

Zhu Xi as Poet

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Zhu Xi's poetic composition chronologically and thematically. Whereas previous scholarship subjugates Zhu Xi's poetry to his literary criticism, and the latter further to his philosophy, this paper argues that the three endeavors did not necessarily share the same agenda. Read closely in its own right, Zhu's poetry reveals multiple dimensions: it advanced an aesthetic ideal; it proposed, commented on, and modified philosophical positions; it defined social relations; and it addressed the author's hidden political and private concerns. It also generated delight on its own. Many paradoxes underlay Zhu Xi's theory and his practice of poetry. A little-examined side of his apparent stance against literature is his visceral understanding of literature, developed from his long and self-conscious literary practice driven by both purpose and pleasure.

In the eleventh month of 1167, Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133–1180), a prominent teacher in Hunan, invited a visiting scholar and his disciple on a wintry excursion to the snow-mantled South Paramount Heng 南嶽衡山. Inspired by the merciless blizzards, the three of them composed 149 poems in eleven days. The principal guest alone composed fifty-one poems. After a solemn farewell, the guest headed east toward his Fujian hometown. His spirit still burning, he produced another ninety-six poems in the twenty-eight days of the journey.

This diligent poet was Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), who a century later would be enshrined in Confucian temples across China.¹ Today he is known to students of philosophy as a formidable opponent to the study of literature. This dominant opinion is supported by substantial evidence from various periods of his long life. Peter K. Bol argues that Zhu Xi represented a narrowed intellectual tradition, in which the moralistic “Learning of *dao*” (*daoxue* 道學) eclipsed the diversity of cultural accomplishments (*wen* 文) represented by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), “the last of the great literary intellectuals.”² Benjamin A. Elman also notices Zhu's “vehement” call for the complete abrogation of poetry and rhyme-prose from the civil examination.³ In this line of scholarship, Zhu Xi seems to advocate the slogan “crafting literature harms *dao*” 作文害道,⁴ coined by Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), whose philosophy was accepted by Zhu Xi as a precursor to his own. Considering that Zhu Xi once in a dialogue approvingly cited this slogan,⁵ his avid interest in “crafting literature,” as demonstrated by his large body of poetry, may appear odd and peculiar.

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1. Zhu Xi was enshrined in the Confucian temple in 1241 and elevated to the main hall in 1712; see Thomas A. Wilson, *Genealogy of the Way* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1995), 43, 62.

2. Peter K. Bol, *This Culture of Ours* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1992), 259; see also 340–41.

3. Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examination in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2001), 26.

4. Cheng Yi argued that literary composition was just a plaything which distracts the student's concentration on the pursuit of *dao*; see Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) and Cheng Yi, *Er Cheng ji* 二程集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 239.

5. Zhu Jieren 朱傑人 et al., eds., *Zhuzi quanshu* 朱子全書 (hereafter ZZQS), 27 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), vol. 18, *yulei* 語類 97: 3277.

Part of the seeming contradiction lies in the diverse, context-specific meanings of *wen*. Among its dozen definitions, those related to *dao* include: 1) patterned manifestation of cosmic principle; 2) cultural accomplishment; 3) writing in the broad sense; 4) “belles-lettres” literature, i.e., those literary texts that beyond their pragmatic functions are deeply concerned with aesthetic appeal, and that hence resist being reduced to mere vehicles of propositional messages; and, within the latter, 5) prose in particular. As a result, when two authors talk about *wen* and *dao*, both addressing their antagonism (or compatibility), the kind of *wen* they have in mind could be quite different. When Zhu Xi, in a single dialogue, first calls the *wen* of the classics the “overflow from *dao*,” then compares *dao* to rice and *wen* to appetizing dishes, and finally reproaches Su Shi’s *wen* as harming the orthodox *dao*,⁶ is he salvaging *wen*, subjugating *wen*, or simply disapproving certain genres or styles of *wen*? The didactic flexibility of the dialogic form allows all these ambiguities to exist simultaneously.

Moreover, in practicing literature Zhu Xi developed a tacit understanding of its craft that he did not explicitly articulate when reasoning about *wen* in the philosophical discourse of the time. Unlike Cheng Yi, who had censored all his poems and left only three extant pieces,⁷ Zhu Xi chose to leave an abundant literary legacy, documenting his poetic career from childhood to the last days of his life.⁸ Despite losses, his extant poetry still comprises circa 1240 pieces,⁹ generally compiled in chapters one through ten in the *zhengji* 正集 and chapter seven in the *bieji* 別集 sections of *Hui’an xiansheng Zhu Wengong wenji* 晦庵先生朱文公文集, published in 1532. In addition, his expertise in literary scholarship is also evident in three important works—*Compiled Commentary to the Book of Odes* (*Shi jizhuan* 詩集傳), *Compiled Commentary to the Songs of Chu* (*Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集注), and *Collation of Han Yu’s Prose* (*Han wen kaoyi* 韓文考異)—as well as in many colophons, epistles, and pedagogical dialogues.

Scholarship on Zhu Xi’s literary writing and criticism has primarily appeared in Chinese.¹⁰ In English scholarship, three important articles have been published in the last forty years. Richard John Lynn understands Zhu’s literary theories as predicted upon the assumption that writing is at once a medium of personal expression and a vehicle of moral persuasion.¹¹ Michael A. Fuller’s recent article forcefully argues that one major disagree-

6. *Ibid.*, 139: 4298.

7. As found in chapter 8 of *Er Cheng ji*. Cheng Hao, however, seemed more tolerant to poetry and has sixty-seven poems left, now collected in chapter 3 of *Er Cheng ji*.

8. Zhu Xi composed his first poem at age eleven and his last poem one month before his death; see Shu Jingnan 束景南, *Zhu Xi nianpu changbian* 朱熹年譜長編 (hereafter *ZXNP*) (Shanghai: Huadong shifandaxue, 2001), 63, 1404–5.

9. There are 1238 *shi* 詩 and *ci* 詞 in the collected edition; see Guo Qi 郭齊, *Zhu Xi shici biannian jianzhu* 朱熹詩詞編年箋注 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2000), 18. Eight of them are dubiously attributed to Zhu Xi (see Guo, 919–23). But Guo Qi does not include 1) three extant rhapsodies (*fu* 賦; see *Zhuzi wenji* 朱子文集 [hereafter *ZZWJ*], ed. Chen Junmin 陳俊民 [Taipei: Defu wenjiao jijinhui, 2000], 1: 2–5); 2) a *ci* (*ZZQS*, vol. 24, 84: 3961–62) generally recognized as Zhu Xi’s own composition; 3) some poems found in local histories or stone inscriptions (transcribed in *ZXNP*, 118, 446, 558–60, 752, 1294–95).

10. To mention just a few: Qian Mu 錢穆, “Zhuzi zhi wenxue” 朱子之文學 (in *Zhuzi xin xue’an* 朱子新學案 [Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 1971], vol. 5, 151–90), and Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, “Zhuzi yu shi” 朱子與詩 (in *Tanyi lu* 談藝錄 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984], 86–88), are seminal early works on this subject. For monographs, Shen Meizi 申美子 has attempted to trace Zhu Xi’s intellectual transformation through his poetry; see *Zhuzi shi zhong de sixiang yanjiu* 朱子詩中的思想研究 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1988). Mo Lifeng 莫礪鋒 provides a comprehensive discussion on Zhu Xi’s literary composition, criticism, and influence; see *Zhu Xi wenxue yanjiu* 朱熹文學研究 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2000). Despite its occasional inaccuracy, Guo Qi’s work (above, n. 9) is also a useful reference.

11. Richard John Lynn, “Chu Hsi as Literary Theorist and Critic,” in *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wing-tsit Chan (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai’i Press, 1982), 350.

ment between the poetics of Su Shi and Zhu Xi was over the epistemological adequacy of language in representing the patterns that underlie the phenomenal world. In Fuller's view, Zhu's transformation of aesthetics into epistemology left its mark on his literary scholarship as well as practice.¹² Yet neither Lynn nor Fuller chose to go further to contextualize Zhu's literary theories within his literary practice. On this topic Li Chi's 1972 article "Chu Hsi the Poet"¹³ remains the single contribution. In it Li aims to present an overview of Zhu Xi's poetry and argues that Zhu was unique among Neo-Confucians in having been troubled by his ambivalence toward poetry. Li, however, also exhibits a tendency to read Zhu's poetry as a footnote to his philosophy, an approach I do not adopt in the present paper.

While former studies interpret Zhu Xi's *wen* within the framework of intellectual history, I will attempt an alternative interpretation primarily in regard to his poetic composition. I will argue that Zhu Xi's apparent stance against literature is only one face of the Janus. As such, it cannot be severed from his visceral understanding of literature, seldom articulated in theoretical discourse and developed from his long and self-conscious literary practice driven by both purpose and pleasure. His literary and philosophical pursuits were not necessarily consistent, but were nevertheless twin outcomes of a life-long dialogue within the same person. A proper study of one will shed light on the other. Yet there is also a degree of duality in Zhu Xi's literary pursuit. Although it was interior and personal,¹⁴ it was simultaneously public display—his identity as a man of private virtues provides the content of the display. Zhu Xi's extensive poetic production was his chosen method of engaging with his learned contemporaries and with ancient cultural models. Unlike the anonymous modern audience, Zhu Xi's contemporary readers often belonged to the author's immediate social circle. Zhu Xi was conscious of those to whom he displayed his image, stated his agenda, and for whom he performed acts of political or philosophical persuasion. Due to its manifold functions, poetry satisfied varying needs and thus maintained its vitality for him through a life deeply engaged with other intellectual pursuits.

This paper traces the development of Zhu Xi's style and divides it roughly into three periods. From his teens to around 1155 was the period of learning and exploration. In 1155 Zhu Xi regretted his youthful interest in Buddhism and decided to undertake the Confucian cause of self-cultivation. He therefore purged nearly all poems betraying a Buddhist persuasion (but spared his Daoist pieces) and edited the remaining into *Purged Drafts in the Study of Self-Herding* (*Muzhai jinggao* 牧齋淨稿).¹⁵ Most of the remaining poems are in the pentasyllabic archaic style, bearing affinity to the poetry of the Han and the Six Dynasties, but also of Tang poets like Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (737–792) and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819). The second period is marked by his social activities and academic progress from the mid-1150s to the mid-1170s. His extant poetry from this period appears strikingly diverse. In addition to pentasyllabic verse, there are also some argumentative philosophical poems and a large number of very contemporary poems written mostly on social occasions. The last period, from the mid-1170s to his death, saw greater liberty, synthesis, and originality in his poetry, which achieved a mature form of clarity, control, and lyric fluidity. I examine a poem from this period, "Wuyi Boat Songs" ("Wuyi zhaoge" 武夷棹歌), as a representative of his late style in the last section.

12. Michael A. Fuller, "Aesthetics and Meaning in Experience: A Theoretical Perspective on Zhu Xi's Revision of Song Dynasty Views of Poetry," *HJAS* 65 (2005): 311–56.

