 11, p. 11b). On the trope of monks' poetry having an "air of vegetables and bamboo shoots," see Protass, "Buddhist Monks and Chinese Poems," pp. 116–58; and Gao Shentao 高慎濤, "Shiseng zhi 'shusunqi' yu 'suansuoqi'" 詩僧之"蔬筍氣"與"酸餿氣," *Gudian wenxue zhishi* 古典文學知識 136 (2008), pp. 50–57.

123 Su Shi is a prominent example of this phenomenon. On his use of Buddhist terminology, see Hsiao Li-hua, "Dongpo shilun zhong de Chan yu" 東坡詩論中的禪喻, *Foxue yanjiu zhongxin xuebao* 佛學研究中心學報 6 (2001), pp. 254–68.

124 For a rulebook's criticism, see Zongze 宗賾, *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 (1103), in Nishi, *Shinsan dai Nihon zoku zōkyō*, no. 1245, vol. 63, p. 532A; English translation in Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan Qinggui* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2002), p. 159. For a critical anecdote, see Huishi Shiming 晦室師明, *Xu guzunsu yuyao* 續古尊宿語要 (1238), in Nishi, *Shinsan dai Nihon zoku zōkyō*, no. 1318, vol. 68, p. 397A.

125 According to Zhou Yukai, the poetry–Chan analogy was used in four ways during the Song: 1. "using Chan to classify poetry 以禪品詩"; 2. "using Chan to produce poetry 以禪擬詩"; 3. "using Chan to deliberate on poetry 以禪參詩"; and 4. "using Chan to discourse on poetry 以禪論詩" (Zhou, *Zhongguo chanzong yu shige*, pp. 270–96).

and Buddhist practice.[126] The idea that poetic practice could serve as a form of Buddhist practice would not be find clear articulation again until Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634–1711), under very different circumstances, declared that "poetry and Chan are identical 詩禪一致."[127] Even there, Wang justified his statement in a very different manner from the poet-monks, describing poetic enlightenment in terms of individual intuition and spontaneity. He did not describe it as primarily the result of hard work and stillness.

Nevertheless, Qiji's articulation of the identity between poetry and meditation is the beginning of this tradition: in his works we find the first clear statements about poetry and Buddhism as two gates. For that, Qiji should be recognized as a pioneer in the history of Chinese poetics. But, just as important, his view amounted to a culmination. Building on other poet-monks such as Guanxiu and Jiaoran, he wove together several threads from the discourses of poetry and Buddhism – Lu Ji's spirit journey, Jia Dao's *kuyin*, and Hongzhou monks' non-meditation as meditation – to create a new idea of Buddhist poetry. The equation of poetry with meditation did not appear out of nowhere, but emerged out of a poet-monk tradition that flourished beginning in the late-ninth century. Literary, religious, social, and political developments aligned to create the right conditions. Under these peculiar circumstances, Qiji claimed that poetry could serve as meditation not only for Confucians, but even for Buddhist monks.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

QTS	*Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩
Shige huikao	Zhang Bowei 張伯偉, *Quan Tang Wudai shige huikao* 全唐五代詩格彙考

[126] Zhou Yukai, *Wenzi chan yu Songdai shixue* 文字禪與宋代詩學 (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998); and Protass, "Buddhist Monks and Chinese Poetry," pp. 102–15.

[127] Kaji, *Zōhō Chūgoku Bukkyō bungaku kenkyū*, pp. 261–78; Protass, "Buddhist Monks and Chinese Poetry," p. 58. For more on Wang Shizhen's poetics, see Lynn, "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment."