

***Drifting among Rivers and Lakes: Southern Song Dynasty Poetry and the Problem of Literary History.*** By Michael A. Fuller. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013. Pp. xi + 526. \$59.95/£47.95.\*

Every society has its cultural bogeymen: some of these begin as the self-appointed watchdogs of the public good, and, acting from the best motives, end up the sworn enemies of creative freedom. The English have their Puritans, who closed the theatres and banned Shakespeare's plays. For the Chinese, it is the Confucian pedant, particularly in his incarnation of "Daoxue scholar" 道學先生—the dedicated partisan of the fundamentalist wing in Confucian thought known as "the Learning of the Way"—whose very name conjures a stuffy old man with an inveterate prejudice against new ideas and pleasurable activities, but most of all against the writing of poetry.

As schoolchildren, we followed with dismay Daoxue's slow but ineluctable climb to ascendancy in the Southern Song, and sympathized heartily with the poets whose work came under fire as being antithetical to the pursuit of Daoxue goals. In the grown-up version of the same picture, the interchanges between the practitioners of Daoxue and poetry are, of course, more layered and complex, but in some ways perhaps even more depressing. We discover, for example, that the attack on poetry in the Southern Song came from many sides, or, to put it more precisely, that, from the late Northern Song onwards, many factors arose to militate against the continued flowering of poetry. Daoxue critics, seeking to redefine, and greatly to circumscribe, the role of literary practice in elite life, found serendipitous reinforcement in the changing culture of the civil service examinations as, from the mid-Northern Song onwards, poetry began periodically to be excluded from the examination curriculum, while the examinations themselves lost importance as a means of entering government office during the reign of Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1126). A succession of autocratic chief councillors, suspicious of poetry as a vehicle for voicing political opinion, and a corresponding tendency among poets to anticipate censorship by censoring themselves, conspired to further undermine the confidence with which poets wrote and narrow the range of their subject matter. By the late Southern Song, thanks to this combination of intellectual assault, loss of value as cultural capital, and outright suppression, the practice of poetry was radically different from what it had been in the late Northern Song.

It was not that poetry ever stopped being written. Far from it: throughout the hectic philosophical debates of the Southern Song, poems were being produced at a

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far more prolific rate than ever—as Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187–1269) remarked, a trifle waspishly, “everyone was a poet” in his day. But poetry in its nature was deeply changed. In *Drifting among Rivers and Lakes: Southern Song Dynasty Poetry and the Problem of Literary History*, Michael Fuller undertakes to revisit the vexed relationship between poetry and Daoxue and, by tracing the evolving discourses of both, to show what these changes were and how they came about.

Some years prior to the appearance of the book, Fuller published an article in which he made a preliminary exploration of this question of the impact of the rise of Daoxue on the development of poetic discourse.<sup>1</sup> Compared to the in-depth analysis of the book, the ideas in this early treatment are necessarily inchoate. Nevertheless, the article makes a useful preview, and it may be instructive as a reader’s guide of sorts to orient us as we approach the more sophisticated but sometimes also more convoluted arguments in the longer work. Also, by looking at the way the author has chosen to pursue, or to drop, a given line of thought, we may hope to learn something about how he arrived at his present approach.

To summarize the article’s main content: Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), in reworking the ontological and epistemological foundations of Confucian thought to ground his revolutionary new reading of the canonical classics, increasingly found himself at odds with the “largely mainstream account of reading and writing” (p. 313), then prevalent among his contemporaries, which was most fully exemplified in the aesthetics of Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101).<sup>2</sup> Su Shi’s prominent standing among the literati,

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<sup>1</sup> “Aesthetics and Meaning in Experience: A Theoretical Perspective on Zhu Xi’s Revision of Song Dynasty Views of Poetry,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 65, no. 2 (December 2005), pp. 311–55.

<sup>2</sup> In Su Shi’s aesthetic model, as Fuller interprets it, the individual can, by writing his encounters with the empirical realm—by inscribing those encounters into “literary patterns” (*wen* 文)—come to grasp the “inherent patterns” (*li* 理) that underlie the manifold of experience. In this “aesthetics of encounter,” which informs Su Shi’s approach to all modes of writing, but most especially poetry, meaning is to be found neither in the self nor in the world, but arises in the moment when the two are brought together by the act of writing. Two corollary assumptions are of immediate relevance here. One is the emphasis Su Shi gives to the locus of meaning as lying outside the self; the other is that, in privileging writing as a means of knowing, that is, in granting privileged status to aesthetic experience as the medium through which we become intuitively aware of the patterns that make up the underlying order of the world, Su Shi implicitly affirms that those patterns are not transparent to us and that, without unmediated access, our knowledge of them can always be only partial. As Zhu Xi began to develop his curriculum for attaining “the mind of the sage,” he came to disagree strongly with Su Shi because he believed that, since “the mind of the sage” exists within ourselves, it is possible, with constant and diligent practice, to gain access to knowledge that is spontaneous, direct, and complete.

as well as the growing divergence between his model and Zhu Xi's developing views, prompted Zhu Xi to launch the famous critique of Su Shi in which he worked out many important positions in his own aesthetic thinking by defining them in opposition to what he perceived Su Shi's positions to be. Fuller examines this critique in close detail.

A born polemicist, Zhu Xi prosecutes his argument in strongly vituperative terms.<sup>3</sup> Fuller, taking his tack from this truculent self-presentation, describes Zhu Xi as mounting an agenda in which, to restore epistemological certainty and moral clarity to the Daoxue world view, he “disputed the cultural authority of Su Shi” and “sought to discredit the *content*” of his writings (p. 313), achieve the “dismissal of Su Shi's aesthetic values” (p. 319), and “fully dismantle the poetics of experience” (p. 350). Given Zhu Xi's uncompromising language, and Fuller's iteration of it, I find it difficult not to see Zhu Xi's engagement with Su Shi in the light of a clash of conflicting viewpoints between two larger-than-life personalities, the chief architect of the Daoxue synthesis in the Southern Song going head to head against the Northern Song's pre-eminent literatus (*wenren* 文人). In this imagining, Zhu Xi bears more than a slight resemblance to the popular image of the Daoxue scholar as inquisitorial schoolmaster.

Fuller notes in the article that, until recently, the prevailing story of the rise of Daoxue was one, told within the movement itself, of the emergence through partisan struggle of “an embattled but finally triumphant lineage of the ‘orthodox transmission of the Way’ (daotong 道統)” (p. 332). Since his reader is invited to understand the evolution of poetic discourse in the Southern Song in terms of continuities and breakages in the transmission of competing lines of thought (with Su Shi's model of aesthetic experience ultimately being displaced and replaced by a model derived from Zhu Xi's metaphysics), Fuller's own interpretation of the Daoxue reinvention of Song poetics, at this early stage in his thinking, would appear to have been cast in a similar mould.<sup>4</sup>

*Drifting among Rivers and Lakes* gives us a different and more mature view. As the title suggests, literary history is depicted in this book as a flow made up of many currents, some more powerful than others, but all coming together in one vast and endlessly moving stream. In tracing developments in poetry and philosophy from

<sup>3</sup> Since Zhu Xi refuses to accord Su Shi the dignity of proper address and insistently refers to him as 蘇氏 (“he of the clan Su,” for which “Mr Su” would be a polite euphemism), it might be more accurate to call his critique a series of diatribes.

<sup>4</sup> The author twice uses the verb “to break” to ascribe intent to Zhu Xi's actions: “Zhu Xi seeks to break” the understanding about the relation between the self and the world embodied in Su Shi's aesthetic thinking (p. 319); “Zhu Xi must break three sets of connections” in the existing poetic tradition in order to make room for his revisionist poetics (p. 346).

the late Northern Song to the close of the dynasty, Fuller weaves the contributions of different individuals or groups of individuals into his narrative, all the while taking care to avoid laying special emphasis on any one individual or group—not even Zhu Xi has pride of place. The difference is largely a matter of perspective. Change, rather than being defined as the outcome of discrete acts by independent agents, is here conceived as an aggregation of interconnected movements arising from within the same corporate body.

Divested of the rhetoric of confrontation that pervaded his earlier analysis of the Daoxue revision of mainstream Song poetics, Fuller's new account of the relationship between poetry and Daoxue presents the two as engaging in a series of mutually accommodative interactions, from which both were to emerge transformed. Not only did poetry change under the influence of Daoxue thought, becoming so deeply imbued with Daoxue values that “human nature and the feelings” (*xingqing* 性情), as reconfigured in Daoxue ontology, eventually became the core aesthetic of late Southern Song poetics; Daoxue's proponents also gradually moderated their position vis-à-vis poetry. Starting with Cheng Yi's 程頤 (1033–1107) uncompromising stance on poetry as inimical to the Way and finishing with the more placable and tolerant views of Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178–1235) and Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁 (1178–1237), who assigned poetry a role ancillary to the Way, Daoxue slowly made room for poetry in its universe.<sup>5</sup> As the author puts it, “*Daoxue* . . . needed poetry,” and “poetry also needed *Daoxue*” (p. 32). This model of symbiotic transformation effectively realigns the communities of poets and Daoxue scholars as participants, not in rival discourses, but in overlapping discourses that showed a strong tendency to merge. The adversarial element in the relationship between the two, one of the most salient features in Fuller's earlier account, all but disappears from the account he gives in the book.

The parallel and intertwining histories of Daoxue and poetry make up a substantial portion of *Drifting among Rivers and Lakes*, a sufficiently large subject in itself; but the book deals with issues larger even than this. Ultimately, the author is less interested in examining the changing poetic and philosophic discourses of the Southern Song in their own right than he is in discovering how those changing discourses register (in the double sense of arising from and contributing to) a shift in the underlying intellectual order of which both are major constitutive parts. The thesis Fuller proposes, and sets out to prove, in his book is that this shift, occurring over roughly the last two centuries of the Song, was of such magnitude as to result in the formation of a new episteme. This new epistemological order, he further maintains, was to hold for the remainder of the imperial period. In other words, whereas most

<sup>5</sup> It was this broader and more syncretic interpretation that was reflected in the Daoxue curriculum after Zhu Xi's teachings became the mainstay of the civil service examinations.

of us are accustomed to consider the Yuan, Ming, and Qing as making up one continuous era, “Late Imperial China,” Fuller argues for pushing the beginning of that socio-historical continuum back by well over a century—a bold and daring assertion, if proven to be true. Although the author nowhere makes such a claim, we may think of *Drifting among Rivers and Lakes* as intellectual history, heavily weighted towards poetry, but intellectual history all the same; it is a history of literary culture in the broadest sense of the word.

Fuller’s approach is complex and multi-layered. To aid his study of epistemological change in the pre-modern Chinese world, he marshals the critical apparatus of Western theorists, primarily Kant, Foucault, and Bourdieu: Kantian aesthetics, to provide an explanatory model to illuminate, by contrastive comparison, the ways in which, during the period in question, the Chinese understood how we come to know the world and give form to that knowledge in language; Foucault’s work in incorporating historical change into the classical model of a stable order of knowledge to account for the phenomenon of epistemic shift. This overarching theoretical framework forms the matter of the introduction and the first chapter of the book. Later, as he develops the terms in which to couch his narrative of the evolution of poetic and philosophic discourse, Fuller also draws heavily on Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory of cultural production.

## I

For Fuller, the history of the Southern Song begins, not with the actual moment of dynastic transition (1125–1127), as North China fell to Jurchen invasion and the Song court fled south, but fully one generation earlier, at the turn of the eleventh and the twelfth centuries. This is where the author locates the breakdown of the “consensus” (p. 30) on which the Song imperium was founded as the changes he undertakes to document began to be felt. “Consensus,” according to Fuller, meant an understanding among the Song ruling elite that it was possible “to establish a model of governance derived from a shared commitment to the Confucian canon,” one in which the elite “derived its authority through participation in national institutions” (pp. 29–30) that were themselves the rational expression of Confucian socio-political ideals. This vision of order, as delineated in the 2005 article, had epistemological roots in a model of which the closest embodiment could be found in the writings of Su Shi. But, even in Su Shi’s lifetime, the polity built upon Confucian social ethics was already showing signs of disintegrating, as the Song court splintered into contending factions and the canonical classics ceased to be a source of cohesion and became instead a battleground for rival schools of interpretation, of which the still nascent Daoxue movement was one. The falling apart of government by consensus in the late Northern Song marks the starting point of Fuller’s narrative.

Factionalism was to remain a standard feature of political life for the rest of the dynasty. Amid the constant dislocations caused by strife between factions, the Song elite sought by different means to reconsolidate the moral and ethical grounds on which they could continue to base the Confucian mission of cultivating the self (*xiushen* 修身) and bringing order to the state (*ping tianxia* 平天下). Or, to put it the other way around, poetic endeavour and philosophical inquiry gave the Song elite different ways of working out solutions when the interpretation of the classics that guided the Confucian mission became riven by schismatic controversy. Poets and philosophers, intersecting groups within the elite stratum who were seeking answers to the same questions, were thus very much a part of the same community. Beginning with poetry, and later bringing in philosophy, Fuller studies both from the same viewpoint, as he looks at how philosophers and poets alike were looking at changes in their world through changing eyes.

As writers, cast adrift from old models, went in search of new ones, they instinctively shied away from Su Shi, the author states, because he was too closely identified with the “increasingly untenable” (p. 59) order of the mid-Northern Song, and found inspiration instead in Su’s younger friend and sometime protégé, Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105). Avers Fuller, it was Huang Tingjian, and the compelling new approach he pioneered in his theory and practice, that fired the imagination and fuelled the experimentation of writers for the next half-century; going beyond this period of direct impact, Huang’s ideas would continue indirectly to shape the development of literary discourse till the end of the Southern Song. In other words, whereas Su Shi had been the presiding genius of the literati while the consensual order described by Fuller still held, Huang Tingjian was the one to whom they looked for guidance when that order failed. From this point, Su Shi drops out of Fuller’s narrative; his name is seldom mentioned again, and he figures only modestly in the author’s later chapter on Zhu Xi.<sup>6</sup>

Huang Tingjian will probably never be as well known, or, for many, as well loved as Su Shi, but after languishing for centuries in the shadow of Su Shi, he has lately been discovered anew by two generations of literary scholars, who have put nearly every aspect of his work under intensive review.<sup>7</sup> Thanks to their efforts,

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 340–43. This contrasts with the Fuller’s earlier study of their relationship, in which Su Shi is seen as playing a pivotal role in the formation of Zhu Xi’s vision of an aesthetic order based on Daoxue principles.

<sup>7</sup> Of these, I will name only two, the senior scholar Huang Qifang 黃啟方 in Taiwan and Yang Jinghua 楊經華 in the rising generation of scholars from the People’s Republic of China. The latter’s *Songdai Dushi chanshixue yanjiu* 宋代杜詩闡釋學研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011) presents the thought-provoking thesis that Huang Tingjian’s reading of Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), in the context of literary inquisition, was key to the formation of the period style of the Song.



Huang's poetry, always difficult and sometimes arcane, is now being read with more appreciative understanding; even more excitingly, we have begun to recognize the extraordinary extent of this man's influence as a reader, critic, literary theorist, and arbiter of style, and to attempt to take its measure. Perhaps, when the market for publications in this area reaches saturation point and the business of critical reappraisal winds down, Huang will have found a niche that more truly reflects his importance in the canon of Song poets and the poetic tradition as a whole. By identifying Huang Tingjian's model of aesthetic experience as the paradigmatic centre of Southern Song poetic discourse, Fuller has made a timely and significant contribution to the continuing reassessment (one is tempted to say rehabilitation) of this enigmatic and hitherto underrated figure.

Fuller describes Huang's aesthetic model as "inward-turning" (p. 32)—its most distinctive characteristic, in his view, as well as its main point of contrast with Su Shi's. Su had located the domain of aesthetic experience in the outside world, or rather in the liminal interface, as it were, that arises between the self and the world in the moment of encounter. Although he did not hold the deeper patterns that underlie the surface world of material phenomena to be transparent, Su believed that writing—the poetic act—is adequate to embody those underlying patterns and hence to connect us to the world in a meaningful way. All we need do is to trust that our own "spontaneous responses" (p. 61) to "chance experience in the phenomenal realm" (p. 73) are capable of yielding true insight into the significance of that experience. Not so with Huang Tingjian. For Huang, the deep patterns that undergird and order the world are not so readily accessible. To apprehend them, in the double sense of getting at them and coming to understand them, we need the wisdom of the age-old human community that is preserved in the great writings of the past. Thus, in Huang's model, it is the textual tradition that serves to anchor us in the world: we come to know the world—our experience of the world acquires meaning—only insofar as it is mediated by the textual tradition.<sup>8</sup>

Huang's foregrounding of the textual tradition is much more than a simple directive to read books—in the examination-driven culture of the Song, the elite were already constantly immersed in books. By reading, Fuller explains, Huang meant a deep and meditative engagement with the text that finally produces an intimacy of understanding bordering on complete identification with the mind of the author: only this kind of attentive reading, when applied to the masterworks of the past, can train the reader "to see the world in the manner of the ancient writers" (p. 64) and, by extension, to organize and represent one's own experience of the world in

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<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that Huang defines the great writings of the past to include the works of poets like Du Fu as well as the Confucian classics, so that he literally "sees the poetic tradition as continuous with the canonical Confucian tradition" (p. 78).

like fashion. Learning to read and write is therefore an inseparable part of the moral education by which one prepares to become a good Confucian, and the pursuit of reading and writing is simultaneously “a moral as well as aesthetic endeavor” (p. 90). Su Shi had in a general way privileged the literary enterprise (*wen*) of the literatus above all other human activities as a means of knowing the world; it remained for Huang to give point and definition to the content of that *wen* and craft from it a curriculum of sorts.

The centrality of the textual tradition in Huang’s thinking meant that, for him, the poetic act does not arise, as it did with Su Shi, out of the direct engagement with one’s experience of the world, but rather indirectly, as one engages with the textual tradition—a voluminous “human repertoire” (p. 71) compounded of similar and analogous experiences to one’s own—in a second-order shaping of experience in place of experience at first hand. The aesthetic encounter for Huang does not, therefore, take place in the outside world, but in an intermediary realm between self and world where the poet synthesizes a response to his particular experience by drawing on the infinite variety of human responses that has come down to us since the beginning of recorded time. All Chinese poetry is, to greater or lesser degree, embedded in the writings of the past. What is unusual about this new model is that, here, the textual tradition has overleaped direct experience and taken first place in the hierarchy of ways of knowing the world. This is why, in describing Huang’s reconfiguration of Su Shi’s vision of aesthetic order, the author calls it a “radical turn inward” (p. 83).

Even in his own time, however, Huang drew less attention with his poetry than with his theoretical formulations about poetry, which, if in some respects they still surprise us today, must have been deeply startling to his contemporaries. Fuller isolates for discussion two famous pronouncements and uses them to illustrate Huang’s fixed allegiance to the priority of the world of texts over the empirical world as the site of the poetic act. One is the assertion that Du Fu and Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824), respectively the greatest poet and prose writer in Huang’s personal canon, never wrote “a single character that did not have a source” but, when they put the time-worn phrases of past authors into their own writing, “it was like a grain of divine cinnabar that, touching iron, turns it into gold” (*diantie chengjin* 點鐵成金, p. 66). The other statement, of greater exotic appeal but more doubtful attribution, identifies two techniques, “snatching the embryo and exchanging the bones” (*duotai huangu* 奪胎換骨) (pp. 77–78), for constructing new poems out of old ones, although the exact meaning of the terms is still controversial.<sup>9</sup> Thus, a great writer uses pre-existing texts

<sup>9</sup> The phrase does not appear in Huang’s own writings but was attributed to him by the poet-monk Huihong 惠洪 (1071–1128) in the latter’s *Lengzhai yehua* 冷齋夜話, in *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 影印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983),

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and enlivens them in the process; a lesser one, by using them, infuses their life into his own. In either case, creativity is said to consist, not in inventing afresh, but in rediscovering, reclaiming, and reprocessing texts from the past.

The theoretical basis of these formulations, as Fuller elaborates it, is subtler than at first appears. As the embodiment of the mind of their writers, great texts contain “intentions” or “dispositions” (*yi* 意)<sup>10</sup> of such profound complexity as can never be exhaustively plumbed: this is as true of the poems of Du Fu as it is of the Confucian classics. So, just as in studying the *Analects* the goal is to discover as many ways as possible of reading and applying a single aphorism, finding ways to appropriate the profuse array of intentions latent within a poem (of which the particular moment captured in the text is but one possible permutation), and then to redeploy them in new contexts, becomes an important part of poetic practice. It is in this sense that composing poetry, no less than studying the canonical classics, can be an act of moral self-cultivation.

It was Huang Tingjian’s programme, the author contends, to create “a morally oriented poetry of self-composure and self-discipline” (p. 59) to revitalize contemporary poetic practice amid the political struggles that had become a fact of life for the Song elite. Interpreted in this light, Huang’s belief in the central importance of the textual tradition would appear to stem from a prior commitment to its value for the self-transformation of the literatus; that is, Huang assigned privileged status to the textual tradition because he saw in it the ideal medium for effecting that transformation. Drawing on this premise, Fuller has managed to integrate the disparate aspects of Huang’s complex and multifaceted approach into a construct that comes across as internally consistent. This is no small achievement, considering that Huang himself, as Fuller concedes, developed his aesthetic thought, not systematically, but in the course of responding to people, ideas, and events over a whole lifetime.

To the unpractised eye, however, Huang Tingjian remains a mass of contradictions. I am prompted to wonder if it is completely necessary to the appreciation of this intriguing and many-sided figure that all the incongruities in his thinking be

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(Note 9—Continued)

vol. 863, pp. 237–60. The entry on “the method for exchanging the bones and snatching the embryo” (*huangu duotai fa* 換骨奪胎法) appears on p. 243. David Palumbo-Liu explains *huangu* as meaning to borrow the general import of a poem while changing the mode of expression, and *duotai* to borrow the general expression or even the actual wording of a poem while changing its meaning. See his elegantly written and still highly readable book, *The Poetics of Appropriation: The Literary Theory and Practice of Huang Tingjian* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 156.

<sup>10</sup> Or, if one can be forgiven for borrowing a Western term, “ideas,” in the sense of a unifying concept from which individual images are developed and around which they are organized.

reconciled, or whether the source of his fascination may not indeed lie in the fact that his thinking contains so many incongruities. Speaking for myself, the strange appeal of this very strange poet comes precisely from the paradoxical combination he presents of a far-out, avant-garde approach to poetic composition and what appears to be an extremely conservative poetics.

Huang's poetics are conservative in the sense that they are based on traditional Confucian poetics that were then rewritten to make them more restrictive. For example, to the standard definition of poetry as "feelings and human nature" (*qingxing* 情性), as stated in the "Great Preface" to the *Book of Songs* and other core texts of the Confucian canon, Huang adds this caveat: not all feelings are created equal, and some are not worthy of being put into poetic form. Specifically, poetry should have nothing to do with "insistent remonstrance at court, bitter abuse on the road, or anger at one's neighbor and scolding from one's seat" (p. 59);<sup>11</sup> to use it in these and such-like ways would be to miss the whole point of writing poetry and "lose poetry's true import and purpose" (*shi shi zhi zhi* 失詩之旨).

This interesting emendation to the "Great Preface" becomes even more interesting when we note its context. In 1098, the date of the poem to which he appended the postface containing this bit of wisdom, Huang was living in remote exile, as were many partisans of the anti-reform faction to which he belonged, following a particularly vicious series of purges that had accompanied the opposing faction's return to ascendancy.<sup>12</sup> A motive for making a prescriptive list of abuses in poetry suggests itself in this context. Part admonition, part recrimination, it can be read as a warning to Huang's immediate readers—the circle of political colleagues and sympathizers most directly affected by the fallout of the latest factional struggle—to steer clear of the kind of poetic language for which Su Shi was tried, and nearly executed, twenty years earlier when he wrote poems to satirize the political reforms then being carried out in the name of Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067–1085).<sup>13</sup> In short, beware

<sup>11</sup> 非強諫爭於廷，怨忿詬於道，怒鄰罵坐之為也。A more complete translation might be: "[Poetry] is not contending with insistent remonstrance at court, abusing with bitter resentment upon the road, ranting at your next-door neighbours, scolding your guests in their seats, or other behaviour of the sort."

<sup>12</sup> When the regency of the anti-reform dowager empress ended with her death in 1093, the young Zhezong 哲宗 (r. 1085–1100) began recalling the proponents of reform to court. Almost immediately, in 1094, Su Shi was sent to Huizhou 惠州 on the Guangdong 廣東 coast; within two years, many of his colleagues were also exiled into harsh conditions, while Su himself was further banished in 1097 to Hainan Island, the southernmost extent of the empire.

<sup>13</sup> The infamous "Poetry Trial at Crow Terrace" (*Wutai shi'an* 烏臺詩案) of 1079, the literary inquisition against Su Shi that kicked off the first large-scale purge of the partisans who stood against reform. Ronald Egan discusses this briefly in his *Word, Image, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Council on East Asian Studies, 1994), pp. 46–53.

of literary inquisition.<sup>14</sup> Speaking somewhat more openly in a personal letter to his poetic nephew Hong Chu 洪芻 (1066?–after 1132), Huang comes out and names Su Shi as the cautionary example, studiously to be avoided, of the pitfalls of being too “fond of scolding” (*haoma* 好罵), although even here he is careful not to say anything more specific.<sup>15</sup>

But, whether Huang wrote his prescription for what one may and may not do with poetry in order to set a moralizing agenda for his fellow literati, as Fuller holds, or to propose a strategy for protecting them against retributive censorship—the two aims are perfectly compatible—the result was the same. Now there were things that one should not write about in poetry, not because doing so would be in poor taste, or make for clumsy workmanship, but because, says Huang with emphasis, poetry in which one writes about these things ceases to be poetry altogether.<sup>16</sup>

On the second proposition in the paradox, Huang Tingjian as standing in the avant-garde of Song poetry, much ink has been spilled in the stylistic analysis of the technical innovations and prosodic experiments with which he enraptured two generations of admiring imitators and, as his popularity waned and reaction set in, sent his detractors into paroxysms of enraged disgust. Of much more interest is the ongoing critical attempt to situate Huang’s contributions within the context of the rapidly changing social and technological culture of Song China.

More than any other poet of his generation, and quite possibly of the period as a whole, Huang Tingjian showed, in the way he wrote poetry and wrote about it, that he was keenly alive to the massive impact being wrought upon literary culture by the spread of print.<sup>17</sup> In an age when print had overtaken manuscript as the primary

<sup>14</sup> The subtext would have been clear to the intended readers of this piece. But even to a reader not in possession of the facts, the exaggerated tone of Huang’s piece—intense disapproval masking a scarcely suppressed hysteria—is enough to signal that its author, faithful to the spirit of indirection urged by the “Great Preface,” is saying one thing while pointing to another. Huang was not being paranoid. A second, and much more sweeping, literary inquisition against the anti-reform partisans was soon to come, as a series of increasingly stringent bans encompassed, first the literary collections of the most prominent writers of the group, including Su Shi and Huang Tingjian, and finally the writings of all their known associates. Mercifully, Su Shi had already died by this time.

<sup>15</sup> It was in this letter, written in 1103, that Huang proposed the famous analogy likening the use of the textual past by Du Fu and Han Yu to the alchemical transmutation of iron into gold.