13. Li Chi, "Chu Hsi the Poet," *T'oung Pao* 58 (1972): 55–119.

14. As Li argues, Zhu Xi's pursuit of literature was "extremely personal"; *ibid.*, 72; see also 60–63, 69–71.

15. Shu Jingnan, *Zhuzi dazhuan* 朱子大傳 (Quanzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992), 105.

IMITATION POETRY AND THE AESTHETICS OF PLAINNESS

The main body of Zhu Xi's poetry (in his *zhengji* collection) begins with a ritual poem, three rhapsodies (*fu* 賦), and one zither song (*qincao* 琴操), followed by roughly 1200 pieces in the *shi* 詩 form,¹⁶ and ends with sixteen *ci* 詞 songs. The sequence of genres shows a ranking of prestige. The order of *shi* poems does not suggest consistent editorial principles,¹⁷ but it notably begins with a few "Imitating the Old" (*nigu* 擬古) poems in pentasyllabic, non-regulated meters, which from diction to topic emulate the "Nineteen Old Poems" traditionally attributed to the Han Dynasty. Their peculiarity and prominent place in the collection merit further examination.

These imitation poems might represent Zhu Xi's early practice. In a pedagogical dialogue, Zhu Xi instructs a disciple on the procedure of literary education. According to him, the single proper path is to read thoroughly and imitate rigorously. A case in point is his personal experience:

When I first read "Imitating the Old" poems, I thought it only meant to learn the ancients' style. But it turned out to be, for instance, when the ancient poet says "Bright, bright, blooms in the garden," the imitator also writes a line like this; or for "Exuberant, exuberant, pine trees by the gulf," the imitator also writes a line like this. [. . .] He imitates everything from meaning to structure, save for replacing a few words. Later I also wrote twenty- or thirty-some poems in this way and felt immediately that I had made progress.¹⁸

This dialogue presents Zhu Xi as an avid student of poetry, though he does not specify the age at which he practiced poetic imitation. It could have happened in his teens, inspired by Six Dynasties imitation poetry.¹⁹ However, since Zhu Xi had been a former child prodigy in poetry,²⁰ he must have produced other early compositions that did not survive. His preservation and recommendation of these poems likely reflect his later assessments, encoding an agenda as well as aesthetics. A close reading of the third poem in this series illustrates this point.

上山采薇蕨	I climb the mountain to collect vetches and ferns;
側徑多幽蘭	By a side path, secluded thoroughwort bloom in bounty.
采之不盈握	I collect some, no more than a handful;
欲寄道里艱	I want to send them, but the journey is hard!
沈憂念故人	In deep sorrow, I think of my old friend;
長夜何漫漫	How long, how long is the endless night!
芳馨坐銷歇	The sweet-smelling fragrance wastes away in idleness,
徘徊以悲歎	Lingering, wandering, I sigh in grief. ²¹

In this poem, every word resonates with voices of the past while also slightly altering these voices to create a voice of its own. The first line rephrases the titular line of an anonymous

16. Two *ci* songs to the "Yiqin'e" 憶秦娥 tune are included in *juan* five ("Xuemei erque fenghuai Jingfu" 雪梅二闕奉懷敬夫, ZZWJ, 5: 176) as part of *Donggui luangao* 東歸亂稿, a separate collection.

17. Selected portions of Zhu Xi's poems are chronologically arranged, apparently due to his own editorship of separate collections issued during his lifetime. For further discussion, see Shen, *Zhu Xi shi zhong de sixiang yanjiu*, 1–8. Thematic factors seem to be also in play, as poems composed under like occasions or addressed to the same person are often grouped together.

18. ZZQS, vol. 18, 139: 4293.

19. On this subgenre, see Stephen Owen, *The Making of Early Chinese Classical Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), 260–97.

20. See Shu Jingnan, *Zhu Xi dazhuan*, 30–31.

21. "Nigu bashou" 擬古八首, no. 3, ZZWJ, 1: 8.

Han poem, “Climbing the Mountain to Collect Lovage” 上山采靡蕪,²² which depicts a divorced peasant woman who climbed up the mountain to collect lovage, a female tonic, and encountered her ex-husband on return. Zhu Xi changed only the herb that was collected, here “vetches and ferns.” Vetch had prestigious associations: it was said that the sagely Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊 brothers fled into the mountains to escape royal succession and lived on wild vetches to avoid eating the Zhou grains.²³ The term *caiwei* also alludes to the title of a song in the *Book of Odes* (Mao 167), praising devoted military service to the king. The fern seems to be affixed only to complete a pentasyllabic line. With the change of plants, the peasant woman’s voice in the Han poem is transformed into the voice of a moral hero. His painful distance from the throne is the central theme of the entire poem.

The whole couplet structurally emulates the sixth of the “Nineteen Old Poems”: “I trekked across the river to collect lotus; in the thoroughwort marsh, fragrant herbs grew in bounty” 涉江采芙蓉、蘭澤多芳草。²⁴ Zhu Xi replaces “fragrant herbs” with “secluded thoroughwort,” the flower worn by the protagonist in *Lisao* 離騷 as symbol of his unappreciated virtue. The third line imitates “All the morning I gathered the king-grass, / but not enough to fill my hands” 終朝采綠、不盈一掬 from the Ode “Cailü” 采綠 (Mao 226).²⁵ The fourth line recalls the line found in the first of the “Nineteen Old Poems”—“The way is hard and long” 道路阻且長—and Zhu’s couplet structurally resembles a couplet from the sixth Old Poem: “I collected it—but send to whom? / He whom I miss is on a journey afar” 采之欲遺誰、所思在遠道。²⁶ The fifth line may have combined two lines credited to Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), “Deep sorrow makes me age fast!” 沉憂令人老²⁷ and “Deep in my heart I miss my old friend” 心中念故人。²⁸ The sixth line borrows “Long, long is the night! When will it be dawn?” 長夜漫漫何時旦 from a song attributed to Ning Qi 甯戚 of the Shang Dynasty.²⁹ The seventh line imitates “The prime of beauty wastes away in idleness” 容華坐消歇 from Bao Zhao 鮑照 (414–466).³⁰ The last line recalls “Sorrowful and worried, I could not sleep; / holding my gown in hand, I rose and paced back and forth” 憂愁不能寐、攬衣起徘徊, from the nineteenth of the “Nineteen Old Poems,”³¹ or perhaps “I pace back and forth—what is there to see? / In sorrowful thoughts, forlorn with my aching heart” 徘徊將何見、憂思獨傷心 by Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263).³² All these allusions derive from poems that directly or allegorically consider the dilemma of service versus retreat. The author ends it in ambivalence: his unemployed virtue, like the dying fragrance of herbs, may ultimately waste away. If this poem represents a relatively sophisticated form of plagiarism, then another

22. “Shangshan cai miwu,” in *Yutai xinyong jianzhu* 玉台新詠箋注, ed. Wu Zhaoyi 吳兆宜 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 1: 1.

23. Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 61: 2123.

24. *Liuchen zhu Wenxuan* 六臣注文選 (Taiwan: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1965; hereafter, *Wenxuan*), 29: 539.

25. Cf. also “I was gathering and gathering the mouse-ear, but could not fill my shallow basket” 采采卷耳, 不盈頃筐, from “*Juan'er*” 卷耳 (Mao 3).

26. *Wenxuan*, 29: 537, 539.

27. Cao Zhi, “*Zhuan peng li ben gen*” 轉蓬離本根, in *Cao Zhi ji jiaozhu* 曹植集校注, ed. Zhao Youwen 趙幼文 (Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1984), 393–94.

28. Cao Zhi, “*Mingyue zhao gaolou*” 明月照高樓, *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集, ed. Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 41: 611.

29. “*Shange ershou*” 商歌二首, *Yuefu shiji*, 81: 1167.

30. Bao Zhao, “*Xingyao zhi chengdong qiao*” 行樂至城東橋, in *Baoshi ji* 鮑氏集 (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, s.n. [*Sibu congkan* ed.]), 5: 4–5.

31. *Wenxuan*, 29: 542.

32. Ruan Ji, “*Yonghuai*” 詠懷, no. 1, in *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu* 阮籍集校注, ed. Chen Bojun 陳伯君 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 210.

composition, “Exuberant, exuberant trees on the plain” 離離原上樹,³³ is a thorough reworking of “Lush, lush riverside grasses” 青青河畔草 from the “Nineteen Old Poems.”³⁴ Zhu’s only substantial departure from the model is the last couplet. Where the original suggestively alludes to the female protagonist’s empty couch, Zhu Xi modifies it by a reference to the Ode “Qiyue” 七月 (Mao 154) to reflect a more chaste standard.

Literati promotion of classical models was often tied to philosophical agendas. As Brigitta A. Lee argues, Six Dynasties imitation poetry resorts to the authority of the past while reconciling the concern for cultural continuity with the demands of social and aesthetic change.³⁵ This argument applies equally to the case of Zhu Xi. Similar to his philosophical effort to build up a lineage of the transmission of *dao* stretching from the distant past into a new social and political context, his imitation poetry was built upon the same claim of continuity, aiming to revive ancient aesthetic standards in a new cultural context. It was also a clarion call for revolution. By his time the early poetry that he strived to emulate had been superseded by the lyric brilliance of Tang and Song—an achievement that Zhu Xi denied. He appreciated Tang poetry only selectively, and his attitude toward Song poetry was altogether critical. In his view, poets were not to be celebrated for their originality but for their piety to the past. Li Bo 李白 (701–762), for instance, was deemed good because of his “consistent study of *Wenxuan* 文選,”³⁶ the sixth-century anthology which imposed a conservative imperial standard on poetry. But Zhu Xi criticized Du Fu’s 杜甫 (712–770) later poetry from his years at Kuizhou 夔州 (766–768) as “making his own models” (*zichu guimo* 自出規模) and said it was not to be learned.³⁷ Innovative Song poets like Su Shi and Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105) were disparaged as “merely contemporary.”³⁸ Opening his *shi* collection with imitation poetry in effect allowed Zhu Xi to announce a break with his contemporaries while proclaiming an aesthetic agenda that stressed continuity with the venerated past.

Such continuity, in a sense, is less obvious in strict imitation than in Zhu Xi’s later, freer emulation of earlier models. In contrast to the aforementioned pieces, the following poem mourning Lü Zuqian’s 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) death describes a concrete situation and shows genuine feelings, without losing its archaic tone:

晚步曲池上	In the evening I strolled to the winding pond;
西風吹我裳	The western wind blew open my robe.
仰觀天宇闊	I looked up to observe the broad arching sky,
愛此明月光	And fondly cherished the bright moonlight.
念我素心人	I thought of him, the pure-hearted,
眇焉天一方	Now so distant, far at the edge of the sky.
沒者永乖隔	The departed is forever separated from me;
存者為參商	But even the living are like Orion and Antares stars. ³⁹
飄零百歲期	All lives shed and scatter within the term of a hundred years.
寂寞幽鬢霜	Lonely and desolate, in seclusion, frost covers my temples.

33. “Nigu bashou,” no. 1, ZZWJ, 1: 8.

34. Also noticed in Shen Meizi, *Zhuzi shi zhong de sixiang yanjiu*, 86.

35. Brigitta A. Lee, “Imitation, Remembrance and the Formation of the Poetic Past in Early Medieval China” (PhD diss., Princeton Univ., 2007), 16, 150, 165.

36. ZZQS, vol. 18, 140: 4321.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. The Orion constellation and the star Antares never appear at the same time. So *shenshang* 參商 is a trope for separation. Here the line refers to Huang Zhu 黃銖 (1131–1199), polite name Zihou 子厚, since this poem was written to match a poem of his.

還坐三太息 I returned, sat, and sighed thrice.
 高林鬱蒼蒼 The high forests were lushly dark in shadows.⁴⁰

Such pentasyllabic archaic poems are generally regarded as representative of Zhu Xi's style,⁴¹ one that achieved a balance between temporariness and timelessness. By depicting a common evening stroll under the moonlight, the author merged his mourning self into the surrounding universe. His emotion is understated, serene, and kept in control. The straightforward syntax and expressions recreate an archaic surface without slavishly imitating particular classical models.

Archaism is a defining element in Zhu Xi's aesthetic ideal of *pingdan* 平淡, "even and plain" (or *pingyi* 平易, "even and easy"), represented especially by the poetry of Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427). Though "plainness" was an established aesthetic feature of Song poetry,⁴² and Tao Qian its well-known face, advocates differed in their understanding of the quality it described, which led to drastically different approaches to learning the style of Tao. Zhu Xi's suggestion is as follows:

The plainness of Yuanming's (aka Tao Qian) poetry comes simply spontaneously. The late-comers who emulated his plainness could not but end up being far different. Some young lad saw other people writing good poetry, so he was determined to learn. Therefore he followed word by word the phonetics and the phrasing of Yuanming's poems. After a month, he began to understand how to write on his own without following a textual model. Only then did he attain the principle of writing poetry.⁴³

The successful example of learning Tao's style greatly resembles, perhaps was even modeled upon, Zhu's own learning of archaic poetry. His disapproval appears to be directed at the general method of learning Tao in the Song. The latter is best explained by Su Shi, initiator of the learning Tao fad:

As for writing in general, when you are young, you should make its aura lofty and steep, its color vivid and splendid. When you age and mature, eventually your writing will achieve plainness. It is in fact not plainness, but ultimate splendor.⁴⁴

For Su Shi, "plainness" means the understated appearance within which there hides ultimate splendor. Students begin from its opposite end and only eventually come to this state with the maturing of their skills, a process illustrated by his own stylistic development. His poetry, often chided by Zhu Xi as being too "crafty" (*qiao* 巧) and "ornamented" (*huali* 華麗),⁴⁵ turned later toward *pingdan* in poems emulating Tao Qian, composed during his last exiles. But Su's learning and craft nevertheless visibly distinguish his style from Tao's. After Su, many took it upon themselves to "match Tao," prompting the satirical line "In just a single day, many Tao Yuanmings suddenly crowded the human realm."⁴⁶ Zhu Xi now proposed to alter this approach: instead of "returning" to Tao's plainness, one should start by

40. Zhu, "Du Zihou 'Buyue' shi shi wen Lü Bogong fu hou shuri fu ci" 讀子厚步月詩時聞呂伯恭訃後數日賦此, *ZZWJ*, 8: 276.

41. See, e.g., the comment of Wu Ne 吳訥 (1372–1457) and Chen Jingzong 陳敬宗 (1377–1459), quoted in Guo, *Zhu Xi shici biannian jianzhu*, 941–42.

42. See Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *An Introduction to Sung Poetry*, tr. Burton Watson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), 35–38.

43. *ZZQS*, vol. 18, 140: 4322.

44. Su Shi, "Yu Erlang zhi yishou" 與二郎姪一首, *Su Shi wenji* 蘇軾文集, ed. Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 4: 2523.

45. See, e.g., *ZZQS*, vol. 18, *yulei*, 139: 4300, 4302, 4305–6, 4308, 4314.

46. Hong Mai 洪邁, *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), 3: 32.

straightforward imitation, so that no alien elements could be betrayed unconsciously when the writing hand was set free.

Both Su Shi and Zhu Xi found paradigms of their theories in their practices. But Zhu Xi declared his method the single orthodox one, hence categorically degrading Su Shi, a lion-like presence in the literary life of his age, to the second class. In the Northern Song, the idea of establishing orthodoxy in poetry appeared first from the Jiangxi School, a poetic group represented by Huang Tingjian and Chen Shidao 陳師道 (1053–1102) and purportedly dominant at Zhu Xi's time. This school advocated a learning process from careful study of selected rules to relative freedom in composition,⁴⁷ which might have inspired Zhu Xi's theory. However, where for the Jiangxi poets Du Fu established orthodoxy in regulated poetry, for Zhu Xi, Du should instead be condemned for exactly the same reason.

Ironically, the highly referential nature of Zhu Xi's pentasyllabic archaic poetry resembles Huang Tingjian's proposal that "every single word must have an origin,"⁴⁸ a proposal that Zhu forcefully refuted by contending: "What is the origin of 'Guan-guan sing the ospreys' 關關雎鳩 [the first line in the *Book of Odes*]?"⁴⁹ Zhu Xi's own compositions, however, reveal that theory and practice do not always accord. The innovations of Song poetics—the referential, argumentative, technical, and sometimes deliberately colloquial poetry that he ostensibly rejected—by and large defined Zhu Xi's poetic corpus, as the following sections will show.

POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY

In Zhu Xi's corpus, poems with a strong argumentative tendency comprise only a few dozen pieces, all written in the middle period of Zhu Xi's poetry, representing a small, albeit highly notable, fraction of his compositions. These poems convey the argument that literature should be directly didactic. Their relatively small number, however, suggests that Zhu Xi did not find their composition to be particularly aesthetically satisfying.

These poems are intellectually complex, sometimes reflecting upon the legitimacy of poetry per se, as shown in the writing of a poem in the year 1158, during a period of "study in puzzlement."⁵⁰ In the first month of that year, Zhu Xi walked from Tong'an 同安 (in modern Xiamen, Fujian) on foot to visit Li Tong 李侗 (1093–1163), a highly regarded Confucian scholar in Yanping 延平 (now in Nanping, Fujian Province), trekking through long-winding, hilly paths. Zhu Xi was then an earnest young man who, after precocious success in the civil examination ten years earlier, had been attracted to Buddhism and Daoism before submitting to Li Tong's rigorous approach to moral cultivation. His intellectual pilgrimage signaled the start of a period during which he redefined himself. He made a solemn oath never to write a poem again—until shortly after he was inspired by a chapter in the *Great Learning* and penned a poem the next morning, purportedly to admonish himself.

頃以多言害道絕不作詩兩日讀大學誠意章有感至日之朝起書此以自箴蓋不得已而有言云

47. On the tenets of the Jiangxi School, see Zhou Yukai 周裕鐸, *Songdai shixue tonglun* 宋代詩學通論 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1997), 208–14. On the nomination, composition, and contentions of this group, see Mo Lifeng, *Jiangxi shipai yanjiu* 江西詩派研究 (Shandong: Qilu shushe, 1986), 87–128. On its influence at Zhu Xi's time, see *ibid.*, 226–38.

48. Huang Tingjian, "Da Hong Jufu shu" 答洪駒父書, in *Huang Tingjian quanji* 黃庭堅全集 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2001), 18: 475.

49. ZZQS, vol. 18, 140: 4321.

50. "Study in puzzlement," or *kunxue* 困學, was the name of his study and the title of two poems composed in this period; see "Kunxue ershou" 困學二首, ZZWJ, 2: 71; ZXNP, 230–38.

Recently I have absolutely renounced writing poems, lest the proliferation of words harms the Way. In the last two days I have been reading the “Sincerity of the Mind” chapter in the *Great Learning* and was touched. On the morning of the winter solstice I wrote this down in self-admonition. This is the so-called “speaking only in necessity.”⁵¹

神心洞玄鑒	The divine mind can penetrate with supreme understanding;
好惡審薰蕕	It distinguishes good from evil like fragrant herbs from the foul.
云何反自誑	Why have I been beguiling myself
閔默還包羞	And silently hiding my shame?
今辰仲冬節	Today is the winter solstice day;
寤歎得隱憂	I woke up and sighed, feeling deep worry.
心知一寸光	I know by heart that an inch of light
昱彼重泉幽	Has come to shine upon the dark abysmal spring.
朋來自茲始	From today on the solar power shall come in succession,
羣陰邈難留	And the cluster of wintry chill would linger no more.
行迷亦已遠	I have indeed far lost myself on the journey;
及此旋吾輶	At this point, I shall turn around my boat.

As Li Chi puts it, “speaking only in necessity” is “the sort of pretext Neo-Confucians used to justify their verse.”⁵² This poem contains contrition, a moment of enlightenment symbolized by the sunlight, and wistful speculation on future progress expressed in reference to an auspicious hexagram—“Return” (*fu* 復). As explanation of this hexagram, *penglai wujiu* 朋來無咎 means that the *yang* power shall return in succession and no error will be committed.⁵³ Since Zhu Xi’s poem was written on the winter solstice day, the hexagram referred to both the cosmic and his personal regeneration. This poem triggered a dozen others in similar style to be written during this period that recapitulated his questions, internal debates, and self-persuasions. Poems that “sp[oke] only in necessity” though they may have been, aesthetically the pieces represent a bold deviation from his imagistic poems modeled after the classical past.

The literary critic Yan Yu 嚴羽 (thirteenth cent.) contended that the cardinal weakness of Song poetry was argumentation taking precedence over emotional expression,⁵⁴ a criticism that initiated the “talent versus learning” debate in Chinese poetics.⁵⁵ Yoshikawa Kōjirō attributes the philosophical and discursive features of Song poetry to the influence of *lixue* 理學 (literally, “the study of the Principles,” an alternative to *daoxue*) philosophy.⁵⁶ It is true that poems of some *lixue* scholars, including Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077), Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073), and Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1078), strongly exhibit such features.⁵⁷ But prosaic argumentation appeared broadly in poetry of poets living before or beyond the influence of *lixue*, and, as Zhu Xi’s admiration of early poetry shows, it did not always represent *lixue* scholars’ ideal of poetry either. The opposite of Yoshikawa’s argument may be true: *lixue* scholars’ literary practice may have often been under the sway of contemporary poetics.

51. “Qing yi duoyan haidao juebu zuoshi [. . .],” *ZZWJ*, 2: 69.

52. Li, “Chu Hsi the Poet,” 65. Li translated the title but not the poem.

53. *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義, 3: 26, in Ruan Yuan 阮元, *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 38.

54. Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi* 滄浪詩話校釋 (Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1961), 1: 26.

55. See Richard John Lynn, “The Talent Learning Polarity in Chinese Poetics,” *CLEAR* 5 (1983): 157–84.

56. Yoshikawa, 21–24.

57. See Xu Zong 許總, *Songshi shi* 宋詩史 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1992), 237–65.

Zhu Xi's experiments with argument in poetry produced some poems that may appear bland and dull, but unique and individualistic, in contrast to his archaic poetry, which was readable but somewhat conventional. Zhu Xi was aware of his innovation. His deliberate poetic competition with the past is stated in his preface to "Twenty Inspirations While Residing in My Studio" ("Zhaiju ganxing ershishou" 齋居感興二十首),⁵⁸ a series of poems composed in 1172 to summarize his secluded study during the period of ritual mourning for his mother (d. 1170).

Reading Chen Zi'ang's 陳子昂 (659–700) "Inspired Encounters" (*Ganyu* 感遇),⁵⁹ I loved the subtlety and profundity of his language and message, as well as his phonetic sonority and vibrancy. Truly he was beyond the reach of our contemporary poets. [. . .] I wanted to emulate his style and compose some dozen poems, but, being prosaic in imagination and weak in compositional power, I never managed to do it. However, I also regretted that Chen was not penetrating enough in terms of the Principles, and depended on Daoism and Buddhism to create an elevated flavor. In the idleness of my study life, I randomly jotted down what occurred to me and accumulated twenty pieces. These poems could not explore into the tenuous or the remote, nor could they emulate ancient poetry. However, they are all close to the quotidian and the substantial; hence the language is also accessible and easily comprehensible. I hereby write them down to admonish myself and to send to those who share my aspirations.