<sup>16</sup> Fuller discusses the same postface and letter (pp. 59–61) but does not place strong emphasis on their relationship to the inquisition against Su Shi.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald Egan, summing up the studies done by Zhang Gaoping 張高評 and Wang Yugen 王宇根 on the Jiangxi School of Poetry 江西詩派, as the posthumous disciples of Huang Tingjian came to be called, writes: “They argue persuasively that the Jiangxi School’s insistence that

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means for the transmission, dissemination, and circulation of writing, the ancient view of poetry—as the product of an outflow of psychophysical energy that is continuous with the person of the poet—was fast giving way to a new perspective, in which writers came to see poetry as being made up of texts separate from and, to a degree, independent of their authors. Huang was to push this evolving perception to its logical conclusion. To him, not only were poetic texts, as they became detached from their authors, fair game for appropriation; the forms that this appropriation could take were also radically different from—and more aggressively exploitative than—the ways in which texts had been used in the past. Perhaps Huang had noticed something about the dual nature of the printed text: that, as writing, texts originated in the psychosoma of the writer, but that, as objects with material existence, they were also capable of being resolved into their constituent elements, which could then be freely disassembled, moved around, and recomposed anew.<sup>18</sup>

The implications are unnervingly postmodern. Perhaps Huang was trying to catch up with himself—inventing theory to explain what he had been trying out in practice—when he used the high-flown metaphors of “spotting iron into gold”<sup>19</sup> and

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(Note 17—*Continued*)

every word in a poetic line have a textual source or precedent, that poets train themselves by reading exhaustively in earlier texts, and that the source of poetic inspiration lies in books rather than the poet’s observance of the world—all these are best understood as springing from the print revolution and the new abundance of books from the time of Huang Tingjian . . . , credited with being the founder of the ‘school’, on through that of later Jiangxi School proponents in the Southern Song” (“To Count Grains of Sand on the Ocean Floor: Changing Perceptions of Books and Learning in the Song Dynasty,” in *Knowledge and Text Production in an Age of Print: China, 900–1400*, ed. Lucille Chia and Hilde De Weerd (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), pp. 44–45). The two works cited by Egan are, respectively, Zhang Gaoping, “Diaoban yinshua zhi fanrong yu Songdai yinben wenhua zhi xingcheng—yinben zhi puji yu chaoting zhi jiankong (shang)” 雕版印刷之繁榮與宋代印本文化之形成——印本之普及與朝廷之監控(上), *Songdai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 宋代文學研究叢刊 11 (2005), pp. 1–36; and Wang Yugen, *Ten Thousand Scrolls: Reading and Writing in the Poetics of Huang Tingjian and the Late Northern Song* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011). The precepts that guided the poetic practice of the Jiangxi poets can all be traced to key elements in Huang Tingjian’s aesthetic thought, as Fuller has painstakingly laid them out.

<sup>18</sup> Or, to put this in the language of today, that texts could be cut, edited, and pasted at will. The analogy is fanciful, of course, but for the eleventh-century reader, the transition from manuscript to woodblock print and moveable type (woodblock print continued to be much more commonly used than moveable type until the twentieth century, although moveable type appears in the eleventh-century record) would have involved a conceptual leap of infinitely greater proportions than the already considerable one we made in the late twentieth century in going from manual typing to electronic word-processing.

<sup>19</sup> Using the translation in Palumbo-Liu, *The Poetics of Appropriation*, pp. 66–67.

swapping out “embryos” with “bones” to describe the infinite realm of possibilities one could open up by separating and recombining words and lines from old poems to make new ones, or by importing and exporting ideas (Fuller’s “intentions”) into and out of one’s poems, as if they were physical commodities. Imprinted in this fanciful language, borrowed from Daoist alchemy, is a strong sense of the wonder and astonishment that Huang must have felt at the discoveries he was making about the new ways in which texts can be composed—even as, true to his commitment to the priority of the textual tradition, he presents those discoveries as being derived from past writings. In his sensitivity and responsiveness to change, and the way he accelerated change by anticipating it, Huang deserves to be recognized as the most progressive thinker, if by no means the most outstanding poet, among the poets of the Song dynasty.

To sum up, although Huang Tingjian professed moral conservatism in his reading of the textual tradition, in which he saw reunited the bifurcating streams of the poetic and the Confucian moral traditions, he was in fact given to experimentation of a daring and highly original nature with formal issues of poetic language that had little, if anything, to do with the moral content of the texts themselves. These innovations later formed the basis of a methodology that Huang’s poetic disciples elaborated to guide them in the difficult art of composition; but the fact that it was readily possible to detach one part of his aesthetic model from another suggests that these parts were not originally conceived of as forming an integral whole. Fuller makes a valiant effort to reconcile the different aspects of Huang’s theory and practice—for example, by pointing to the consonance between the traditional method of exhaustively studying every possible meaning of a canonical text and Huang’s new method of extracting all the possible ideas, or intentions, contained in a poetic text—but, even so, they remain ill-assorted, and fit together uneasily at best. The amalgamation of an extremely forward-looking approach to creative technique with a retrofitted Confucian poetics may be what gives Huang Tingjian’s aesthetic thought its bizarre and outlandish charm, but it also builds in a significant amount of potential for instability. Perhaps that is what Fuller wishes to intimate when, in rounding up his analysis, he describes Huang’s model as being compounded of a “precarious synthesis” (p. 82).

## II

Notwithstanding the challenges implicit in following his difficult and complicated approach to poetry, Huang Tingjian was, as the author rightly assesses him to be, the greatest seminal influence on the development of Chinese poetry in the Southern Song—the source from which would flow many streams.<sup>20</sup> Huang’s model for the

<sup>20</sup> As neatly figured in the title of Chapter 2.

creative transformation of the textual tradition was to become the foundation of the poetics of the “Jiangxi Poetry Society” that stood “at the center of poetic culture in early Southern Song China” (p. 86). In Chapters 3 and 4, Fuller studies first the Jiangxi poets, and then broadens his focus to examine the role played by the aesthetics of the Jiangxi School in the transformation of literary values within the context of the larger cultural shifts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Of the poets who composed with and/or were mentored by Huang Tingjian, Fuller names his three nephews, the Hong brothers,<sup>21</sup> as being the most representative of the “Jiangxi style” in its classic form. The basic features of this style are highly distinctive and hence easily identifiable, and their filiation to Huang Tingjian is obvious. They include: the use of allusions from an exceptionally wide variety of sources, many of them obscure, reflecting an obsession with book-learning in which Huang’s emphasis on the importance of the textual tradition has been taken to almost parodic extremes; the search for the new (*xin* 新) and striking (*qi* 奇) that were the stock in trade of his poetic craft; and, in seven-character regulated verse, the systematic violation of the standard forms of tonal prosody, in imitation of Huang’s peculiar affinity for the “distorted style” (*aoti* 拗體) born of the prosodic experiments of Du Fu’s final years. The result is an approach to poetic composition, at once bookish and clever, that seems deliberately contrived to showcase the poet’s familiarity with an immense body of textual lore at the same time that it affords him opportunities to create pyrotechnical displays involving the manipulation of formal structure and other purely language-based effects.

Poetry of this kind is by definition laborious to read as well as to write, requiring a long apprenticeship in order to achieve basic competence, but the skills necessary for passable execution are all eminently learnable; in other words, it is a kind of poetry that requires much diligent application, but little genius, to write. One can imagine how it might be desirable to cultivate a style of poetic composition that distinguishes the writer as a man of superior education, talent, and resources: in the world of the late Northern Song civil service, where a booming trade in printed books gave competitive edge to examination candidates who could afford a personal library, this specifically meant someone who had not only the wherewithal to accumulate a vast store of books but also the intellectual flair to gain a masterful command of their contents. At the same time, one can also imagine how poetry written according to such straitjacketing prescriptions could easily degenerate into mechanical and repetitious exercises; indeed, Jiangxi poetry was later to come under scathing criticism for being pedantic and abstruse to the point of irrelevance, and, even worse, insipid and unoriginal.

<sup>21</sup> Hong Peng 洪朋 (1065?–1102?), Hong Chu (the most gifted of the three as well as the recipient of the famous letter discussed above), and Hong Yan 洪炎 (1067–1134).



The difficulty is not in figuring out why such a difficult and recondite style of writing should eventually have passed out of fashion, but in learning the reasons for its enduring appeal in the first place. The Jiangxi style, as Fuller reminds us, was *the* period style for a good fifty years after the death of its imputed progenitor, Huang Tingjian, dominating the practice of the two generations of poets that lived one on either side of the divide between Northern and Southern Song. As the author fills in the political and social background of this transitional period, we begin to understand the curious and unlikely phenomenon of the rise of the Jiangxi style.

The poets who formed the core group of Huang Tingjian's immediate disciples, such as the Hong brothers, all belonged to the social network of his clan, a lineage of long-established standing in his hometown of Shuangjing 雙井 in Jiangxi province. Some years after the fact, Lü Benzhong 呂本中 (1084–1145), a second-generation disciple, took the names of these close associates and of some of Huang's other followers, and, along with a list of their poetic compositions, compiled them into the "Lineage Chart of the Jiangxi Poetry Society" 江西詩社宗派圖.<sup>22</sup> The most interesting thing about this "Jiangxi Poetry Society" is that it appears never actually to have existed; that is, with the exception of the core members mentioned above, the poets listed in the chart are not known to have composed or even to have associated with one another as a group—a fact that scholars are still puzzling over today. In Fuller's opinion, however, the group's putative membership is irrelevant: the chart was important for other reasons.

Writes Fuller, the uninterrupted growth of the civil service since the beginning of the dynasty had, by the late Northern Song, enabled a large number of successful officials to establish themselves and their clans in local society, as the Huangs had done in Shuangjing. Membership in a prominent lineage guaranteed the resources needed for future generations to succeed in the examinations, and success in the examinations in turn further consolidated the family's position in local society. By contrast, during the early and middle periods of the Northern Song, the literati had drawn their authority as a class solely from participation in government, and their lives had, accordingly, centred upon the court. The "shift in literati identity away from the court and state" (p. 89), occurring as a gradual process of social change, received additional impetus from factional struggle. As the families of anti-reform partisans, including those of Su Shi and Huang Tingjian, were debarred from entering the capital in the proscriptions launched under Huizong, the last emperor of the Northern Song,<sup>23</sup> these acts of ostracism inadvertently accelerated the growth of "a communal literati ethos outside

<sup>22</sup> The date for the compilation of this chart is given variously as 1103 and 1111.

<sup>23</sup> If we discount Qinzong 欽宗 (r. 1126–1127), who sat on the throne briefly following the abdication of his father, Huizong, as North China was falling to the Jurchens.

of and independent of the claims of the state” (p. 91). In this context, says Fuller, the “Lineage Chart of the Jiangxi Poetry Society,” which honours Huang Tingjian as the founder of a school made up of his partisans, may be seen as presenting “a countercultural model” (p. 91) for the forming of associations that, by celebrating the cultural leadership of members of the proscribed faction, enabled literati banned from the capital to express their solidarity at the regional level against the values being propagated at court. Although Fuller does not explicitly so state, it was perhaps, in part, the symbolic currency earned by the lineage chart that focused so much attention on Jiangxi poetry in discussions of poetry during the reign of Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1162), the first emperor of the Southern Song.

Parallel to the development of institutions of local culture that ran in counterpoint to the once monolithic culture of the court, the author continues, Chinese society at large was by the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries rapidly advancing to a stage comparable to that described by Pierre Bourdieu for Western Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. For a society at this point in its evolution, where the political, social, and cultural are beginning to separate into distinct fields, Bourdieu proposed a sociological model that recasts the symbolic circulation of power and authority in terms of “cultural and social ‘economies’ with their own modes of production, accumulation, and circulation” (p. 127). Described in these terms, Chinese elite society at the beginning of the Southern Song was one in which growing numbers of well-educated young men engaged in ever intensifying competition for access to official positions in the following ways: exchanging economic for cultural capital by buying books to ensure success in the examinations, investing the returns to gain more cultural capital, or turning them into social capital in the form of a network of connections, and so forth. The Jiangxi style of poetic composition can easily be fitted into this model: one used economic capital to access the books (a form of cultural capital) that were needed to acquire the ability to write this kind of poetry (a more substantial form of cultural capital), and this ability readily became social capital at the gatherings, both at court and in private settings, where the literati were frequently called upon to compose occasional poems.

This much is self-evident. But Fuller takes a considerably more thoroughgoing approach to the application of Bourdieu’s theories as he continues to explore the changing aesthetic order by which the world of the Song elite was organized. If, he goes on, we imagine early Southern Song elite society to be “a Bourdieusian world of many, many agents staking out positions in a highly structured field of cultural production” (p. 87), then poetry figures as only one part of a larger field of discourse in which Buddhist monks and Daoxue scholars were also laying claim to a share of cultural authority through vigorous participation in cultural debate. This being so, it is necessary to situate poetry in this wider context—the aesthetic and philosophic

debates that were taking place in the heyday of the Jiangxi style—before we can fully understand the role played by Jiangxi poetics in the formation of the poetic culture of the period.

The discussions about poetry that animated the literary salons of Gaozong's reign, and in which Daoxue scholars, Buddhist monks, and poets alike participated, survive in a voluminous body of literature made up of *shihua* 詩話,<sup>24</sup> prefaces, letters, essays, and poems.<sup>25</sup> Here, Fuller explains, are set out the full range of “positions,” in the Bourdieusian sense, taken by the early Southern Song elite in response to the poetic practice of the late Northern Song. He then proceeds to analyse the writings of eleven figures, including Daoxue thinkers as well as poets and literary theorists, whose views he considers to be representative of the distribution of the major positions within this range.<sup>26</sup> Fuller's reason for incorporating this “peri-poetic literature,” as I would like to call it, into his analysis of poetic style is that, different as the approaches taken by the authors of these writings may be, the cultural debates to which they refer all grow out of issues that first arose in the writings of the Jiangxi poets. The positions they elaborate may therefore be understood in terms of either counterpositions or the reworking of existing positions by which the field of cultural production is ultimately transformed. In other words, by Fuller's definition, the poetics of the school of Huang Tingjian, as embodied in the poetry of the late Northern and the early Southern Song, when taken together with the early Southern Song debates about poetry and poetics, constitute one single field of mutually differentiating positions that came collectively to be known as “the Jiangxi style.”

An analysis that presents everything in terms of “positions” sounds abstract until we consider a few examples from the book. One criticism levelled against the Jiangxi poets in the Southern Song was the profound lack of imagination with which, mechanically applying Huang Tingjian's methods, they made “distorted prosody” and “obscure reference” (p. 125) an invariable part of their compositional repertoire. To remedy the excessive preoccupation with “fixed methods” (*dingfa* 定法), methods that could be blindly copied, Lü Benzhong proposed what he called the “living method” (*huofa* 活法), a method in which one can transcend the rules without violating the norms implied in the rules (pp. 124–25). This “living method”

<sup>24</sup> A new subgenre of anecdotal literature, *shihua* were miniature compendia of “remarks on poetry” whose eclectic contents ranged from stories about the provenance of famous lines to expert advice on poetic technique to brief excursions into poetics.