Zhu Xi confessed that he took inspiration from reading Chen Zi'ang, a poet he admired but was unable to emulate. This apology for his limited talent, however, led only to accusing Chen of not knowing philosophical principles, which reduced his achievement to mere words and sounds. As a result, Zhu's compositions were not "imitations," but aimed instead at a complete break from Chen by demonstrating principles of cosmology, historiography, and moral philosophy in verse. These twenty poems enjoyed high acclaim among his followers. Commentaries were written to illustrate every word of these poems with a chapter of Zhu's philosophy—assuring readers that the full meaning and depth of these poems were unintelligible without studying Zhu's entire corpus.⁶⁰ Through these and other philosophical poems, Zhu Xi recommended himself as not only the better philosopher, but also the better poet, provided that in poetry, too, language served as the vehicle of philosophy.

Praise of these argumentative poems was largely confined to *daoxue* circles. In comparison, the philosophical poetry in which he manages to add metaphorical expression enjoyed longer influence and popularity. In those poems, polyvalence is employed to enhance rather than obscure the philosophical message. These poems typically use natural images to convey a moment of enlightenment. A few poems related to spring illustrate this point.

勝日尋芳泗水濱 無邊光景一時新 等閒識得東風面 萬紫千紅總是春	On a pleasant day, I seek fragrance on the banks of the Si River; The boundless sunlit landscape appears suddenly new. Once you recognize the face of the eastern wind— Myriads of purple, thousands of red, all are [the appearances of] the spring. ⁶¹
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This poem, written in around 1167, strikes the reader with its lyric sensibility. It apparently celebrates a spring blooming in splendid sunlight. Then the reader may come to a second

58. ZZWJ, 4: 146–51.

59. ZZWJ edition has it as *ganyu* 感寓, or "inspired allegories." Guo Qi's collated edition, however, corrects it to *ganyu* 感遇; see Guo Qi, *Zhu Xi shici biannian jianzhu*, 4: 375, collation note 1.

60. Shen Meizi accepts this approach and provides a detailed compiled commentary on these poems; see *Zhuji shi zhong de sixiang yanjiu*, 204–66. See also Guo Qi, *Zhu Xi shici biannian jianzhu*, 370–400.

61. Zhu Xi, "Chunri" 春日, ZZWJ, 2: 72.

reading. After a long winter of puzzled study in the world of words, the poet looks up to seek the “fragrance” of life in the world of things. An eastern wind suddenly lifts the bleak veil on nature, and he sees every living thing partaking in spring. It is a vivid example of the cosmic principle having multiple manifestations in the phenomenal world (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊). Recognizing this principle in its concrete forms happens at a moment of sudden enlightenment, but it comes only after long and gradualist study. The first “innocent” reading of the poem is not superseded by the second; on the contrary, it supports and extends the second reading through empathy. Not every reader has experienced the abstract ecstasy of philosophical enlightenment, but whoever understands wintry entrapment indoors shares the joy of embracing the beauty of spring. The reader is thus encouraged to translate the author’s experience into his own, and his sensual experience into a philosophical analogue.

The setting of this poem—a spring outing by the riverside—emulates an episode in the *Analecets* (11.26). When Confucius asked his disciples about their aspirations, Zeng Dian 曾點, unlike his fellow students, described a joyous outing to River Yi in early spring. The master approved this modest wish over others’ lofty ambitions. Zhu Xi particularly liked this passage and held frequent discussions with his disciples about it. In a poem titled “Zeng Dian,” he rewrote Zeng’s reply in verse.⁶² As Zhu commented, Zeng understood that “the heavenly principle is revealed among the quotidian, and everywhere one should take delight.”⁶³ The spring landscape in this formulation now appears to be an observatory of cosmic order. In “A Casual Poem on a Spring Day” (“Chunri ouzuo” 春日偶作), Zhu Xi calls readers to “recognize the mind of the Universe, the Maker of Things” 乾坤造化心 among the thousand blossoms of spring.⁶⁴ Observing an abstract principle in concrete, quotidian objects is a defining element in Zhu Xi’s doctrine of *gewu* 格物, the investigation of things. It also points to the limits of book knowledge:

川原紅綠一時新	Red and green over rivers and plains appear suddenly anew;
暮雨朝晴更宜人	In dusk rain or morning sun, how even more pleasant!
書冊埋頭無了日	In endless days I have buried my head in books;
不如拋卻去尋春	Better throw them aside, go out to seek the spring! ⁶⁵

In this quatrain, the immediacy of the landscape is set into contrast with the mediacy of self-proliferating book knowledge. The voice of the poem is that of a pedant who, after staying indoors passively when the spring arrived, decides finally to “seek” it, committing himself to a life of actions. The circumstance of composition further suggests a political context. Shu Jingnan 東景南 dates it in the third month of 1188, when Zhu Xi was on his way to the court after a long period of study in retreat, summoned by an imperial edict which asked for his counsel.⁶⁶ The political situation was at a turning point: half a year earlier the emeritus Emperor Gaozong (1107–1187; r. 1127–1161) had passed away, leaving the empire to his foster son, Xiaozong 孝宗 (1127–1194; r. 1163–1189). The entire *daoxue* fellowship was jubilant at Zhu Xi’s court reception, believing that Xiaozong would finally end his father’s conservative domestic and military policies and enact the sagacious rulership they advocated. Thus the “spring” stands for the universal prosperity they anticipated when the Way would be reenacted on the highest level of governance. In short, the “spring” is a rich symbol that unites Zhu Xi’s epistemology, moral philosophy, and political thinking.

62. ZZWJ, 2: 72.

63. ZZQS, vol. 15, 40: 1427.

64. ZZWJ, 2: 72.

65. “Chushan dao zhong kou zhan” 出山道中口占, ZZWJ, 9: 302.

66. See Shu, ZXNP, 886; *Zhu zi dazhuan*, 616.

It should be noted that this terse and imagistic poetic version of enlightenment is modeled after many Chan poems and gāthās composed since the late Tang. Regarding the natural world's manifestation of the Buddha's nature, Chan masters often conveyed their teaching in natural metaphors, usually in a couplet or a quatrain using clear and accessible language.⁶⁷ Spring, in particular, is a common metaphor in Chan Buddhism. Since it is a season of rebirth, spring sprouts stand for the natural germination of Buddha's nature within sentient beings.⁶⁸ It is also used to illustrate the principle of unity, i.e., that the myriad phenomena are manifestations of one true dharma,⁶⁹ a doctrine that inspired Zhu Xi's philosophy. Furthermore, "spring flower" is an image that symbolizes the transmission and proliferation of dharma.⁷⁰ More than one Chan master was said to be enlightened upon seeing blossoms in the spring, after a long term of puzzled study and thinking. And as pedagogical method these public cases (*gong'an* 公案) were routinely discussed by acolytes, not unlike Zhu's discussion of Zeng Dian with his students. Chan poetry on this topic proliferated in Late Tang and especially in Northern Song, most of it in heptasyllabic quatrain.⁷¹ From form to content, Zhu Xi's imagistic philosophical poetry betrays some Buddhist influence. Perhaps for this reason, later Chan masters also used Zhu Xi's poems on the spring to illustrate the moment of enlightenment.⁷² "Spring" as a poetic image provided a breeding ground for Confucian and Buddhist philosophies.

ZHU XI'S SOCIAL POETRY

A large number of Zhu Xi's poems were composed on social occasions, addressing a specific audience and expecting responses in verse. Poetic exchange, or *chouchang* 酬唱, was a popular literary game initiated in the Six Dynasties. Its most complex form was fully established in the ninth century, and that required the response poem to be written in the same meter, length, and rhyme words as the initiator's poem and related to the latter in meaning. Two significant issues could be taken with Zhu Xi's social poetry. First, since such occasions often required decorum and formality, these compositions are formal in tone, highly crafted, and composed on contemporary topics. Studying them thus reveals unacknowledged influences on Zhu Xi's poetry. Second, since a social poem exposed its occasion as communal and a product of the literary circle in which it was composed, the act of preserving it simultaneously identified its addressee as an intimate associate of the poet. The element of identification and self-display is important in understanding Zhu Xi's choice of counterparts in his poetic exchanges.

Zhu Xi's extant social poetry represents his interaction with various social circles, including officials, fellow scholars, friends, disciples, and family. Given the fact that in poetic exchange, the response poem should match the original rhyming words, regulated verses in the "recent style" (*jinti* 近體) were most common. The style register corresponded to social distance. When the addressee was a respected senior or official, the poem was usually a mannered heptasyllabic octave. When the social relationship was more intimate, Zhu Xi tended

67. For a wonderful case study, see William R. LaFleur, "Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature, pt. 1," *History of Religions*, 13.2 (1973): 93–128; pt. 2, *HoR* 13.3 (1974): 227–48.

68. See, e.g., *Zongjinglu* 宗鏡錄, T.48.2016.460.

69. See, e.g., *Zongjinglu*, T.48.2016.613.

70. As in the six "gāthās of the transmission of the dharma" (*chuanfaji* 傳法偈) of the Chinese Chan patriarchs; see Puji 普濟, *Wudeng huiyuan* 五燈會元, 卅.80.1565.43–47.

71. Xiao Lihua 蕭麗華 and Wu Jingyi 吳靜宜, "Huihong shichan de chun yixiang" 惠洪詩禪的春意象, *Foxue yanjiu zhongxin xuebao* 佛學研究中心學報 9 (2004): 155–75.

72. Zhang Peifeng 張培峰, *Song shi yu chan* 宋詩與禪 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 36–38.

to use heptasyllabic quatrains, pentasyllabic meters in varying length, or even *ci*, the least formal genre. The topics were usually concrete, such as a banquet, garden, object, or journey. Despite Zhu Xi's reserved attitude toward "recent style" and his mistrust of poetry as "idle words" (*xian yanyu* 閑言語),⁷³ at friendly gatherings he seemed to have joined the literary game in good humor and with genuine delight.

More than ninety of Zhu Xi's poems were addressed to a single recipient: Liu Yun 劉鞏, the uncle of Liu Zihui 劉子翬 (1101–1147). The latter was Zhu Xi's guardian and mentor after his father's death in 1143.⁷⁴ Most of their exchange poems were composed in 1164 and 1165,⁷⁵ after Liu Yun was dismissed from a minor position in 1164 and retired to Zhu Xi's neighborhood.⁷⁶ This intensity of literary exchange may not be accidental. These two years happened to be uneventful in Zhu Xi's life. Prior to this period, in 1163, he was deeply engaged in court politics when he submitted three outspoken memorials to the newly enthroned Xiaozong and was consequently dismissed. After this period, the year 1166 was marked by philosophical breakthroughs, active writing, and debates, a time when he found the tenet for his systematic self-cultivation: "inner mental attentiveness" (*jing* 敬). The intervening period of 1164 to 1165 was thus a liminal stage of life when his disappointment in politics was eventually channeled into a new direction in scholarship. The poetic exchanges with Liu Yun, usually about rural pleasures, might have provided occasional diversion for Zhu Xi from his immediate distress, and they may have facilitated his intellectual transformation. Given Liu Yun's seniority, Zhu Xi's poems are intimate but careful, paying close attention to meter and other technical matters. One studied example reads:

偶向新亭一破顏 高情直寄有無間 地偏已隔東西路 天闊長圍遠近山 浩蕩祇愁春霧合 輪囷卻喜暮雲還 不堪景物撩人甚 倒盡詩囊未許慳	Occasionally you spread a smile toward the new pavilion; ⁷⁷ Your lofty feelings are lodged between being and emptiness. This bit of hinterland is separated from roads east and west; The breadth of sky eternally encircles mountains near and far. The vast spring mist, I only worry, may close; The rounded evening clouds delight me as they return. How can I bear the scenery's flirtatious play? So I pour out the sack of poetry without reserve! ⁷⁸
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This poem is rich in skill, especially in the middle two couplets. The second couplet is not only in strict parallelism, but uses parallelism within each line (*dangjudui* 當句對): *east* : *west* :: *near* : *far*. The third couplet uses an anastrophe that the English translation cannot fully represent. In the couplet, Zhu inverts the adjectives modifying the nouns in the penultimate position to the beginning of the lines, so as to stress the descriptive features of the situation. A textbook example of this skill is Du Fu's difficult-to-translate line: *xiangdao zhuocan yingwu li, biwu qilao fenghuang zhi* 香稻啄殘鸚鵡粒、碧梧棲老鳳凰枝。⁷⁹ The grammatically correct sequence should be *yingwu zhuocan xiangdaoli, fenghuang qilao biwuzhi* ("The

73. ZZQS, vol. 18, 137: 4245.

74. Shu, *Zhuzi dazhuan*, 38–76.

75. Zhu Xi's exchange poems with Liu Yun are mainly collected in ZZWJ, chap. 3.

76. ZXNP, 327.

77. *Xinting* 新亭 in poetry is often a proper noun referring to a pavilion in Nanjing by the Yangtze River and symbol of patriotic lament for conquered territories; see Xu Zhen'e 徐震堦, ed., *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian* 世說新語校箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 2.31: 50. But here I regard it as referring to Liu Yun's newly built View Exhausting Pavilion 極目亭, where this poem was written.

78. "Ci Xiuye 'Jimu ting' yun" 次秀野極目亭韻, ZZWJ, 3: 120.

79. Du Fu, "Qiuxing bashou" 秋興八首, no. 8, in Qiu Zhao'ao 仇兆鰲, *Du shi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 17: 1497.

parrot picked at leftover grains of fragrant rice; the phoenix has perched till old on a verdant paulownia branch”). In both lines, the modifying elements in the accusative or the adverbial modifier shifts positions with the subjects. This innovative couplet was written during Du Fu’s Kuizhou sojourn, a period that Zhu Xi disapproved of as the beginning of Du’s decline from the *Wenxuan* authority. However, here Zhu Xi apparently absorbed this skill. Notably, both *haodang* 浩蕩 and *lunqun* 輪囷 are binomes comprised of two synonyms. So, including the *youwu* 有無 in the second line, this poem uses altogether five binomes—perhaps a bit too excessive, betraying the poet’s relish in his craft. Zhu was aware of it. The last couplet is self-referential: the poet admits to be exhausting his poetic talent with no reserve, but it is only because the scenery, like a flirtatious woman, breaks his taboo against idle word-play.

The admiration of Du Fu’s poetic skills was general among Song poets, but particularly within the Jiangxi School. Huang Tingjian recommended “sentence rules” (*jufa* 句法) as a central concern of poetic composition, with Du’s regulated poetry being the representative of these rules.⁸⁰ Zhu Xi similarly acknowledged the importance of “sentence rules” in prose and poetry writing. He once recommended two couplets by Chen Yuyi 陳與義 (1090–1138), a Jiangxi School poet, a model of “sentence rules.”⁸¹ His attention to sentence rules and allusions—another feature of the Jiangxi School—is most clearly shown in the following poem, written on the ninth day of the ninth month in 1168:

去歲瀟湘重九時	Last year, by the Xiao and Xiang rivers, on this Double Ninth Day—
滿城寒雨客思歸	Wind and rain filled the whole city, so the guest thought of return.
故山此日還佳節	On the hometown mountain, today comes again the auspicious festival day;
黃菊清樽更晚暉	Yellow chrysanthemums, clear goblets of wine, and the evening sunshine.
短髮無多休落帽	Of my short hair there remains little—pray my hat not fall!
長風不斷且吹衣	The long wind incessantly blows open my robe.
相看下視人寰小	We look at each other and then down at the human realm, so small;
祇合從今老翠微	We should from now on live and grow old on the delicate verdure! ⁸²

This poem recalls the windy and rainy Double Ninth Day that Zhu Xi spent in Changsha (by the Xiao and Xiang rivers) when he visited Zhang Shi. It borrows from and alludes to a few earlier poems related to this day. The second line borrows Pan Dalin’s 潘大臨 (active c. 1090) “Wind and rain filled the whole city—the Double Yang Day is near” 滿城風雨近重陽.⁸³ The third line recalls Wang Wei’s 王維 (701–761) poem which laments his loneliness on this “auspicious festival” and imagines his brothers climbing a hometown mountain

80. See Zhou, *Songdai shixue tonglun*, 205–7.

81. *ZZQS*, vol. 18, 140: 4329.

82. “Jiuri deng Tianhu yi ‘juhua xu cha mantou gui’ fenyun fushi de gui zi” 九日登天湖以菊花須插滿頭歸分韻賦詩得歸字, *ZZWJ*, 5: 196.

83. A story has it that Pan, poverty-stricken, had only conceived this line when the tax clerk came. His inspiration gone, he did not manage to finish the poem. See Huihong 惠洪, *Lengzhai yehua* 冷齋夜話 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 4: 35. The “Double Ninth Day” 重九 is also called “Double Yang Day” 重陽, since “nine” is the biggest odd number, representing the *yang* power at its peak.

without him.⁸⁴ The fifth line refers to a story of Meng Jia 孟嘉, a Jin scholar. Once at an outdoor banquet celebrating the Double Ninth Day, the wind blew off his hat, but he was so self-possessed as to be totally oblivious of the accident.⁸⁵ This is a clichéd allusion in poetry about this occasion. Zhu Xi here tries to bring some novelty to the allusion, pleading to the wind not to blow off his hat, since his aged head has little hair to spare. The sixth line alludes to Tao Qian's "Return!" ("Guiqulaixi ci" 歸去來兮辭), which states "The swaying wind blows open my robe" 風飄飄而吹衣.⁸⁶ This allusion corresponds to the first line, recalling the homecoming journey. The penultimate line alludes to the anecdote that Confucius, standing atop the Paramount Tai, thought All-under-Heaven small (*Mencius*, 7A.24).

The whole poem pays homage to Huang's proposal that every single word in a poem should have its origin. In terms of structure, it is a highly self-conscious, careful composition, beginning with memory, proceeding to a description of the present moment in two exquisite couplets, and ending with a wish for transcendence. In the third line, Zhu Xi plays on the multivalence of the word *gu* 故: although in its combination with "mountain," it means "hometown," when set parallel to "this day" (today) it means "the past." Thus, the second couplet also manages to create parallelism within each line: "*past*" *mountain* : *this day* :: *yellow chrysanthemums* : *clear goblets (of wine)*. The first parallelism is abstract; the second concrete and immediate. This is a more extensive form of the binome parallelism discussed earlier. A textbook example is Du Fu's couplet: "Rapid wind, high heaven, gibbons wailing in grief; clear islets, white sands, birds fly in return" *feng ji tian gao yuan xiao'ai / zhu qing sha bai niao feihui* 風急天高猿嘯哀、渚清沙白鳥飛迴,⁸⁷ again from his Kuizhou period. This technique was favored by Song poets Huang Tingjian and Chen Shidao, whose poetry Zhu Xi knew.⁸⁸ The fifth line is a typical case of recycling poetic clichés in a fresh fashion, as Huang Tingjian put it in an alchemical metaphor: "transforming iron into gold" (*diantie chengjin* 點鐵成金).⁸⁹ In those social poems examined above, Zhu's poetry displays attention to craft and allusion. His conscious criticism of contemporary poetry aside, in reality its influence permeated his writing through many unremarked channels.

An opposite form of Zhu Xi's social poetry can be found in casual poems such as heptasyllabic quatrains composed on Mt. Heng and on his return. Some of these are highly vernacular, swift, playful compositions composed on horseback. For instance, in a quatrain on the Stone Granary Peak 石廩峰, Zhu declares "If every household had such a tall granary, how very good; the human realm would have a merry year" 家家有廩高如許、大好人間快活年.⁹⁰ The name of the peak is associated to the real object—a tall granary—and the poet further suggests that a good government should feed its people. Colloquialism is an important feature of Song poetry, and these poems bear certain resemblance to the style of Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127–1206), Zhu Xi's contemporary and associate, whose poetry often uses witticism, colloquialism, and the imaginative transformation of nature to create fresh aesthetic effects.⁹¹

84. Wang Wei, "Jiuyue jiuri yi Shandong xiongdì" 九月九日憶山東兄弟, in *Wang Wei ji jiaozhu* 王維集校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 1: 3.

85. Tao Qian, "Jin gu Zhengxidajiangjun zhangshi Meng fujun zhuan" 晉故征西大將軍長史孟府君傳, in Lu Qinli 選欽立, ed., *Tao Yuanming ji* 陶淵明集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 6: 170.

86. *Ibid.*, 5: 160.

87. "Deng gao" 登高, *Du shi xiangzhu*, 20: 1766.

88. See, e.g., *ZZQS*, vol. 18, 140: 4328, 4332–33.

89. "Da Hong Jufu shu," op. cit. For discussion of this method, see Zhou, *Songdai shixue tonglun*, 177–86.

90. "Shilin feng ci Jingfu yun" 石廩峰次敬夫韻, *ZZWJ*, 5: 167.

91. See Zhou Qicheng 周啟成, *Yang Wanli he chengzhaiti* 楊萬里和誠齋體 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 101–11.

Occasionally, being casual and referential occurred together, as in a poem also written on Mt. Heng:

我來萬里駕長風	I come across ten thousand <i>li</i> , riding the long wind;
絕壑層雲許蕩胸	Layered clouds in a cliffy gully—I let it swell my breast.
濁酒三杯豪氣發	After three goblets of unfiltered wine, my heroic mood breaks forth—
朗吟飛下祝融峰	Chanting a poem aloud, I fly down from the Fire God Peak! ⁹²

The author did very little to hide the sources of his lines. The first line borrows the Liu Song Dynasty general Zong Que's 宗憲 (?–465) famous expression of his aspiration: “I want to ride the long wind and break ten thousand *li* of waves” 願駕長風破萬里浪!⁹³ The second line borrows Du Fu's description of the Paramount Tai: “Swelling my breast, the layered clouds are born” 蕩胸生層雲.⁹⁴ The last couplet transforms “Thrice I entered Yueyang, but no one recognized me; chanting a poem aloud, I flew across the Dongting Lake” 三入岳陽人不識、朗吟飛過洞庭湖, a line from a poem attributed to Lü Yan 呂巖 (better known as Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓), the Daoist immortal.⁹⁵ Since Zhu Xi brings little novelty into these liberal and literal references, this poem exhibits the Jiangxi principle in its crude form. The romantic role playing, stimulated by alcohol, also presents a Zhu Xi very different from his normally controlled self.