<sup>25</sup> I am tempted to propose the term “peri-poetic” to describe these writings because, though expressed in different genres, they are alike in being “about poetry.”

<sup>26</sup> For example, in addition to Lü Benzhong and other poets in the Jiangxi School, Fuller includes Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077–1148) and Zhang Jie 張戒 (*fl.* 1125–1158), known primarily for the poetic theory in their *shihua*, and the Daoxue scholar Zhang Jiucheng 張九成 (1092–1159).

establishes a counterposition to distinguish Lü from other practitioners of the Jiangxi style at the same time that it restructures the field around the Jiangxi style.

Lü Benzong, for whom the textual tradition took precedence over all else, envisioned his “living method” in terms of a creative engagement with texts that avoided mindless conformity to learned techniques. Writing some twenty years later, Zhang Yuangan 張元幹 (1091–1170) used the same term to describe “a form of spontaneous creativity freed from the constraints of textual self-consciousness,” that is, from self-conscious dependency on the textual tradition (pp. 144–45). Zhang was a friend of both Lü Benzong and the Hong brothers: we may see his appropriation of “living method” as a way of setting himself apart from the difficult and obscure style of the mainstream Jiangxi poets while at the same time moderating Lü’s heavy emphasis on texts—a counterposition to a counterposition. One generation later still, Zhou Fu 周孚 (1135–1177), distrustful of a too-easy spontaneity that can quickly degenerate into the facile and superficial, wrote disparagingly of the misappropriation of “living method” in the hands of vulgar contemporaries who hoped to win approval on the mere strength of eschewing the difficult and the obscure. “Living method,” as it had been properly understood by the previous generation, Zhou reminds us, was predicated on “reading widely and applying diligent effort” 讀書博用功深, thus reinstating the original Jiangxi position on the centrality of the textual tradition. Presenting these differing views in terms of interlocking “positions” shows the extent to which their authors, who were clearly addressing one another, “were deeply engaged in a many-sided debate” (p. 152), and not simply theorizing in the abstract.

In Fuller’s reading of the material, discussions about poetry throughout this period revolve around three centres: the textual tradition, the self, and the world. These are also the three points of concern built into the “inward-turning” aesthetic model of Huang Tingjian. In proposing to relocate the site of aesthetic encounter from the phenomenal realm to a highly mediated realm where the individual poet engages with the textual tradition in order to craft meaning from his own experience, Fuller argues, Huang introduced into contemporary poetic discourse such issues as the inward shift of the locus of meaning, the increasing isolation of the self, and the burden that is then placed on the textual tradition to reconnect the self with the world. These in turn became the categories within which writers, among them the author’s chosen eleven, developed their positions.

In particular, the tendency to look inwards, as the individual retreated from the external world into a world constituted from his own inner resources, appears in itself to have been an issue of overriding concern, if not indeed the key issue, in the cultural debates in which Jiangxi poetics figured so prominently in the early Southern Song. Different ways of grappling with this problem of “inwardness,” as Fuller calls it, were tested in different circles. For the poets of the Jiangxi School, the textual

tradition was, of course, the site for generating the patterns of aesthetic coherence that the individual failed to find in either his own self or the world. Daoxue-influenced literary theorists, on the other hand, saw in human nature the microcosm of an inner moral order, anticipating the development of even stronger positions on the supremacy of the human mind as the Daoxue movement gathered momentum over the course of the next century.

The common feature among all these approaches—perhaps the necessary corollary to the inward shift of the locus of meaning—is the tendency for the individual to become “increasingly self-complete” (p. 146), with the external world diminishing in importance as the site of meaningful experience until it becomes almost incidental to the aesthetic encounter. But the questions that were taken up for discussion and around which different approaches came to be elaborated—whether poetic order is based on, and refers to, an order in the world, in the textual tradition, or in the moral nature of the self—all derive from concerns initially problematized in the aesthetic thought of Huang Tingjian.

The author goes so far as to schematize the positions represented by his eleven representative writers in the form of a diagram, in which “text,” “Nature” (the self defined in terms of human nature), and “world” make up the apices of a triangle, with the different writers occupying different areas of the triangle depending on the relative weight they give to each of these three terms in their poetic discourse (see p. 153). The field of positions mapped out in the diagram represents the entire range of discourse on poetry in the early Southern Song; but, as Fuller notes, the diagram is not completely filled. Certain positions were not taken because they simply did not lie within the realm of literary discourse as conceived by those engaging in it at this time: for example, although the textual tradition figures significantly in the writings of many, no one took the position that either human nature or the world of direct experience was of central importance, and so those parts of the triangle remain empty.<sup>27</sup> The field of possible positions—the range of possibilities for poetic discourse—was determined by the aesthetic, and to a certain extent, philosophical decisions of Huang Tingjian, and the different ways in which succeeding generations responded to them. It is in this sense that Jiangxi poetics, the poetics derived from Huang’s model, fashioned the dominant style of the period.

<sup>27</sup> Su Shi would have given first importance to direct experience, but he was quite literally out of the picture by this time; meanwhile, the Daoxue position on the centrality of human nature was still in the making. Although I cannot agree that it is possible to make an accurate visual representation of something so abstract as the different positions described by the author, his diagram is nonetheless useful because it presents us with a concrete illustration of the field of literary discourse at a particular moment—when neither the aesthetic model associated with Su Shi, nor the one associated with Zhu Xi, was in play.

Briefly to recapitulate, in the last generation of the Northern Song, the friends, colleagues, and protégés who were strongly influenced by Huang Tingjian, or who actively sought to imitate his style, each developed his own approach to the writing of poetry but, to the degree that they all shared his commitments—to the intensive application of craft, to poetic ideas as taking priority over experience in the poetic act, and to the primacy of the textual tradition—their choices came to define the initial set of poetic possibilities identified with the Jiangxi style. The generation following theirs, regrouping in the wake of the Jurchen invasion and the reconstitution of a truncated Song state, strove to create a poetic discourse to fit their own times as they responded to the practice of their immediate predecessors. These responses—appropriations of the Jiangxi style purporting to be a continuation of that style—structured a wider set of possibilities, or, in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms, staked out an array of positions that, in turn, would shape the development of poetic theory and practice in the generations to come. The “Jiangxi style”—that heterogeneous grab bag of poetic styles that we find embodied in a poetics distinguished as much for the dogged tenacity with which it was embraced by two generations of practising poets as for its equally vehement dismissal in subsequent generations—has bedevilled scholarly discussion throughout the ages. Although his argument may be overwritten in places and the way he orders his presentation makes it difficult to follow, Fuller has gone a long way towards helping us to understand this extraordinary cultural phenomenon.<sup>28</sup>

But, for all the liveliness with which writers worked and reworked all the possible positions implicit in Huang Tingjian’s model in the course of their debates on aesthetic values, “no clear orthodoxy or consensus opinion” (p. 154) emerged from the welter of discussion, no compelling new vision that could provide common ground for the pursuit of literature that was the Song literati’s occupation—in the double sense of their livelihood and their lifework. It would thus appear that, although the period of transition from Northern to Southern Song—the period of the ascendancy of the Jiangxi style—was characterized by great ferment, this was not to result in groundbreaking discoveries of matching proportions. Whether ultimately the fault lay in the intrinsic flaws of the paradigm proposed by Huang Tingjian, as seems to be the

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<sup>28</sup> Fuller makes a useful expedient of taking the writings of the Jiangxi poets and the responses to those writings in the peri-poetic literature together as establishing “positions” and “counter-positions” in one interconnected field of cultural production, but the term “Jiangxi style” loses its original function as a descriptive label for poetic style when thus used to refer to both primary and secondary writings. This leads to occasional moments of confusion in following his argument. We remember, however, that the author’s stated interest is not in studying stylistic developments per se, but in observing how, as poetic styles evolve, they register shifts in literary values that are embedded in larger currents of political, social, and cultural change.



rhetorical undercurrent of Fuller's argument, is impossible to know; the fact remains that, through fifty years of continual discourse, writers were unable to arrive at anything more than provisional solutions to the problem of establishing a firm basis in which to ground their literary enterprise.

The author closes his exposition of the Jiangxi style with a brief coda on Chen Yuyi 陳與義 (1090–1138). A morally engaged poet living in a time of dynastic change, Chen naturally invites comparison with Du Fu, the more so as Du Fu was the cynosure of the school of Huang Tingjian, and Chen consciously took him as a model. It may well be invidious to compare any poet with the incomparable Du Fu. To be sure, set against the sweep and expanse of Du Fu's poems in the high style, where personal sorrows and the lament for the fate of the empire are caught, held, and finally fused together in one seamless whole, Chen Yuyi's poetic world, with its smaller and more fragmented landscapes, does seem to show a sad falling-off in breadth and scope. Reading their poems side by side, Fuller concludes that, despite the similarities in their situations, the two poets "belong to two different aesthetic universes": for all that Chen strove to model himself on Du Fu, the sheer immensity of his predecessor's vision was something that lay beyond his reach, and "his poetic syntheses were constrained and local" (pp. 180–81).

What matters here is not that these two poets were endowed with different portions of creative genius. For present purposes, the only significant difference between Du Fu and Chen Yuyi is that the latter inhabits a poetic world that has been transformed, subtly but palpably, by Jiangxi poetics. This is a strange, inward-looking world, where aesthetic order, a sense of coherence, no longer has any correlative in the external realm, but must be synthesized from the meeting of the fragile subjectivity of the individual self with some form of internalized human order—here, the textual tradition—and then projected back onto the external realm. Between Chen Yuyi's hesitant and partial resonances and the powerful symphonic harmonies that hold together the broken pieces of Du Fu's world, there lies a certain distance: that distance is the measure of the degree to which literary values, and the cultural ground on which they rested, were changing in the age of the Jiangxi style.

It is appropriate that the author of a work of scholarship should, in observing a given phenomenon, stop short of trying to account for it, unless he can find a way to corroborate his speculations. Fuller accordingly documents the rise of the Jiangxi style—defined as both the "obscure and difficult" style directly associated with the school of Huang Tingjian and the "easy" style that was proposed in counterpoint to, and as a remedy against, their excesses—without attempting to explain its strange perdurability. For his readers, however, the reasons may not be far to seek. In the narrow intensity with which poets focused on texts and methods in the last generation of the Northern Song, and the obsessive engagement with Jiangxi poetics in the first

generation of the Southern Song as writers continued to retrace old territory instead of charting new courses, it is possible to read symptoms of the moral bankruptcy of the Song literati, faced as they were with the rapidly devolving chaos of internecine politics followed by the even greater cataclysm of dynastic upheaval. The trauma attendant on these events is seldom overtly mentioned in the literature surveyed in this book, and yet it is everywhere apparent. At any rate, it was not until well after the re-establishment of the dynasty in the south, after a whole new generation had grown up with no memories of life before the loss of the north, that writers began to evolve a new style to give voice to the spirit of the new age.

### III

The poets of the Jiangxi School are neither major nor representative poets in the mainstream critical opinion. By contrast, when speaking of the literary history of the Southern Song, Lu You 陸游 (1125–1209) will most likely spring to mind, often followed, at some distance, by Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127–1206) and Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126–1193). The general consensus has long been that these three near-exact contemporaries, all living in the middle period of the Southern Song and all connected as friends, or colleagues, or both, have produced bodies of work significant enough to earn them a ranking not only as major poets but also as the poets most capable of representing the collective poetic achievement of the Southern Song. Out of this mid-Southern Song triumvirate, Fuller has chosen to devote one chapter each (Chapters 5 and 6, respectively) to Yang Wanli and Lu You as being the two greatest poets, with the most individual voices, of the Southern Song as a whole.<sup>29</sup>

Fuller sees commonalities as well as differences between these two poets. The sons of families with some standing in their respective communities, Yang and Lu both belonged to that stratum within the literati that enjoyed, or at least enjoyed asserting, a certain measure of independence from the authority of the central court while remaining engaged in government service; both were staunchly committed to the irredentist cause; and both had close ties to the Daoxue fellowship—Yang was a respected Daoxue scholar in his own day. Both also learned to write poetry in a world still dominated by the aesthetic values embodied in the poetry of the Jiangxi School. Yang describes his own early poetry as being mostly in the Jiangxi style; Lu You, though sporting an eclectic style in his youth that supports his claim of being self-taught, actively sought instruction from Zeng Ji 曾幾 (1085–1166), who, as well as being something of a grand old man to hawkish members of the younger generation,

<sup>29</sup> Curiously, Fan Chengda is mentioned only as a friend of Yang Wanli and Lu You's senior colleague, without reference to his work as a poet.

was known as an accomplished practitioner of the Jiangxi style. Working their way from these beginnings towards a more mature style, both men eventually came to feel the need to set aside their earlier writings in strongly categorical terms: Yang Wanli at thirty-five chose to commit all his juvenilia to the flames, and Lu You twice subjected his poetic collection to a drastic winnowing that left very little of what he wrote before the age of forty-two.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, Yang and Lu, though travelling by diverse routes, each arrived at a turning point in his poetic career when he realized that the source of poetic inspiration was to be found not in an inner realm, as Jiangxi poetics had taught, but in the outside world of direct experience—a realization, says Fuller, that was deeply transformative for both. These parallels notwithstanding, the two developed vastly divergent approaches to poetic composition that, in Fuller's view, point to deep differences in the underlying intellectual commitments that drove each to write, as well as in the nature of the poetic encounter as each came to experience and record it.