In addition to revealing his poetic influences, Zhu Xi's social poetry complements other aspects of his persona. Where in philosophical debates he was argumentative and feisty,⁹⁶ in social poetry he appeared intimate, affable, and courteous. In other words, poetry was to him a social instrument for befriending instead of debating. A good case in point is the poetic exchange surrounding the Goose Lake meeting 鵝湖之會 with his philosophical opponents, the brothers Lu Jiuling 陸九齡 (1132–1180) and Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1193). At the time of their meeting, the Lu brothers argued that scholars should be solely concerned about the cultivation of their moral foundation and observe its effect in their daily interaction with the world; book study was nothing but triviality. Zhu Xi, a leading classicist, begged to differ. To reconcile their antagonism, Lü Zuqian arranged this meeting in 1175 in modern Qianshan, Jiangxi Province. The process was recorded only by Lu Jiuyuan's disciples. It relates that Jiuling, on his way to Goose Lake, composed a poem stating the Lus' philosophical agenda. The sharper Jiuyuan, unsatisfied, wrote a more polemic poem in matching rhymes, announcing:

易簡工夫終久大	Easy and simple study ultimately lasts long and expands;
支離事業竟浮沉	Trivial and pedantic undertakings will finally float and drown. ⁹⁷

Jiuyuan dismissed Zhu Xi's scholarship as “trivial pedantry,” belittling his devotion to classical commentary as divergence from the proper pursuit of *dao*. According to the Lu school records, Zhu Xi, upon reading the poem, abruptly left the meeting without leaving a response,

92. “Zui xia Zhurong feng zuo” 醉下祝融峰作, ZZWJ, 5: 171.

93. Shen Yue 沈約, *Songshu* 宋書, 76: 1971.

94. “Wang yue” 望嶽, in *Du shi xiangzhu*, 1: 4.

95. Lü Yan, “Jueju” 絕句, no. 16, in *Quan Tang shi*, ed. Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 858: 9696.

96. See Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1992), 64–82, 119–26, 161–86, 202–30.

97. Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵, *Xiangshan yulu* 象山語錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), 1: 22.

which was interpreted as the Lus' victory. But years later, in 1179, when Lu Jiuling visited Zhu Xi with a desire for reconciliation, Zhu Xi finally responded to Lu's earlier poem:

德義風流夙所欽 別離三載更關心 偶扶藜杖出寒谷 又枉籃輿度遠岑 舊學商量加邃密 新知培養轉深沉 卻愁說到無言處 不信人間有古今	As an old admirer of your virtue, integrity, and bearing, Three years after our farewell, I take you closer to my heart! I perchance leaned on a goosefoot stick to leave my chilly valley, To my honor, you came in a sedan chair across distant hills. Through discussion, scholarship of antiquity becomes dense; By cultivation, study in the new style deepens and solidifies. My sole worry: when you talk of where language becomes silent, You may not believe the past and the present differ in the human sphere! ⁹⁸
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This poem opens with the appropriate social protocol, expressing Zhu's admiration for Jiuling and his longing for their meeting. But Zhu Xi's real audience was Jiuyuan, to whom the second half of the poem spoke. In the third couplet, Zhu acknowledges their philosophical difference and begins to answer Jiuyuan's challenge. Zhu reverses the hidden judgments within Lu's nomenclature by redefining his "trivial and pedantic undertaking" as "scholarship on antiquity," while Lu's "easy and simple study" is "the new style." Despite the apparent even-handedness, Zhu Xi subtly conveys his criticism by changing the meaning of Lu's rhyme word, *chen* 沉: instead of admitting that his own scholarship will *chen* (drown), Zhu suggests that it is Lu's scholarship which needs to *chen* (deepen). A more straightforward criticism is in his pedagogic dialogue with his disciples, where he declares that "easy and simple" in the *Book of Changes* is a description of the cosmic principle of creation and not, as Lu misunderstood it, a prescription for one's study.⁹⁹ The irony is that Lu's misunderstanding resulted precisely from his lack of rigorous textual scholarship. The last couplet is slightly provocative: Zhu Xi frequently criticized Lu Jiuyuan's school of thought for its resemblance to Chan Buddhism,¹⁰⁰ in his reliance on the principle of wordless teaching.¹⁰¹ "Do not stand on words [, but rather on] / a separate transmission outside the teachings" 不立文字教外別傳¹⁰² was a slogan by which the Chan School distinguished itself from other Buddhist lineages. By pointing out the resemblance of Lu's doctrine to Chan, Zhu Xi implied that Lu was not Confucian, a strong charge against a fellow *daoxue* scholar. Yet compared to his otherwise acerbic comments, Zhu phrased the criticism in this poem subtly, implying only his "worry" that Lu's teaching might annul historical perspectives. In general, this poem emphasizes courtesy and dialogue. Its polite, moderate tone stands in contrast with Jiuyuan's forthright polemic, placing Zhu Xi on the high road of their debate.

In his social poetry, Zhu Xi seldom appears different from literati of his time. He enjoys friendly conversation and literary games, engaging in contemporary aesthetics, poetic forms, and skill. However, one conspicuous absence distinguished him from other poets: in his extant corpus there is not a single exchange poem addressed to the renowned poets whom he befriended, including Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140–1207), Lu You 陸遊 (1125–1210), and Yang Wanli.

98. "Ehusi he Lu Zishou" 鵝湖寺和陸子壽, ZZWJ, 4: 152. Zishou is Lu Jiuling's polite name.

99. ZZQS, vol. 14, Yulei 16: 551–52.

100. See ZZQS, vol. 15, 17: 581; vol. 18, 124: 3875–97.

101. See ZZQS, vol. 18, 124: 3878, 3883.

102. Puji, *Wudeng huiyuan*, 卍.80.1565.31.

Zhu's friendship with these poets was deep. He had likely met Xin in the eighth month of 1178 at the funeral of a colleague,¹⁰³ about the same time that he made Lu You's acquaintance.¹⁰⁴ The three of them later became colleagues and political allies in Jiangxi Province, together engaged in famine relief.¹⁰⁵ As for Yang Wanli, in 1185 he took the leading role in a court recommendation of Zhu Xi to the throne, which failed. In 1187 Yang's persistent effort finally succeeded, although Zhu declined the appointment.¹⁰⁶ Altogether, Zhu had expressed his high regards for the virtue and literary achievement of these three poets.¹⁰⁷ But his collection suggests that he seldom honored their friendship with poems or even if he did, he did not choose to preserve them. For instance, in the ninth month of 1182, he met Xin Qiji in Shangrao, Jiangxi Province. Upon their excursion to the South Cliff, Zhu Xi composed two poems which enjoyed immediate popularity and prompted many response poems, and yet these two poems were not preserved in his collection.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, after his Hall of Refinement on Wuyi 武夷精舍, his private study and academy, was completed in 1183, Xin, Lu, and Yang over time all sent him poems,¹⁰⁹ but no response poem by Zhu Xi, if there ever was one, has been preserved. In contrast, he preserved his response to the congratulatory poem on the same occasion from Chen Junqing 陳俊卿 (1113–1186), a respected scholar but not a poet.¹¹⁰

Zhu's social poetry shows a capable poet versed in the *totality* of the poetic tradition, taking pleasure in literary skills and being amiably engaged on occasions of "word play." Yet, despite or precisely because of this, he also occasionally shows an uneasy self-consciousness with respect to his identity. His apparent silence toward certain poets suggests a deliberate attempt to distance himself from the society of poets. As Hoyt C. Tillman points out, the *daoxue* scholars formed a "fellowship" in terms of having "a network of social relations and a sense of community with a shared tradition that distinguished them from other Confucians."¹¹¹ Among his contemporaries, Zhu Xi had been known first as a poetic talent and only later as a scholar of the newly fashionable learning of *dao*.¹¹² Thus when he strove to redefine himself, he perhaps felt the need *not* to match a poet's poem, so as to highlight the difference of their identities. His silence may have betrayed a certain sense of insecurity regarding the self-designated, newly formed *daoxue* identity, as if the boundary of this small fellowship could easily dissolve into the surrounding republic of letters.

103. *ZXNP*, 607.

104. *ZXNP*, 658–59; Lu You, "Ji Zhu Yuanhui Tiju" 寄朱元晦提舉, in *Jiannan shigao* 劍南詩稿 (Hunan: Yuelu shushe, 1998), 14: 344–45.

105. *ZXNP*, 658–84.

106. *ZXNP*, 820, 872.

107. For instance, in 1189 he praised Lu You as a true inheritor of ancient poets; see "Da Xu Zaishu shu" 答徐載叔書, in *ZZQS*, vol. 23, *wenji* 56: 2648–49. His friendship with Xin Qiji was particularly profound, as shown in Shu's careful study (*Zhuzi dazhuan*, 851–61).

108. *ZXNP*, 752.

109. Lu You sent a poem in 1183; see "Jiti Zhu Yuanhui Wuyi Jingshe" 寄題朱元晦武夷精舍, in *Jiannan shigao*, 15: 382. Yang Wanli sent twelve poems in 1190; see "Jiti Zhu Yuanhui Wuyi Jingshe shi'er yong" 寄題朱元晦武夷精舍十二詠, in *Chengzhai shiji* 誠齋詩集 (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, s.n. [*Sibu congkan* ed.]), 30: 9–10. In 1193, Xin Qiji came to visit Zhu Xi in Wuyi and composed ten boat songs; see "You Wuyi zuo zhaoge cheng Huiweng shishou" 游武夷作櫂歌呈晦翁十首, in *Xin Qiji quanji* 辛棄疾全集 (Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, 1994), 296–98.

110. "Fumeng zhishi Shaofu Xianggong chongci jiti [. . .]" 伏蒙致仕少傅相公寵賜寄題[. . .], in *ZZWJ*, 9: 303.

111. Tillman, 3.

112. As evident in the comments of You Mao 尤袤 (1127–1194) and Zhang Duanyi 張端義 (active ca. 1234), quoted in Guo, *Zhu Xi shici biannian jianzhu*, 936–37.