The transformation that the author describes for the two poets took very different forms. In Yang's case, we have his own record of the experience in one of the prefaces he wrote to accompany the discrete collections of his writings that he put together from time to time in the course of a long and productive life. Fuller discusses the first two of these collections, *Rivers and Lakes* 江湖集 and *Jing Creek* 荊溪集. In *Rivers and Lakes* are collected the poems written between the ages of thirty-five and fifty—Yang's earliest extant work, since he destroyed everything from before this time—when, having abjured the Jiangxi poets, he experimented with other models from different periods in the Tang and Song. Then, at fifty, some half a year after

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<sup>30</sup> It was, of course, common practice to edit one's own writings. Even someone like Li Bo 李白 (701–762), who was keenly invested in projecting the appearance of a devil-may-care insouciance, seems to have made revisions to his poems—there is no other straightforward way to account for the existence of many variant readings consisting not just of the occasional character or phrase but of alternative versions of entire lines. But the habit of revising a large accumulation of poems to produce a body of work, self-consciously so conceived, began with Du Fu, and was picked up by the Song poets after Du Fu was made into the gold standard against which all poets came to be measured. By the mid-Southern Song it had become routine for poets, or their sons, to make periodic compilations of their poetry to be circulated in print. The impersonal nature of print, and the wide distribution that printed books were known to enjoy, must have given writers additional incentive to eliminate the work of the years of indiscretion from their finished collections. To my mind, the formation of the cult of the “old man poet,” so important in the late Southern Song, owes much to the disproportionate representation given to the writings of old age in the collected works of popular and influential poets like Lu You and, later, his great admirer Liu Kezhuang, two-thirds of whose extant poetry dates from the last twenty of his eighty years of life.

arriving at his newly assigned post in Changzhou 常州 (the administrative centre of the district in which Jing Creek lay), Yang had a breakthrough that permanently changed his approach to writing, and indeed all else. Ten years later, he recalls this moment in the preface he wrote to head the newly finished *Jing Creek* collection containing all the poems produced in the intervening decade: “Suddenly it was as if I had an awakening” (p. 202). From this point onwards, he says, he had no further use for poetic models, because his poems “flowed out without any of the difficulty of former days.”<sup>31</sup> As Yang settled into his new approach, “all the myriad images came to present me with material for poems” (pp. 202–3), and it was as much as the poet could do to respond to the urgent summons of first one and then another in a process that seemed to lie “beyond my command” (p. 203). Interestingly, he adds, the effects of this breakthrough were felt in all aspects of his life: once it was no longer difficult to write poetry, the work of government too ceased to be difficult.

Although Yang himself conceives of the epiphany in Changzhou as a species of *l'illumination subite*, Fuller believes that it was more likely the result of a gradual process of cumulative change, and remarks stylistic continuities between the *Rivers and Lakes* poems and the poems from *Jing Creek*. The only significant difference, he suggests, is in the manner of composition: whereas previously poems were the product of painful and laborious effort, they now came, unbidden, with the greatest of ease. The rhetoric of the preface to the *Jing Creek* collection couches the fundamental change in Yang's approach in terms of the relative ease and difficulty of writing—a persistent concern in the old debates surrounding Jiangxi poetics. Decoding this out of the language of Yang's habitual framework of reference, I see the emphasis as falling rather on the irresistibility of the impulse to poetry and the poet's loss of mastery as he submits to that impulse. For Yang Wanli, the poetic act is something that lies outside the poet's control even as he participates in it.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> 瀏瀏焉無復前日之軋軋矣。Here the author appears to be following the interpretation of Zhou Ruchang 周汝昌, who glosses 軋軋 as describing the difficulty of poetic composition, based on this line from Lu Ji's 陸機 *Wen fu* 文賦: “Thoughts come out with difficulty as though pulled” 思乙乙其若抽, where 軋軋 has a variant reading of 乙乙 in the “Six Officials” edition of the *Wen xuan* 文選 that would certainly have been known to Yang Wanli. See *Yang Wanli xuanji* 楊萬里選集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), pp. 288–89. To my mind, a simpler solution would be to take 軋軋 as the onomatopoeic representation of the scrunching sound of carriage wheels: this usage, attested in the Southern Song, makes a pleasant contrast to 瀏瀏, the sound made by the smooth and uninterrupted flow of water. In that case, the concrete imagery of the line can be preserved, as in “poems came rippling out without the creaking and grinding of former days.”

<sup>32</sup> Of the two poets, Yang Wanli has by far the more original and interesting approach to compositional technique, which, for lack of space, can be noted only in passing. Fuller discusses

(Continued on next page)

Lu You does not speak of his own poetic development in terms of a break between his earlier and later work, but from the way that his poetic corpus begins to explode from his mid-forties onwards, some time after his arrival in Sichuan, it would appear that something did change significantly during this period.<sup>33</sup> He was to spend nearly a decade, moving from post to post, in different parts of Sichuan. Tradition has it that Lu You's transformation as a poet was precipitated by his first (and only) experience of military life, an eight-month stint on the frontlines of war at Nanzheng 南鄭 on the border between Chinese and Jurchen territory. This version of events is based on the poet's own recollections, in which, looking back from a nostalgic distance, Lu You the easterner avidly romanticizes his life in western Sichuan, and most especially his days in the military, as a series of adventures on the wild frontier. Real and substantive change, Fuller holds, came in the form of a more gradual and less glamorous process.

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(Note 32—*Continued*)

the famous “Chengzhai style” (*Chengzhai ti* 誠齋體), the signature style of Yang's mature poetry, and tries to connect the key elements of that style to the ontological and epistemological positions he took in his philosophical writings. For me, the most interesting feature of the Chengzhai style is the frisson one gets from perceiving the dissonance between the illusion of spontaneity the poet likes to create and the shrewdly calculated manner in which that illusion is achieved. Poems in the Chengzhai style tend to be short—Yang's poetic form of choice was the seven-character quatrain—and are often marked by the whimsical, if not downright mischievous, use of humour. Typically, as in “Cold Sparrows” (p. 204), the poet captures the experience of a moment with a few deftly placed brushstrokes, in the manner of an impressionistic sketch. The sensation of speed this leaves with the reader, combined with what Yang said about how after his sojourn at Jing Creek he began to feel the overmastering power of the creative instinct, has led many to assume that he wrote impulsively and without much deliberation. Looking more closely, however, we see that, almost invariably, his poems are carefully written to represent multiple perspectives, so that, within the space of as few as four lines, we get both an inside view of the experience (as it happens to the poet, the perceiving subject, in the moment) and an outside view (as the poet, the reflecting observer, looks back on the moment and overwrites it with an act of interpretation). In this way, the reader is invited to relive the experience of the moment in all its vivid immediacy at the same time that he is instructed to ponder its meaning at his leisure. Yang's peculiar combination of poetic “show and tell”—simultaneously drawing us into and detaching us from the experience so that we are at once looking at the world through the poet's eyes and looking at him looking at the world—is a uniquely brilliant strategy for representing the many-layered complexity of the process by which human beings come to know the world as they find meaning in their experience of it, and equally that by which the poet makes his experience of the world into a poem.

<sup>33</sup> That is, the fact that many of the poems written after coming to Sichuan escaped Lu You's harsh editorial hand suggests that, retrospectively, he thought them worth keeping.

Fuller sees numerous factors as contributing to the changes by which Lu You grew into his mature style during this period: his deepening awareness of the encroachment of age; the dashing of his hopes, after leaving military service, for vigorous prosecution of the war against the Jurchens; and continued bafflement in his pursuit of office in the civilian sphere. Most important of all, however, were the relationships that he formed with alternative communities, both real and imaginary, while living in Sichuan. After transferring from the army into a civilian post in Chengdu, Lu You wrote “a series of strident revanchist poems” (p. 261) about recovering the lost territory in the North to register moral protest against what he saw as the weak and temporizing policies of those in power. With the hardening of this oppositional stance vis-à-vis the court, Lu You drew closer to the “community of the disenfranchised” (p. 266), made up of disaffected literati, like himself, and a Daoxue fellowship that was being progressively marginalized by court policy. At the same time, he also found refuge in another kind of oppositional community, “an imaginary community derived from the long textual tradition of writers asserting their moral autonomy in trying times” (p. 258), specifically, Du Fu, Cen Shen 岑參 (715–770), and Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234), all three of whom had powerful associations with the Sichuan landscape. Argues Fuller, it was through his encounter with the physical landscapes of Sichuan, on which these great men had inscribed their presence through their writings, that Lu You entered into his transformation as a poet.

On coming to Sichuan, the author shows, Lu You at first engaged with its landscapes from “an aestheticized distance” (p. 253), at a loss how to connect with a world filled only with the “marks of absence” (p. 256). Soon, however, he learned to see that the mountains and high plains of Sichuan, because they “resonated with the writings of Du Fu, Cen Shen, and Zhuge Liang” (p. 266), were in fact replete with deep and “abiding meanings” (p. 256). Over the years, as he continued to drift among these landscapes, meditating upon the writings of the great men associated with them, Lu You came to the conclusion that there was something “real and permanent” (p. 258) in the world, embedded within the changing forms of the landscape, that had called upon these writers to respond as they did; at the same time, he began to understand that, as these men infused their writings with the ardour of their inner convictions, the patterns they traced became imprinted on the world as “a substantial presence immanent in the landscape” (p. 267). In short, poetry arises from the encounter with the external world but takes its shape equally from the forms of the tangible world and from the poet’s own moral commitments. Or perhaps one could say that, in the sense that poetry is based on experience of the world, it takes its structure from the world, but in the sense that it is also derived from the poet’s moral commitments, it imparts structure to the world.

One example suffices to illustrate what Fuller believes the transfigured landscapes of Sichuan revealed to Lu You about the double nature of the poetic act. Visiting



the famous Thatched Hall 草堂 built by Du Fu on the outskirts of Chengdu, Lu You wrote a poem in which he apostrophizes Du Fu's portrait as follows: "How are your poems just on paper? / Everywhere [here] is full of remnant lines. / People all wish to gather them up: / Although their resolve is great, their talent is sadly lacking" (ll. 5–8, p. 266). Du Fu's poems do more than exist as words on a page; they are literally to be found everywhere in the world. This is because only a poet like Du Fu had the vision to see, and the talent to grasp, the things of this world and inscribe them into his poems; absent his genius, what he left unclaimed must perforce remain behind only as poems *in potentia*. At the same time, what Du Fu has already bodied forth in his poems—the moral passion of the suffering poet—remains vitally present "as a part of the constant structure of the world" (p. 267).

As Lu You reflected upon a landscape illuminated by the writings of these great men of the past, the author urges, he discovered that it spoke to him in similar ways, and that he was equal to the task of responding to it as they had done: this realization, Fuller implies, is what worked the crucial change in Lu You that the poet himself later referred to but never tried to explain. A failure in every other aspect of his life, Lu You now became a member of an ancient and glorious company of morally engaged writers, and, as he brooded in his poetry on the same sorrows that had troubled his predecessors, his world became continuous with theirs. Poetry ceased to be a matter of the poet recording in isolation the events of a day or the emotions of an hour: it had become a task, shared with the great writers of the past, in which he could tap into the "deep human logic of the world" (p. 267), the human patterns that both generated and were generated by the world, and held it together.

Fuller describes Lu You looking back in later life on his Sichuan experience as a time when the world was "luminous with possibilities for poetry" (p. 269). We are reminded of Yang Wanli's account of his own epiphany at Jing Creek, when the wellsprings of poetic creation became unsealed and the world suddenly began to teem with poetry. There is a difference, however: the act of writing, in the case of Yang Wanli, involves letting go as one yields to the workings of a creative agency outside oneself ("Heaven"), whereas, for Lu You, it presumes a conscious exercise of the will to write, even as, in writing, one is responding to the call of the outside world. In Lu You's universe, poetry arises only when the poet actively chooses to respond to the challenge of the world, and his response accordingly bears the imprint of that choice, which for Lu You is always a moral one. Poetry originates in the promptings of "Heaven," but it is completed by a moral act on the part of the poet.

Yang Wanli spent his formative years with the Jiangxi poets and, even after renouncing them, continued to look for models among other poets of the Tang and Song; only in mid-life did he realize that the source of poetry was to be found, not in the textual tradition, but in the teeming world outside it. Lu You, taking a different and more eccentric path, also arrived, in mid-life, at the discovery that poetic

inspiration reposed in the physical landscape, but only after he had learned to read that landscape as a setting in which the great men of the past had inscribed their presence. Thus, it would appear, it was his relationship to the textual tradition—or rather, his identification with and participation in the community of writers represented in that tradition—that led Lu You to step out into the world beyond the textual tradition. Or, to put this in slightly different terms, Lu You came to the poetic tradition at a time when it had been redefined by Jiangxi poetics as a body of texts, but, by interacting with the writings of a more august and distant past, he recreated the poetic tradition—re-mythologizing it, so to speak—as a body of human poets, and so made a place for himself among them.

In turning outward to find poetry in the world, Yang Wanli and Lu You were seeking to establish a new basis for their poetic practice. This took the form, as Fuller sees it, of a return to what, until the late Northern Song, had been the mainstream understanding of the relationship between the human and the phenomenal realm. But Yang and Lu, “in reasserting the claims of the world” (p. 283) on the poet, were responding to, or reacting against, the aesthetics of the Jiangxi style; or, if we wish to use Bourdieusian terms, the return to mainstream Northern Song poetics that they championed by their approach was, more than a restatement of an old position, a counterposition to the Jiangxi position, after the field of discourse had been substantially restructured by the debate around Jiangxi poetics. In other words, even as they moved the domain of aesthetic experience back into the outside world, the two were still struggling with the same problems of “inwardness”—of how to reconnect the isolated self to the world through poetry—that had plagued their immediate forebears, and by which Su Shi and his contemporaries would have been profoundly mystified. The world in which Yang Wanli and Lu You wrote their poetry was, for lack of a better description, a post-Jiangxi world. It would be impossible, I think, to understand the complexities underpinning the different poetic solutions they proposed unless we bear this in mind.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Without meaning to disagree with the author, I find the self-conscious way in which the two invoke the relationship between the human world and the world of material phenomena to be suggestive of a noticeable difference between their approach and that taken by their Northern Song predecessors. Despite the dissimilarities in the representational strategies that Yang and Lu each developed for making poetry out of their individual experience, the two were alike in that they both wrote insistently, and in strangely coincidental terms, about how poetry exists, ripe for the taking, out in the world. For Lu You, especially, metaphors of picking up poetic material from the wayside, using scissors to trim poetic feelings from the landscape, and the like, abound with the frequency of recurrent motifs (Fuller gives examples on pp. 182–83, 267, and 277–79). A certain amount of alienation is implied in the act of writing poems repeatedly (and, in Lu You’s case, almost obsessively) about the nature of the poetic act, and this signals

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I noted earlier that, in the eyes of many, the middle period of the Southern Song is the golden age of Southern Song poetry, and the major poets it produced, Yang Wanli and Lu You—respectively, the greatest comic and the greatest tragic poet of the Southern Song<sup>35</sup>—represent the Southern Song’s poetic mainstream. This being so, the Jiangxi poets cannot but be viewed in the light of a minor aberration, a deviant tributary that dried up in mid-course. Fuller’s narrative of stylistic evolution, in which aesthetic systems are studied *in situ* as they are embedded in a larger matrix of social, political, and cultural values, compels us to rethink this hierarchic order.

In the newly reconsidered literary history of the Southern Song, the Jiangxi poets, or rather the poetic culture that grew up around the aesthetics of the Jiangxi School, emerges as the major current in early Southern Song poetry, from which the poetry of Yang Wanli and Lu You flows as a natural outgrowth. Indeed, the two men are more important as transitional figures in Fuller’s account of the changing role that poetry played in the lives of the literate elite of the Southern Song. In harking back to what he sees as an essentially Northern Song model of aesthetic experience, Yang and Lu were, in Fuller’s view, “the last two poets to sustain a faith in the meaningfulness of the world before the major shift that occurred in the next generation,” a shift in which the field of literary discourse went through a “large-scale . . . restructuring” (p. 281) in the process of assimilating Daoxue concepts about cosmology, ontology, epistemology, and ethics.<sup>36</sup>

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(Note 32—*Continued*)

to me that the relationship between the poet and the world that is the source of his poetry, as he chooses to present it, is a markedly constructed one. Indeed, although the poetics embodied in the work of Yang and Lu bear no resemblance to any concurrent Daoxue positions, I detect a faint whiff of the Daoxue scholar in the somewhat mannered presentation of these poetics.

<sup>35</sup> That is, if one reads Lu You primarily for his revanchist poetry, as most Chinese readers have been doing since the early twentieth century.

<sup>36</sup> The two men are also transitional in the sense that both belonged to the last generation of elite men who could be called “literati” (*wenren*) in the old Northern Song meaning of the word—a class of men on whom the ability to read and write conferred both the qualifications and a strong moral obligation to seek their livelihood in the service of the state. As the growth of local institutions in the Southern Song provided increasingly viable alternatives to the state as a source of power and authority, literacy continued to define elite identity and success in the civil service examinations was still *de rigueur* as a marker of elite status, but by the late Southern Song many men who passed the examinations no longer felt impelled to dedicate themselves to the uninterrupted pursuit of a career in government, and indeed it became the norm not to do so. This is why the author is careful to observe a distinction between “literatus” and “literate elite”: some time in the generation after Yang and Lu, *wenren* ceased to mean what it did in the Northern Song and acquired the narrower, and more modern, definition of “a person with literary ability.”

## IV

The “large-scale restructuring” of elite culture around Daoxue concepts was, of course, the epistemic shift about which the author spoke at the beginning of the book. Chapters 7 and 8 trace the evolution of Daoxue in the Song dynasty, from its first inception in Zhou Dunyi’s 周敦頤 (1017–1073) explosive new vision of cosmology that, by appropriating Daoist concepts to create a human-centred metaphysics based on Confucian moral ethics, set his successors on a radically divergent trajectory of development from other schools of Confucian thought, all the way down to the final revision of Zhu Xi’s synthesis by which Zhen Dexiu and Wei Liaoweng sought to bring Daoxue into accommodative relationship with the thought of rival Confucian schools. Fuller shows how, as Daoxue, a comparatively late development in Confucianism, slowly gained critical mass, it shifted from its originally marginal position into a position of central importance by restructuring the field of Confucian discourse around itself; then, as the movement continued to gain momentum, this process of restructuring came to encompass the whole field of elite discourse.<sup>37</sup> The assimilation of Daoxue values into poetic discourse, occurring in tandem with the attempt by the Daoxue thinkers coming after Zhu Xi to embrace the aesthetic dimension of poetry, formed part of this process, in which the once distinct fields of poetic and Daoxue discourse gradually merged into one.

I see a strong implicit connection, in Fuller’s account, between the rise of Daoxue in the Southern Song and the collapse of what he calls the “consensus”—the political, social, and ethical culture on which the collective identity of the literati was founded—of the late Northern Song. The disintegration of the “consensus” among the literati around the close of the eleventh century—as disagreements over the interpretation of the Confucian classics eroded the intellectual and moral basis of their solidarity as a group and factional strife worked its insidious destruction—created the conditions for the cultural debates of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that

<sup>37</sup> In 1195, following a crisis in the imperial succession, Daoxue was proscribed as “false learning” (weixue 偽學) and its adherents removed from government office; the ban was lifted in 1202, two years after Zhu Xi’s death. From this time forward, Zhu Xi steadily grew in stature as his disciples—Zhen Dexiu and Wei Liaoweng prominent among them—worked to disseminate his teachings, and local cults of Zhu Xi became increasingly common in areas where Daoxue influence was strong. In 1241, the five founding masters of Daoxue—Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077), Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085), Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi—were created Confucian sages by the state and their images placed in the Temple of Confucius. Daoxue’s initial marginalization and its subsequent rise to become a cultural movement of staggering proportions are properly understood only with reference to the vagaries of its political fortunes.

engrossed elite discourse to a degree unmatched since the “pure conversations” (*qingtan* 清談) of the early Six Dynasties. Initially centred upon aesthetic issues in Jiangxi poetics that were, as Fuller has persuasively argued, rooted in the fundamental epistemological question of how human beings can know the world, these debates eventually became the proving ground in which Daoxue emerged as a new source of moral solidarity and social cohesion with overwhelming mass appeal—the basis of a new kind of consensus, as it were, for the Southern Song elite.

In the days of the Northern Song consensus, the question had been, “How do we access the meaning that is inherent in the world?” When that consensus fell apart, the question became: “How do we synthesize the meaning that we can no longer access in the world?” In other words, if human experience of the external realm can no longer be counted on to grant us meaningful insights into the deep nature of the world, then what do we replace it with—by what means can we know the world if not through direct experience of it? The different positions that Fuller earlier described as developing out of the aesthetic model of Huang Tingjian, either directly or indirectly, occupied different areas of the ground between the two questions—we remember how they were plotted in different parts of the same diagram. These positions stood for different possibilities for making meaning out of human experience, but none had proved permanently satisfying—including the ones proposed by the early Daoxue thinkers who were the contemporaries of the Jiangxi poets. Now Daoxue came in its full flowering to provide new answers to the same questions, answers that many found psychologically compelling. Again, to put this in Bourdieusian terms, it was not just because Daoxue had reached a more mature stage in its development that its ideas met with a more welcoming reception; the conceptual field had shifted in the meantime, and what had once been regarded as freakishly *outré* and off-kilter from the perspective of the Confucian mainstream, in the early days of Daoxue, was now itself the Confucian mainstream.

To resume Fuller’s narrative: As the poetic discourse and the discourse of the “Learning of the Way” critiqued, influenced, and assimilated one another in the late Southern Song, a new elite culture was born. This is the matter of Chapter 9, in which the author casts the evolution of the two discourses, seen in the larger context of political and social change, in terms of Bourdieusian field theory. Briefly put, he shows how, with the rise of regional elites and the diffusion of power from imperial to local institutions, Daoxue became a “shared conceptual language” (p. 407) mediating the exchanges between the political, social, and cultural networks that grew up around the civil elite in the capital on the one hand and the local elites on the other. As poetry developed within this field of cultural production, increasingly defined in terms of the interplay between central and local systems of culture, a group of writers that came to be known as the “Rivers and Lakes” poets rose to the fore. So called because they

were the sons of local elites who drew their identity from their regional affiliations even as they participated with some regularity in the civil service, these writers from the “rivers and lakes” became important in facilitating the exchange of cultural values between local elite society and the society of the capital. Over the course of the first half of the thirteenth century, as the conceptual language of Daoxue entered common usage and the “Rivers and Lakes” poets developed in their writings an aesthetic model that more and more closely embodied Daoxue metaphysics, their writings came to dominate the field of poetic theory and practice; or, to put this another way, the incorporation of increasingly mainstream Daoxue values into their poetic discourse brought the “Rivers and Lakes” writers into the mainstream of late Southern Song poetry.

The writings of the “Rivers and Lakes” poets, which take up the bulk of Fuller’s discussion in this chapter, are beautifully limpid and serene, as is appropriate in poetry consciously written to embody the Confucian aesthetics of “human nature and the feelings” (redefined in Daoxue thought to mean the feelings as they are derived from the moral nature of the self). Poems like this are pleasant and soothing to read, but provide little material for discussion. However, the author’s challenge is not to log the perceptible changes wrought by the assimilation of the vocabulary of Daoxue thought into poetic discourse, but to show how they speak to more impalpable changes in the underlying epistemological order: in short, he must prove that the shift in the episteme of which he speaks was indeed taking place.

Change, as a phenomenon, is almost impossible to document. The best one can do is to describe the situation as it was before it changed, and again, the situation after the change has already occurred: what happens in between, the actual process of change, can only be inferred by extrapolating between these two points. Fuller’s choice of the two points for describing his proposed trajectory of change is quite ingenious. He uses Lu You’s reading of the world in his poetry to mark a point in time before the epistemic shift, and his reading of the world, as it was understood (or misunderstood) by the next generation of poets, to mark a point after the shift. The pivotal moment is encoded in the difference that Fuller perceives between the two.

Towards the end of his chapter on Lu You, the author interposes a brief “Digression on the Modern Dismantling of the Loom of Heaven” (pp. 280–84). The “loom of Heaven” comes from the couplet, “The loom of Heaven and its cloud brocades were for my use, / But the marvelous part of the cutting was not in the knife and ruler” (p. 270), one of several famous statements that Lu You made, in poetic form, about poetry. To me, Lu You’s poetics present an interesting tension between the roles he assigns to “Heaven” and to the human poet in the creative process, the weight given to each varying at different points in his life. They are nicely balanced in the present configuration. The “cloud brocades woven on the loom of Heaven” (*tianji*



*yunjin* 天機雲錦) are the material of poetry that the world gives to the poet, but, says Lu You, “their use rests with me” (*yong zai wo* 用在我), that is, it is up to the poet what he chooses to do with this material, or whether he chooses to do anything with it at all. At the same time, once he is committed to the act of writing, the poet discovers that shaping the raw material of the world into a poem requires much more than the exercise of his own skill, because there is a “marvellous” or “ineffable” aspect (*miaochu* 妙處) in the creative process that lies beyond the poet’s conscious reach. In other words, poetry is neither born solely of the world, nor made entirely by the poet; it must be brought into being through the agency of both. “Heaven” and the poet are as necessary to the poetic act as the two sides of an equation.

For Lu You, the patterns formed by the external world have substantial existence—the “cloud brocades woven on the loom of Heaven” are not simply figures of speech—and the poet has both the privilege and the burden of taking these patterns and finding the best way he can to put them into his poetry. It is Fuller’s contention that “Lu You’s sense of the meaningfulness of the world” (p. 280)—his vision of the world as inherently meaningful and of the poet as one capable of reading meaning in the world—was lost to later generations as the aesthetics of experience disappeared for good under the restructuring of elite culture by Daoxue. For evidence of this disappearance, Fuller cites what the generation of poets coming after Lu You saw, or rather failed to see, in his poetry: a landscape which, in Lu You’s eyes, had once been so full of the immanent presence of others, now emptied of all but the poet’s own subjectivity.

Today’s readers know Lu You as a great patriot, who was preoccupied even on his deathbed with winning back the empire’s lost territory, and the poems on revanchist themes are the most widely read of all his works. Although these same poems won Lu You a certain amount of favourable attention in his own day, what they did was to establish him as a member of an oppressed but morally upright minority in opposition to the pacifist majority who controlled the court: *revanche* was not at the time associated with patriotism, in the modern sense of the word, because that concept had yet to be invented. To the “Rivers and Lakes” poets who were his immediate poetic posterity, Lu You was instead a consummate craftsman, admired and imitated for the protean flair and inventive fecundity with which he spun parallel couplets in his regulated verse. The main reason for Lu You’s sudden rise to popularity was, Fuller interestingly proposes, that the late Tang style had become fashionable with the “Rivers and Lakes” poets, and Lu You’s genius for balanced antithesis, as well as what they saw as the “even blandness” of his style of poetic composition,<sup>38</sup> gave his

<sup>38</sup> Dai Fugu 戴復古 (1168–1250?), an important “Rivers and Lakes” poet, accorded Lu You the highest praise as a poet and described his mastery of the poetic art as being rooted in the “even and bland” (*pingdan* 平淡). See pp. 295–96.

writing a superficial resemblance to that style. This was ironic because, whereas the “Rivers and Lakes” poets were in close sympathy with the late Tang’s “circumscribed poetry of landscape vignettes” (p. 241), in which they saw embodied the yearning for a world far away from the court and from service to the state, Lu You openly despised the late Tang style as a reflection of the narrow self-absorption of its poets and the smallness of their concerns. That it was possible for the “Rivers and Lakes” poets to mistake Lu You for a poet of the same ilk as the late Tang poets suggests the extent of their misreading of him, and that they were able thus to misread him, urges Fuller, is proof that Lu You’s vision of the world had become invisible to them.

Having failed in his ambition to distinguish himself in service to the state, Lu You late in life spent many years in enforced retirement in his native Shanyin 山陰, before retiring there permanently some seven years before his death at the age of eighty-four. Much of the poetry he wrote during these long periods in Shanyin celebrates the life of bucolic ease, but even in the most easeful of these poems we detect faint traces of a “pointing elsewhere” (p. 291), as Fuller calls it, so that, even here, something other than the immediate scene is present in the poem. In some poems, the pull coming from beyond the immediate scene of the poem is so powerful that it threatens to destroy the unity of the regulated verse form in which the poem is contained, as when, for example, thinking quiet thoughts to match the quiet of the autumn night around him, Lu You is suddenly transported to another night scene, blazing with torch fire, far away on the frontlines of war (p. 292). A reader with knowledge of modern psychology will no doubt see in this the workings of a tortured mind, but Fuller’s reading of these moments of disruption is much more interesting.