“WUYI BOAT SONGS”

The last period of Zhu Xi's poetic development is characterized by his extensive series of poems on landscape. These include thirty-eight poems in two series written on his 1175 tour of the Cloud Valley 雲谷 in Wuyi;¹¹³ another seven poems on Mt. Wuyi on 1178;¹¹⁴ fourteen poems on Mt. Lu 廬山 in 1181,¹¹⁵ when he was rebuilding the White Deer Grotto Academy 白鹿洞書院; later in the same year, twelve poems bidding farewell to Mt. Lu when he was dismissed from the post;¹¹⁶ his building of the Hall of Refinement on Wuyi in 1183 generated another twelve poems,¹¹⁷ as well as “Wuyi Boat Songs,” a series of ten poems written in 1184. These poem series consist of careful works which achieve a unified aesthetic appearance of ease, fluidity, and clarity. The series of “Wuyi Boat Songs,” in particular, differs from the others in its emulation of folk literature and its exquisite structure. By similar formulation of the first lines from stanza two through the end, the series creates a chain of lyric progression. I take it as representative of Zhu Xi's late style as well as perhaps of his poetic achievement in general. It is written in the tranquil, self-controlled mode that Zhu sought in early poetry, but the style suggests that Zhu had largely surpassed the influence of classical models to achieve a freer synthesis. As evidence of its aesthetic success, the series inspired many later visitors to Mt. Wuyi to write similar songs in response¹¹⁸ and remains a work of local pride to this day.¹¹⁹

淳熙甲辰中春精舍閑居戲作武夷權歌十首呈諸同遊相與一笑

In the mid-spring of the Jiachen year under the Chunxi reign, I live in idleness in the Hall of Refinement. So I playfully write ten “Wuyi Boat Songs” to present to my fellows for a laugh.¹²⁰

武夷山上有仙靈	There are immortals and spirits lodging on Mount Wuyi.
山下寒流曲曲清	Beneath the mountain a cold stream flows curvy and clear.
欲識箇中奇絕處	If you want to know its hidden marvels, sir,
棹歌閑聽兩三聲	Please listen in your idleness to two or three boat songs.
一曲溪邊上釣船	By the first curve of the stream please ride on my fishing boat,
幔亭峰影蘸晴川	The reflection of Curtained Pavilion Peak tinges a sunlit river.
虹橋一斷無消息	No message has come since the Rainbow Bridge was broken; ¹²¹
萬壑千巖鎖翠煙	A myriad of gullies and thousands of cliffs lock in emerald mists.

113. “Yungu ershiliu yong” 雲谷二十六詠, ZZWJ, 6: 226–29; “Yungu zashi shiershou” 雲谷雜詩十二首, *ibid.*, 6: 230–31.

114. “Wuyi qiyong” 武夷七詠, ZZWJ, 6: 241–43.

115. “Fengtong You Yanzhi Tiju Lushan zayong shisipian” 奉同尤延之提舉廬山雜詠十四篇, ZZWJ, 7: 265–68. Given the social occasion of the composition, this series is more formal than the others.

116. “Shanbei jixing shierzhang zhang bajiu” 山北紀行十二章章八句, ZZWJ, 7: 271–74.

117. “Wuyi jingshe zayong” 武夷精舍雜詠, ZZWJ, 9: 299–301.

118. The Qing scholar Dong Tiangong 董天工 collected twelve suites of boat songs written to Zhu Xi's rhymes along with other imitative compositions in his *Wuyi shanzhi* 武夷山志 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1974), 4: 277–303.

119. Not only is it duly mentioned in tourist programs, but in the year 2011 a film was made and released to honor Zhu Xi's activities on Mt. Wuyi.

120. ZZWJ, 9: 302–3.

121. Legend has it that the God of Mt. Wuyi, “Prince Wuyi” 武夷君, is the grandson of the Jade Emperor 玉皇. In the Qin dynasty, Prince Wuyi once held a banquet on the Great King Peak 大王峰. A rainbow bridge appeared across the sky. The Prince, together with some guests, went across to pay obeisance to the Jade Emperor, and these guests all became immortals. The Curtained Pavilion Peak 幔亭峰 stands where the banquet was held. See *Wuyi shanzhi*, 5: 338–39, 6: 393, 7: 453–54.

- 二曲亭亭玉女峰 By the second curve stands the graceful Jade Maid Peak,
 插花臨水為誰容 Wearing blossoms by the water—for whom does she adorn
 herself?¹²²
- 道人不再陽台夢 The Man of the Way no longer dreams the Sun Terrace dream;¹²³
 興入前山翠幾重 Ride your spirits to enter the forward mountains, the layered
 green!
- 三曲君看架壑船 By the third curve, sir, behold the boats high above the cliff;¹²⁴
 不知停櫂幾何年 No one knows for how many years their oars have been at rest.
 桑田海水今如許 Mulberry fields have turned into an ocean, now so vast—
 泡沫風燈敢自憐 Amid floating foam and lamps in the wind, dare we pity
 ourselves?
- 四曲東西兩石巖 By the fourth curve stand two rocky cliffs to the east and to the
 west,
 巖花垂露碧氳氤 Dewy blossoms on the cliffs stoop and glitter amid the lush green.
 金雞叫罷無人見 The golden rooster¹²⁵ has finished its crowing, but no one is there
 to see;
- 月滿空山水滿潭 Moonlight fills the empty mountain, and water brims the deep.
- 五曲山高雲氣深 By the fifth curve stands a mountain high, where clouds densely
 gather,
 長時煙雨暗平林 Where in long seasons the misty rain darkens low-rising woods.
 林間有客無人識 In the woods lives a sojourner whom no one knows,
 欸乃聲中萬古心 Who in the creaking song of oars lodges his mind in eternal
 antiquity.
- 六曲蒼屏遶碧灣 By the sixth curve, the Dark Screen Peak embraces an emerald
 bay;
 茅茨終日掩柴關 Where a thatched hut closes its brushwood door through the long
 day.
 客來倚櫂巖花落 When the guest arrives by oar, blossoms are falling from the cliff;
 猿鳥不驚春意閑 Gibbons and birds are not startled, the spring mood is at ease.
- 七曲移船上碧灘 By the seventh curve, tow the boat to the emerald shoal,
 隱屏仙掌更回看 And turn around to see the Screen of Reclusion and the Divine
 Palm.¹²⁶
- 人言此處無佳景 People say this place lacks fine scenery:
 只有石堂空翠寒 There is only an empty stone hall in verdant chill.

122. This peak has cliffs on all sides, but at the top plants blossom lushly. See *Wuyi shanzhi*, 8: 495.

123. In the “Rhapsody on the Gaotang Shrine” (“Gaotang fu” 高唐賦) credited to Song Yu 宋玉 (fl. 3rd cent. B.C.E.), the King of Chu dreamed on the Sun Terrace of the goddess from Shaman Mount (Mt. Wu 巫山), who offered him a night of pleasure; see *Wenxuan*, 19: 345–49.

124. These “boats” are boat-shaped coffins. Laying them in cliffs was possibly an ancient funerary custom. Without knowing them to be coffins, Zhu Xi speculated that these “boats” were above on a cliff due to geographic change, similar to the proverbial mulberry fields that turned into an ocean.

125. The Golden Rooster is a cave by the fourth curve. Local legend has it that sometimes rooster’s crow can be heard from the depth of the cave. See *Wuyi shanzhi*, 9: 567.

126. Peaks located by the fifth and the sixth curve respectively; see *Wuyi shanzhi*, 10: 600, 786.

八曲風煙勢欲開	By the eighth curve the wind is to break the mists;
鼓樓巖下水縈洄	Beneath the Cliff of Drum Tower, ¹²⁷ the water eddies.
莫言此處無佳景	Please don't say this place lacks fine scenery;
自是遊人不上來	It's only that no visitor has yet ventured this far!
九曲將窮眼豁然	By the end of the ninth curve, one's vision suddenly broadens,
桑麻雨露見平川	Many flat fields of mulberries and hemp spread in rain and dew.
漁郎更覓桃源路	If the fisherman seeks again a road to the Peach Blossom Spring—
除是人間別有天	[Here it is,] besides the realm of man, under another sky! ¹²⁸

This suite of songs is united by an inviting voice, beckoning the reader to a boat tour to explore the hidden marvels of Wuyi. The tour follows a stream of nine curves, each to unfold its secret. The host duly announces the arrival at each curve at the beginning of each stanza, which recreates the effect of an actual boat tour and enhances the consistency and lyric fluidity of the series. This structure of repetition in the first lines of multiple stanzas finds its literary precedence in the *Book of Odes*, though its heptasyllabic form more likely emulates folk literature of Zhu's time.¹²⁹ Moreover, Zhu Xi uses this structure in two other sets of poems each comprised of three quatrains.¹³⁰

To complement the boat song form, the language of this poem is deliberately unsophisticated and the syntax straightforward. Classical references are minimal, restricted to some well-known allusions. But local knowledge is abundant. The fluid pace of the poem linguistically simulates the visual impressions along a flowing stream. In an orderly sequence, the hidden layers of landscape are unfolded to the guest, together with the all-knowing narrator's hidden identity.

The narrator appears in the beginning as a fisherman, courteously inviting the guest to explore the secrets of Wuyi. The guest is told that there has been no message since the "Rainbow Bridge" broke. Legend of the rainbow bridge suggests that such messages were once sent from the celestial realm. Now, with no message coming, the guest must venture to the land where immortals reside. By the second curve, the host begins to call himself a *daoren*, which could be understood as either a Daoist or a Man of the Way. The dream of encountering the goddess is often used as a metaphor of encountering a sagacious ruler. By declaring that he "no longer" dreams this dream, the host implies that he once did. At the third curve the guest will be reminded of the inconstancy of this world, in which human life is so absurdly short that even self-pity appears undeserving. The brevity of the phenomenal world is set in contrast with the constant Way, symbolized by two images in the fifth song:

127. In its midst is a rock, which, presumably, sounds like drum upon knocking. See *Wuyi shanzhi*, 11: 833.

128. At the end of the ninth curve, there are no more mountains but only fields and villages. The "Peach Blossom Spring" is a utopia described by Tao Qian. A fisherman followed a stream and found at its source an agrarian society hidden within the mountains, where the residents came to escape the warfare and taxation at the end of the Qin Dynasty. After leaving this place, the fisherman could find it no more. See Tao Qian, "Taohuayuan ji bing xu" 桃花源記并序, *Tao Yuanming ji*, 6: 165–67. In Mt. Wuyi, there is a "Minor Peach Blossom Spring" 小桃源 by the sixth curve, a space of around three acres of arable land surrounded by mountains with a narrow entrance; see *Wuyi shanzhi*, 10: 786.

129. A similar structure is found, for instance, in "installing the beams" liturgical texts (*shangliang* 上梁文), written for the ceremony celebrating the completion of building projects and honored by many prominent authors of Song.

130. "Chongshou keshe yewen zigui de san jueju" 崇壽客舍夜闌子規得三絕句, *ZZWJ*, 7: 245; "Zuizuo san-shou" 醉作三首, *ZZWJ*, 10: 324.

the moon and the water. Both of them possess a physical form in constant transformation and eternal resurrection, unifying change and constancy. They alone bear witness to the singing of the “golden rooster,” a wonder unappreciated by human ears.

At the fifth curve, the author uses the narrative persona to make a self-referential move. The gentleman in the woods is no one but Zhu Xi, whose Hall of Refinement is built by this curve. Though a “sojourner” in the world, he has a mind set on eternal antiquity, a quality supporting his identity as a Man of the Way. After leading the guest further along the sixth and the seventh curves, the guest is told that beautiful scenes have always been waiting for a visitor who dares the hard journey. This line conveys a political message: the Man of the Way is willing to serve, but he awaits a ruler who dares the austere requirements of his uncompromising principles. If such a chance never comes, he retreats into the serene landscape that symbolizes his self-sufficiency of virtue. But a bold traveler accepting his company will see by the end of this journey a Peach Blossom Spring, the promised land of riches and bliss.