The author reminds us that, in the aesthetic model that Lu You has so painstakingly set out in numerous poetic statements about the creative act, a poet writes a poem when something in the world has called upon him to do so; in other words, the challenge from the world is substantive and the poem with which the poet responds to that challenge is also substantive. When the world draws the poet in one direction and then another, these conflicting claims manifest themselves as ruptures in the body of his poems. Fuller is right, I believe, because otherwise it is hard to understand why Lu You, so thoroughly committed to the balanced symmetries of regulated verse that one suspects him of thinking in parallel couplets, did not feel tempted to try to smooth these structural disharmonies out: it would not have occurred to him to do so because these moments of disruption are as much an integral part of the physical structure of the poem as they are of the world from which they came.

But in the cultural universe of the generation coming after Lu You, where the material realm had been divested of self-subsistent meaning through the assimilation of Daoxue metaphysics, the poet writes a poem to trace the patterns, not of any external landscape, but of an inner landscape made up of his feelings, feelings produced by his own human nature that are then drawn out by his encounter with the

external landscape. The only thing with substantive existence in the poem, under this aesthetic model, is the poet's response to the world, not the world itself. This is why, in Fuller's explication, the "Rivers and Lakes" poets could look past the deeply riven nature of Lu You's late poetry, where tensions between the countervailing impulses of *l'homme engagé* and the pastoral recluse are ever present either overtly or lying just below the surface, and see only the "even blandness" that made him a model for their revival of late Tang aesthetic values. For Lu You, ruptures occur in his poems when moral conflict arises from the poet's experience of the world. In the restructured aesthetics of the "Rivers and Lakes" poets, the outside world and the world inside the poet have fused into one as both are subsumed into the subjective reality of the poem. Read in this way, the structure of Lu You's poems ceases to be a material embodiment of a self-division in the poet that mirrors the poet's conflicting commitments in the world outside himself, and it becomes possible to see these bucolic writings as, quite literally, all of a piece and hence uniformly "even and bland."

In narrating literary history as part of a larger story of epistemological change, the author writes, he hopes to "restore to visibility" (p. 281) some of the different ways of structuring meaning in the world through poetry that were displaced, and that eventually disappeared, with the rise of Daoxue. Whether or not one agrees that Lu You's reading of the world represents a late outcropping—perhaps the last—of this now-extinct vision, or that the reception of Lu You by the writers of the mid-thirteenth century marks the moment of its final extinction, Fuller has provided us with an interesting and original way of looking at Lu You and his place in Song literary history. Lu You has not been well served by the early twentieth-century educators who remade him, along with Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 340–278 B.C.E.) and Du Fu, into poets of patriotic themes: Fuller's treatment of Lu You's writings has helped to restore to visibility much of their forgotten richness and complexity.

## V

Chapter 10, the last chapter of the book, takes us to the end of the Song dynasty and the aftermath of the Mongol conquest, as the author winds up his narrative of the interwoven discourses of poetry and the "Learning of the Way" with the merging of the two in an "aesthetic synthesis" (p. 461)—the last stage in the great cultural restructuring of the thirteenth century. The mid-thirteenth-century model of poetry, redefined by Daoxue discourse and popularized by the "Rivers and Lakes" poets, had replaced the inherent patterns of the material world with "a specifically moral order identified with moral principles" (p. 463) as the locus of meaning in experience. Since this moral order was immanent in the moral nature of the self, and the feelings that gave rise to poetry were produced by the moral nature, this meant that all good poetry literally began and ended with the self. In Daoxue's aesthetic universe, the reason

for writing poetry was not, ultimately, for the sake of responding to the things of the material world, but in order to discover the “normative moral response” (p. 463) with which one should respond to everything that occurs in this world: poetry was useful to the extent that it redounded to this narrowly defined form of moral self-cultivation. “This did not make for very interesting poetry” (p. 463), the author wryly comments, and indeed the “Rivers and Lakes” poets had already come under criticism for dealing too exclusively in “pallid, undemanding, and uninspiring topics” (p. 480).

Now, in the cultural crisis precipitated by the catastrophes of invasion, war, defeat, and occupation, writers found new uses for this same poetry, grounded in Daoxue’s aesthetics of “human nature and the feelings,” to express their commitment to loyalist resistance and to preserve the cultural values of the fallen dynasty. Two collections that the martyred statesman-general Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236–1283) put together of his own writings—the first written during the war of resistance and the second in prison after his final defeat and capture by the Mongols—along with the 1286 poetry competition of the “Moon Spring Poetry Society” 月泉吟社, a large-scale loyalist literary event that reached out to the elite in all the major cultural centres of the former Southern Song, furnish the material for the most fruitful parts of the discussion in this eloquently written chapter.

As a young man living in the examination culture of the late Southern Song, in which an officially sanctioned Daoxue curriculum gave poetry no practical value, Wen Tianxiang had dabbled in poetic composition as a minor accomplishment in the way of most of his contemporaries. The tribulations of war and captivity taught him to embrace poetry for its own sake, as “an activity with cultural, moral, [and] personal value” (p. 464), and ultimately made him the Southern Song’s last major poet. To put Fuller’s more sophisticated explanation into simpler terms: good poetry, according to Daoxue, was the expression of a good man, but it took the experience of heroic struggle and honour in defeat to bring this goodness out. As Wen explains it in his own words: “Only in times of extremity is the inner integrity of the man revealed” (*shi qiong jie nai xian* 時窮節乃現).<sup>39</sup> The ontology mapped out in this poem seems

<sup>39</sup> Line 9 in the “Song of the Breath of Righteousness” (*Zhengqi ge* 正氣歌), written while awaiting execution in a Mongol prison, in *Wen Tianxiang quanji* 文天祥全集 (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1985), pp. 375–76. *Jie* 節 are literally the joints that hold the different parts of a bamboo plant together; the analogous “joints” holding a human being together would be the essential part of his moral nature, his moral skeleton, as it were, or his “inner integrity.” Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998) excited mild controversy when, as a highly authoritative scholar, he failed to include this poem in his 1979 anthology of Song poetry—Wen Tianxiang naturally holds a high place in the early twentieth-century canon of patriotic poets and the “Song of the Breath of Righteousness” was considered to be his signature work—but Qian was right to omit a piece so piously didactic that it does not always succeed in rising above the level

(Continued on next page)

to be taken straight out of a Daoxue textbook: the cosmic principle from which moral order comes is immanent in the human individual, but since principle exists above form and so does the moral nature that is its immanence in the self, it follows that this moral nature can be revealed only in action. There is, however, a slight but important difference: the essential part of the moral nature, the most human part of a human being—a man’s “inner integrity”—becomes manifest only in “times of extremity.” The encounter in the empirical realm by which the moral nature becomes manifest, far from being thought of as casual or incidental, as it had been in the Daoxue-influenced poetry of peacetime, has become crucial to the process of revelation: absent an encounter with sufficient moral weight to bring out the essential inner man, that man will never truly be known.

Wen Tianxiang wrote his best poetry—poetry that was good because it revealed a good man—while fighting to save the empire and, in captivity, pleading for an honourable death. For those living in less dramatic conditions, poetry found quieter forms of expression, but here too the inner integrity of the poet is articulated through the presentation of a “moral dimension” (p. 480), even in the humblest scenes of daily life. For loyalist poets, protest against the present might take the form of a nostalgia for the past that brims, unspoken, on the edge of speech; others, though seeming to have accepted the conquest as a *fait accompli*, might nevertheless register an absence here, a moment of persistence there, as they ruminate upon the landscape. In these poems, where the remnant subjects of the Southern Song use the encounter with their surroundings to uncover something of their own inner nature and deeply held feelings, Daoxue’s poetics of the moral self come close, in an oddly inside-out fashion, to the old Northern Song aesthetics of experience—a strange but fitting way of coming full circle as we arrive at the end of this long and thoughtful book.

At the beginning of Chapter 1, the author said that “*Daoxue* . . . needed poetry” and “poetry also needed *Daoxue*” (p. 32), a statement that, though pleasantly orotund, was not made primarily for rhetorical effect. On poetry’s need for Daoxue: when government by consensus broke down in the late Northern Song and the literati were compelled to jettison the aesthetics of inherent pattern that had formerly given structure and coherence to elite culture, they experimented with “a different, inward-turning model” (p. 32), based on the aesthetic thought of Huang Tingjian, and

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(Note 39—*Continued*)

of doggerel. By contrast, the poems Fuller has chosen to discuss are much more effective in that they depend for their unity on a system of internal coherences rather than being structured around a line of rhetorical exposition. But Wen was so deeply invested in his Daoxue beliefs that I am not entirely sure whether, if pressed, he could have told the difference between poetry as a vehicle for moral truths and poetry that successfully conveys those truths by its power to move the reader.

derivatives thereof. However, it was not until the widespread assimilation of Daoxue values into elite culture that writers found in Daoxue ontology the “transcendental ground” (p. 32), missing in these other models, that could provide a stable connection between the self and the world, between mundane experience (the world as it appears) and knowledge of a higher order (the deep nature of the world). In this way, Daoxue filled poetry’s “need.”

At the same time, in Daoxue’s reordering of Confucian metaphysics, the inherent patterns of the world (*li* 理) that could be accessed through direct experience were reconfigured as the patterns formed by a moralized “principle” (represented by the same character *li*). This principle, the source of order in all things, was immanent in the moral nature of the self but, because it lay outside the forms of the world, it also lay outside the bounds of direct experience; this made it essentially inaccessible to the ordinary human intelligence. Aesthetic intuition—the part of poetry that, aside from its physical form, makes it poetic—was, as Daoxue thinkers came to appreciate over time, something that could open up a space where this transcendental order could be grasped through direct experience. That is, poetry always involves, at some level, direct experience in the mundane realm and yet, in order for poetry to be poetry and not just rhymed words arranged into metrical patterns, it must presume an intuitive certainty that there exists an other lying just beyond the pale of the mundane. The implicit affirmation of the transcendental in the aesthetic ordering that poetry gives to experience was, according to Fuller, what prompted Zhu Xi’s disciples to include the reading and writing of poetry as part of Confucian practice in their reinterpretation of his synthesis. Thus, Daoxue also had a “need” that only poetry could fill.

Although the terms of this proposition may have sounded teleological and hence somewhat ahistorical, setting them out in this way enabled the author to create an outline for structuring an account of the two-hundred-year-long evolution of Southern Song elite culture, in which the cultural debates between the communities of poetry and Daoxue are highlighted as the most essential part of the story, while at the same time telling that story as a fully contextualized historical narrative. In the end, Fuller’s vision of literary history, true to the organizational metaphor of his book, is one that sees literary discourse as only one stream flowing in a much wider river made up of many currents.

## VI

*Drifting among Rivers and Lakes* is a prodigious work. Not all parts of this book are written with equal clarity, nor does this reader find every part of the author’s thesis equally cogent, but it would be unrealistic to expect an undertaking of this scope and complexity to be uniformly successful. As it stands, Michael Fuller’s achievement is



impressive. He has taken the methodology of the traditional literary historian, who uses the close, critical, and philologically informed reading of individual texts to build a picture of cumulative stylistic change from the ground up, and bent it in the service of the historian of cultural change, whose more ambitious eye roves over the landscapes formed by the cultural production of whole periods in search of evidence of sweeping cultural shifts. This meticulous attention to detail, deployed within what amounts to a macro-level approach to the sociology of literary discourse, is what ensures that, even if we do not always agree with Fuller's conclusions, there is much to appreciate in the way he constructs his arguments.

If there were a fault that must be cavilled at, it would be the author's tendency to rely too much on theoretical models. Bourdieu's field theory is useful in reorienting our perspective so that we learn to see cultural change in terms of the cumulative result of accommodative shifts in the behaviour of entire social bodies and not as a series of discrete acts resulting in well-defined outcomes—the spread of Daoxue, for example, as progressing through the gradual assimilation of its values into other communities rather than, say, by the successful imposition of the ideas of a small minority upon the majority. Beyond its general usefulness, however, Bourdieusian theory tends to be exceedingly labour-intensive when specifically applied, in the sense that we often consume as much energy in trying to figure out how it works as we derive from the illumination it sheds. This can become burdensome, as when, for instance, in Chapter 4, the author feels the need to write a separate section on the role played by Buddhist monks in literary discourse because he is unable to map them onto the field of cultural production in the same way as he does with Daoxue thinkers. Conversely, one positive aspect of this book that deserves particular mention is the scrupulous care with which Fuller has surveyed the scholarship, both traditional and modern, on Song literary and intellectual history. Reading his footnotes, in which he often digests recent works of secondary criticism and compares their treatment of a given writer or subject, is an education in itself, and the way he credits his sources is exemplary.<sup>40</sup>

The tale of the intertwining fortunes of poetry and Daoxue has been told before, from different perspectives, sometimes with poetry and sometimes with Daoxue standing in the role of chief protagonist; nor is it entirely new to reimagine this story in

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<sup>40</sup> There is one small but regrettable omission in this otherwise richly documented book. The numerous shifts and reversals that the Daoxue movement went through, prior to becoming the dominant stream of Southern Song Confucianism, are reflected in what "Daoxue" was understood to mean at different times by those inside the movement and outside it. It would have been good if the author could have guided us through the evolution, through changing socio-political contexts, of this historically charged term.

terms of an interflow of discourse between the members of different communities within the Southern Song elite.<sup>41</sup> Seldom, however, have literary and intellectual historians shown the even-handed detachment with which the developing discourses of both are treated in Fuller's narrative. Fuller's narrative is also unique in that it is presented, in its entirety, as a case study to substantiate the author's thesis about epistemic shift—that the restructuring of the culture of the Chinese elite, in which the rise to ascendancy of Daoxue Confucianism was both the most powerful motive force and the most prominent outcome, was on a scale so massive as to result in the birth of a new culture altogether. In other words, there is a break in the evolution of Chinese society running down the middle of the thirteenth century: on one side of the break, the society of late Northern and early Southern Song may be thought of as being continuous with that of the foregoing period, and the emergent society of the late Southern Song with that of all the periods that follow, down to the present day.