In the “Boat Songs,” Zhu Xi reconstructed the boat tour along the Nine-Curve Stream 九曲溪 to become a metaphorical and progressive exploration of “hidden marvels”—a utopia to be realized under the guidance of the Man of the Way. He declared this poem to be “playfully” written, though he nevertheless troubled to send it to friends. Ostensible playfulness can conceal a serious message. The choice between service and retreat was for Zhu Xi an existential and moral question. He often contemplated this issue in poems that depicted nature as a metaphorical landscape of politics. Although the multivocality of allegory allows multiple readings, his fellow poets’ responses to the “Boat Songs” suggest a similar political interpretation. When Xin Qiji called to visit, he also composed ten boat songs, interpreting Zhu Xi’s landscape and his reclusion. One reads:

山中有客帝王師	In the mountain, there is a sojourner worthy to tutor emperors and kings.
日日吟詩坐釣磯	Daily chanting poems, he sits on a fishing rock.
費盡煙霞供不足	Even with all the mists and rosy clouds, it is not enough to supply him.
幾時西伯載將歸	When will the Duke of the West come to ride him to court? ¹³¹

Since there was a fishing rock by the Hall of Refinement, Xin Qiji alluded to the story of Lü Shang 呂尚 who encountered the future King Wen of Zhou (?–1056 B.C.E.) when fishing by the Wei River 渭水.¹³² Xin suggested that Zhu Xi in Mt. Wuyi, despite his apparent delight in “fishing,” was also waiting for the imperial recognition. Others saw in it an excuse to evade his duty calls. Around this time Liu Qingzhi 劉清之 (*jinshi* 1157) sent Zhu Xi a lamb-fur jacket, alluding to the story of Yan Guang 嚴光 (1st cent. B.C.E.), who, wearing such a jacket, sat fishing to escape the appointment by the first Eastern Han emperor.¹³³ Zhu Xi promptly sent a poem in which he depicted himself as a fisherman in this jacket, who wanted to leave his hiding but was afraid of the “cold wind”—alluding to the unpredictable inclemency of the political climate.¹³⁴ In these cases, the learned parties engaged in the exchange reached a tacit understanding. Poetry was used as an indirect way to voice political ambitions, resorting to the ancient tradition of allegory.

131. “You Wuyi zuo zhaoge cheng Huiweng shishou,” no. 9 (the current sequence of this series is apparently in disorder; I suspect it should be no. 6), in *Xin Qiji quanji*, 297.

132. *Shiji* 史記, 32: 1477–78.

133. Fan Ye 范曄, *Houhanshu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 2763–64.

134. “Liu Zicheng yuanji yangqiu [. . .]” 劉子澄遠寄羊裘 [. . .], *ZZWJ*, 9: 304.

CODA: THE POET ON MT. HENG

Song *daoxue* philosophy arose in part as a reaction to the traditional conception of the function of language. Since the Six Dynasties, belletristic literature had been regarded on the metaphysical level as manifestations of cosmic principles, or, on the pragmatic level, as a medium that was essential to the transmission of *dao*.¹³⁵ For this reason, literary talent was routinely tested for the selection of civil servants. Yet *daoxue* scholars contended that this was not the case. Zhou Dunyi proposed that aesthetic features of language were but embellishments on a vehicle, not part of the vehicle per se; they should have the minimum appeal to make the vehicle employed, but otherwise remain useless.¹³⁶ Zhu Xi agreed, too.¹³⁷ As Michael A. Fuller has argued, Zhu Xi believed that the world “above form” was knowable and that the sages knew it directly and completely. Therefore “knowledge can be represented in simple and direct language that corresponds to the simplicity and transparency of the knowledge to be conveyed.”¹³⁸ The excessive appeal of literature distracts students from their proper pursuit. Zhu Xi’s call for the blanket abolition of literature from the cosmopolitan examination was a natural outcome of his epistemology.

But Zhu Xi’s literary composition shows an ambiguity and flexibility that was not articulated in a discursive fashion. Its development further betrays his exploration, misgivings, and reconciliation. First of all, he sanctioned poetry that followed the early tradition and showed an aesthetic appearance of plainness. As “spontaneous” overflow from the author’s mind, such poetry provided a transparent medium to the existential essence of its author. However, it was not without question. His attempt at writing didactic and argumentative poetry aimed to further rehabilitate aesthetics in philosophy. Yet this appeared to be an abandoned effort, perhaps because it satisfied neither the philosopher Zhu Xi, for whom similar meanings could be articulated better in prose, nor the poet Zhu Xi, for whom such practice did not bring aesthetic pleasure. Even Zhu Xi the literary critic and Zhu the poet were often in conflict, with the latter’s compositions often transgressing the boundaries imposed by his theory. For instance, although the literary critic discredited the innovations of the late Du Fu, the poet’s regulated poetry frequently revealed such innovations. When the critic vehemently attacked Su Shi’s literature as “harming the orthodox *dao*,”¹³⁹ the poet called Su Shi fondly “the old immortal” in an adroit palindromic lyric song emulating the latter’s composition.¹⁴⁰ In fact, in Zhu Xi’s poetry Su Shi was the single most frequently named individual, aside from Tao Qian, and the only one juxtaposed with Li Bo as poetic immortals.¹⁴¹ Finally, though the critic Zhu Xi argued against referential and technical poetry, which was the signature style of the contemporary Jiangxi poets, those poets’ influence on Zhu’s poetry even led the literary critic Fang Hui 方回 (1227–1305) to declare that Zhu had acquired the essence of Chen

135. Both standpoints, for instance, are shown in the “Yuandao” 原道 chapter of *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍. The author, Liu Xie 劉勰 (fl. 5th century), describes the patterned nature as the *wen* of *dao* 道之文, and the sage uses literary language to illustrate *dao* 聖因文而明道. See Yang Mingzhao 楊明照, ed., *Zengding wenxin diaolong jiaozhu* 增訂文心雕龍校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 1: 1–2.

136. Zhou Dunyi, “Wenci” 文辭 chapter in *Tongshu* 通書, see *Zhou Lianxi ji* 周濂溪集 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, n.s. [Congshujicheng ed.]), 6: 117.

137. *ZZQS*, vol. 17, *yulei* 94: 3169.

138. Fuller, 335.

139. *ZZQS*, vol. 18, *yulei* 139: 4298.

140. “Huiwen” 回文, *ZZWJ*, 10: 338. The whole composition emulates Su Shi’s four *huiwen* lyric songs in *pusaman* 菩薩蠻 tune, in *Su Shi ci biannian jiaozhu* 蘇軾詞編年校注, 839–42.

141. See, e.g., “Dingchou dong zai Wenling [. . .]” 丁丑冬在溫陵 [. . .], *ZZWJ*, 2: 88; “Ci Shen shilang you Lengqie Lishi shanfang yun” 次沈侍郎游楞伽李氏山房韻, *ZZWJ*, 7: 264; and “Kaixian Shuyu ting” 開先漱玉亭, *ZZWJ*, 7: 267.

Shidao, patriarch of the Jiangxi School¹⁴²—a partisan view perhaps,¹⁴³ but nevertheless worthy of noting. The writing practice of Zhu Xi as poet tacitly acknowledges aspects of human experience with the world which cannot be fully expressed discursively, but can be recreated in poetry through skillful language.

Zhu's delight in poetry suggests the self-sustainable nature of aesthetic play. However, aesthetic pleasure stripped of metaphysical or pragmatic function required strenuous justification, given his stated aesthetic positions. Zhu Xi's deep understanding of poetry's allure was the reason for his caution. Luo Dajing 羅大經 (1196?–after 1252) gave a telling example of this conflict from his excursion on Mt. Heng:

Hu Dan'an 胡澹庵 (aka Hu Quan 胡銓, 1102–1180) once recommended ten poets to the throne, Zhu Wengong (aka Zhu Xi) amongst. Wengong was displeased and abjured composing poetry ever since—until he could not help himself. Once on his excursion with Zhang Xuangong (aka Zhang Shi) onto the South Paramount, they exchanged more than a hundred pieces of poetry. Suddenly he asked in alarm: “Aren't we wasted in poetry?”¹⁴⁴

This story has three morals. First, Zhu Xi was known as a “poet,” albeit unwillingly. Second, there were occasions when he “could not help” the urge of poetic composition. Third, Zhu Xi's occasional indulgence in poetry was akin to intoxication, though he possessed enough self-control to sober up in an instant.

This anecdote is a fabrication, since Hu Quan's recommendation was written in 1170, eight years after Zhu Xi's climbing of Mt. Heng. Still, its message could be accepted as fictive truth. In the afterword to the collection of poems on Mt. Heng, Zhu proposed a relatively eclectic view on writing poetry. Though he and Zhang Shi had previously agreed not to write poetry anymore, the impending farewell made Zhu Xi declare that poetry was needed to express otherwise inexpressible emotions. What was to blame was not writing poetry per se, but the excess of it.¹⁴⁵ The anecdote implies alternative views of writing poetry as catharsis and as temptation: although poetry releases suppressed emotional needs and is harmless when one remains in control, as with carnal pleasures the allure is so great that a weaker person may not be able to resist it.

Zhu Xi later acknowledged his reputation as poet with irony. In 1198, when the *daoxue* fellowship was banned as “false teaching” (*weixue* 偽學), Zhu Xi alluded to Hu Dan's recommendation in a poem:

我窮初不為能詩	My misfortune did not begin by being good at poetry;
笑殺吹竽濫得癡	How laughable that like a fake pipe player I won a musician's fame! ¹⁴⁶
莫向人前浪分雪	No need to argue about the truth in front of others—
世間真偽有誰知	Whether worldly affairs are true or false, no one knows! ¹⁴⁷

In a note to this poem, Zhu Xi wrote: “I really am not capable in poetry, but was once recommended for this to the throne by Master Hu Dan'an. I have had plenty of such undeserved

142. Ji Yun 紀昀, *Ji pi Yingkui lüsu kanwu* 紀批瀛奎律髓刊誤 (Taipei: Peiwen shushe, 1960), 13, 548, 676.

143. An opinion held by Ji Yun and Qian Zhongshu; see *ibid.*, 676; *Tanyi lu*, 87.

144. Luo Dajing 羅大經, *Helin yulu* 鶴林玉露 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1990), 6: 9.

145. “Nanyue youshan houji” 南嶽游山後記, in *ZZQS*, vol. 24, *wenji* 77: 3704–5.

146. Alluding to the story of Mr. Nanguo 南郭先生, who faked pipe-blowing for the King of Qi by mixing among a team of musicians; see Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Hanfeizi xinjiaozhu* 韓非子新校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), 30: 601.

147. “Ji Jiang Wenqing Liu Shutong” 寄江文卿劉叔通, *ZZWJ*, 9: 319.

luck in my life!” Such “undeserved luck” included his learning of *dao* being labeled as “false,” but also his being recommended as a true poet, a skill which he regarded as petty and idle. Yet he evidently enjoyed it. The first line overturns the saying “[being good at] poetry can bring misfortune” (*shi neng qiong ren* 詩能窮人).¹⁴⁸ This method, called *fan'an* 翻案, was first initiated in Chan Buddhism and prospered in Song poetry.¹⁴⁹ Typically, Zhu Xi’s apology for not being good at poetry is phrased in skillful poetic play.

148. Ge Shengzhong 葛勝仲 (1072–1144), “Chen Qufei shiji xu” 陳去非詩集序, *Danyang ji* 丹陽集, 8: 9, in *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku Quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–1986), vol. 1127. The earlier formulation of this phrase comes from Meng Jiao’s 孟郊 (751–814) poem “Tan ming” 嘆命, *Quan Tang shi*, 374: 4204.

149. See Zhou Yukai, *Zhongguo chanzong yu shige* 中國禪宗與詩歌 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1992), 181–88.