That people changed the way they wrote about the world because their way of looking at the world had changed, and that these changes came about in the course of the widespread acceptance of Daoxue beliefs and values by the culture at large: the author has documented these developments in terms of a clear progression and provided copious examples to instantiate them at every stage. Rather than question whether this succession of changes, as described by Fuller, was significant enough to merit the label of epistemic shift—there is no question that the changes were significant—it might be more profitable to ask ourselves if these were the only significant changes taking place at the time. That is, if we conditionally accept the author's proposal that there was a shift in the episteme in the late Southern Song, can we think of other factors, besides the rise of Daoxue, which could have contributed to the making of such a shift?

Two factors have suggested themselves in my reading of the current scholarship: the spread of print and the rise of literary inquisition. The impact of print culture on China has been extensively studied. In an earlier section of this review, I suggested that Huang Tingjian's radically new ideas for using the textual tradition were, at least in part, a response to print culture. That is, as print changed the way readers and writers thought about texts, their relationship to the texts they produced as well as to

<sup>41</sup> Ma Jigao 馬積高 tells the story from the perspective of poetry in his *Song Ming lixue yu wenxue* 宋明理學與文學 (Changsha: Hunan shifandaxue chubanshe, 1989), and Shi Mingqing 石明慶 from that of Daoxue in his *Lixue wenhua yu Nansong shixue* 理學文化與南宋詩學 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2006). Both are far from detached: much of Ma Jigao's narrative is made up of a spirited invective against the destructive influence of Daoxue, whereas Shi Mingqing, going to the opposite extreme, holds Confucian thought to be the greatest cultural legacy of Song China, and even proleptically attributes developments in earlier periods to the influence of Southern Song Confucianism.

their textual past would also have changed; Huang, as one of the most creative minds of his generation, would have registered the imprint of these changes in his approach to reading and writing, possibly in ways similar to those I have suggested. Like print, literary inquisition was also an invention whose impact was broadly felt from the late eleventh century onwards. The two are, of course, related: it was because Su Shi's writings were being widely circulated in print that it was thought necessary to stage the so-called "Poetry Trial at Crow Terrace" to make an example of him and discourage the writing of poems satirizing the government's programme of reforms; twenty years later, the second inquisition against the anti-reform faction ended with a universal proscription against its members in which their writings were banned and the woodblocks for printing them ordered destroyed.

Government censorship became a fact of life among the Chinese elite in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing: it is one of the distinguishing features of the culture of the late imperial period. We in the twenty-first century have grown so accustomed to the modern reinvention of this time-honoured practice that we have come to think of it as either an evil that cannot be escaped, or a nuisance that must be endured, depending on whether we are living in direct company with it or only in its near proximity.<sup>42</sup> And yet there was a time when this was not so. It became so—the moment of change occurred—in the generation of Su Shi and Huang Tingjian. Su Shi was the one who bore the brunt of the punishment—he was the one to be sentenced to death in 1079 and, in 1094, he was the first of his cohort to be banished, and he was eventually sent to the most far-flung place—but it was Huang Tingjian, again, who registered the most sensitive response to what was happening in the changes he made in his approach to literary creativity. I have mentioned Huang's prescriptions for writing poetry, or more specifically, what not to write in poetry, and the repeated exhortations not to follow Su Shi's example that lay in the background of these newly conservative poetics. Yang Jinghua goes much further in exploring the implications of an awareness of censorship for the development of the literary culture of the late Northern Song.<sup>43</sup>

Yang argues that the cult of Du Fu, which had been growing throughout the Northern Song, became largely fixed by Huang Tingjian's reading of his poetry, and

<sup>42</sup> Before the liberalization of PRC government policy in the 1990s, a good part of the interest and pleasure of reading a new book, or watching a new film, lay in decoding its contents as one attempted to reconstruct the complex negotiations that, one presumed, had had to be made between the artist's need for creative expression and the limitations imposed on that expression by censorship.

<sup>43</sup> See his *Songdai Dushi chanshixue yanjiu*. It has not escaped this reader that the comparatively relaxed political climate of the 2000s was probably crucial to Yang's ability to formulate his thesis in the first place.

that Huang's reading was in turn conditioned by the mounting fear of inquisition. For example, Huang is shown to be seeking to shift emphasis away from Du Fu as a poet of moral activism, or "commendation and censure" (*meici* 美刺), as seen in such famous pieces as his "Three Petty Bureaucrats" (*Sanli* 三吏) and "Three Partings" (*Sanbie* 三別), six poems lambasting government policy that Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086) particularly, and somewhat ironically, is said to have admired. Instead, in Huang's construction of Du Fu, pride of place falls to the poetry of the later years, where Du Fu shows himself, in his unparalleled mastery of the poetic craft, to be a magus who remakes the world with his visionary use of language, more than a loyal subject trying to remedy the ills of the here and now. Then, as the political environment became increasingly hostile to the anti-reform faction, Yang continues, it was logical for Du Fu to yield to Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (c. 365–427), the recluse-poet par excellence, as the chief poetic inspiration of both Su Shi and Huang Tingjian. Viewed from this perspective, the project that Su Shi undertook, soon after being banished to the southernmost edge of the empire, to compose a poem to match the rhymes of every poem in Tao's extant collection, and that filled most of Su Shi's own poetic collection for this final period, can be seen as a way of negotiating a dignified compromise between the need for creative self-realization and an equally imperative need to elude the draconian grasp of the inquisitor.<sup>44</sup>

That the life of the Song elite was deeply affected by print culture is not in question; Yang Jinghua has convincingly added the social and psychological pressures of literary inquisition as another important factor of change. The changes wrought by print culture and the culture of inquisition, from the level of physical institutions down to that of individual perception, contributed greatly, I believe, to the destabilization from within of Chinese elite culture during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries; together with external forces, such as military invasion, these helped to create the conditions for the cultural transformations that Fuller describes as taking place over the course of the following century. I would like now to propose, in

<sup>44</sup> We must allow the possibility of multiple motives in such a prolonged and massive undertaking. It should also be noted that Su Shi's first essay in "harmonizing with the rhymes of Tao Yuanming" (*he Tao shi* 和陶詩) took place some years before his southern exile, when, in 1092, he matched the rhymes of a famous series of twenty poems by Tao on "Drinking Wine" (*Yinjiu* 飲酒) while serving in a prestigious posting as prefect of Yangzhou 揚州. There is no evidence to suggest that, at the time, Su thought of the exercise as anything more than a *jeu d'esprit*. Indeed, when he credits himself in the preface to his own set of poems with being the first to extend the highly competitive social activity of "matching rhymes" beyond a circle of living associates to challenge the ancient poets themselves, his tone is one of proud complacency at a feat already accomplished. It was only after being exiled to Huizhou that Su took up the experiment again from a new perspective.

addition to the above, a third factor that, for lack of a better word, I can only describe as the development of a new kind of literary-historical consciousness among the elite of this period.

The Chinese had, of course, early on developed an awareness of their own literary history; but, somewhere between the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, something seems to have changed in the way they thought about this history and their relationship to it. Or perhaps, since here too change is impossible to document as an ongoing phenomenon and can be known only by the traces it leaves behind, one should say that, before a certain point in time, the Chinese, though aware of literary history, thought of it in an unselfconscious way, and after that point, began to think of it in a self-conscious way. More specifically, just as Fuller saw changing perceptions of the world captured in the changing ways writers wrote about the world, I find, in the changing ways writers wrote about their literary past, evidence of changes in the way they perceived and related to that past.

When Liu Xie 劉勰 (c. 465–520) wrote his magisterial treatise on literature, *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, or when Li Bo and Du Fu severally praised the Six Dynasties poets that each loved and admired, their relationship with their predecessors, as implied in the statements they made, can be said to have been a simple, perhaps even naïve, one. Liu Xie clearly saw no contradiction between the morally conservative poetics in which he calls for a return to ancient values and the florid modernity of the form in which that content is put—the euphuistic parallel prose fashionable in his own day and of which he was an acknowledged master. Likewise, when Li Bo exclaims about how much poetry has declined from ancient times to the present in the opening lines to the first of a series of “Ancient Airs” (*Gufeng* 古風), there is a delicious incongruity between this lugubrious sentiment and the luxuriant expansiveness with which he sustains no less than fifty-nine of these meditations.<sup>45</sup> And Du Fu appears to have been seized by a similar spirit of blithe perversity when, in a poem about the restless urge towards poetic creativity, he invites both Tao Yuanming and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) into his poems so that he may sit back and let them do all his work for him.<sup>46</sup> It is not that these writers lacked knowledge of their literary past; all three were uncommonly well read. But for all their

<sup>45</sup> “The Greater *Ya* [of the *Book of Songs*] stopped being composed long ago, / Who will tell the tale of ‘my decline’?” 大雅久不作，吾衰竟誰陳。 “My decline,” a quotation from the *Analecets*, conflates the poet’s own decline with the decline of poetic culture. See *Li Taibo quanji* 李太白全集, ed. Wang Qi 王琦 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), p. 87.

<sup>46</sup> “Where can I get hold of poetic thoughts like those dab hands, Tao and Xie? / I’d make them do all of the creating and transmitting, and just ride along with them” 焉得思如陶謝手，令渠述作與同遊。 This is the closing couplet in a seven-character regulated verse from the Chengdu years, “On the river, meeting a flood with the force of an ocean, I casually wrote

(Continued on next page)

sophistication in reading the writings of the past, the way in which they relate to those writings, and the men who wrote them, shows that the literary past *as an abstraction* was to them something in the nature of an aboriginal dreamtime, in the sense that what is past is not meaningfully differentiated according to degrees of pastness but exists, for the most part, as a background against which the people of the present live and move.

At some point, this changed. As the writers of the Song looked back on the Tang as a whole, dividing their predecessors' works by period and associating clearly defined stylistic characteristics with each period, they historicized the literary past and gave it an objective reality.<sup>47</sup> The vehement reaction against Jiangxi poetry in the *shihua* of the mid-twelfth century as leading poetry down a deviant course,<sup>48</sup> and the concurrent movement among the “Rivers and Lakes” poets to recapture poetry's lost purity by reviving the style of the late Tang, would not have been possible without a strong awareness of the historical nature of period style. Interestingly, in acquiring a sense of literary history—in becoming aware of the literary past as being made up of a series of stages that are continuous with the present and hence as having an objective existence that is independent of the present—Song writers became intensely self-conscious about their place in the flow of this history.

The Jiangxi poets had come under attack, when Lu You and Yang Wanli were still young men, for being obsessed with “methods” as they fixated on a poetic model supposedly derived by Huang Tingjian from Du Fu, but over the remaining hundred years and more of the dynasty, writers did not cease in their quest for alternative models. As Qian Zhongshu has noted, scathingly, when Yan Yu 嚴羽 (1191–1241) claimed to have identified, after much soul-searching, the style of the High Tang poets as the one true source of “poetic method” (*shifa* 詩法), this was a case of “changing

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(Note 46—*Continued*)

this brief narrative” 江上值水如海勢聊短述 (*Dushi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳注, ed. Qiu Zhao'ao 仇兆鰲 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981], vol. 2, p. 810). One should not miss the bemusement implicit in the image of getting into a boat together with Tao and Xie, two literary giants as diametrically opposed in their talents as Gladstone and Disraeli were in their politics; but Du Fu's humour goes deeper than this. The phrase *shuzuo* 述作 (“creating and transmitting”) is taken from the *Analects*, where Confucius says, modestly, that he transmits without presuming to create. The implication is that, in planning neither to create nor to transmit but instead to leave all his work to greater powers, the poet is humbler even than Confucius himself. Du Fu is being immensely playful here.

<sup>47</sup> In this they were guided by the way the poets of the Han Yu circle began to read the work of their forebears in earlier periods of the Tang.

<sup>48</sup> Most famously articulated by Zhang Jie in his *Suihantang shihua* 歲寒堂詩話 (in *Lidai shihua xubian* 歷代詩話續編, ed. Ding Fubao 丁福保 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983], p. 455).



the broth without changing the herbs” 換湯不換藥—trying to adjust the remedy by merely putting the same active ingredients into a different substrate—and hence did nothing to address the problems Yan Yu saw in contemporary poetic practice.<sup>49</sup> Looking at the way in which late Southern Song writers made systematic attempts to reintroduce the practices of past writers, one finds a literalness in their application of the poetics of “recovering the past” (*fugu* 復古) that would have been quite startling to Liu Xie, Li Bo, and Du Fu, who all believed in a glorious literary past and who were all content to leave it alone. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that becoming aware of the literary past as an unfolding progression seems to have induced in the writers of the Song a paradoxical desire to make that progression stop.

Here, again, I see the pivotal moment of change as coming in the generation of Su Shi and Huang Tingjian, that is, theirs was a generation of writers whose practice and theory were transitional within the arc traced by this development. In Su Shi’s project to “harmonize with the rhymes of Tao Yuanming,” as he called it, we can discern twin impulses at work: the archaizing impulse, the impulse to appropriate the past and subordinate it to one’s own purposes, and the impulse to “recover the past” by recreating one’s style through the sincere imitation of the style of the ancients. That Su’s rhyme-matching poems are sometimes quite painful to read is perhaps a sign of the conflicting pull of these impulses. Huang Tingjian exhibits the same self-contradiction, in a more advanced form, in his aggressive exploitation of Du Fu in practice and the theoretical formulations he made about the sacrosanct nature of Du Fu’s poetic legacy that the Jiangxi School, to their detriment, took so much to heart. In paying lip service to the literary past as inviolable while simultaneously remaining energetically committed to the co-optation of that past, Su and Huang were on the cusp of the newly developing consciousness of literary history I described above, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, the development of a new self-consciousness in the reading of literary history.

If one accepts the existence of literary history, then one must also be prepared to embrace, or resign oneself to, the inevitability of literary change over time. This was precisely what the late Southern Song writers sought to obviate in their revival of the aesthetic values of the late Tang and the High Tang, and so we have the appearance of a seeming paradox in which the awareness of literary history leads, in effect, to a denial of literary history. But the backward-looking vision of the late Southern Song was actuated less by a wish to “recover the past” for its own sake than it was by the

<sup>49</sup> See p. 21 of Qian’s preface to his *Song shi xuanzhu* 宋詩選注 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1979), the anthology mentioned in footnote 39. Yan Yu’s famous manifesto on the art of poetry, *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話, is collected in *Lidai shihua* 歷代詩話, ed. He Wen-huan 何文煥 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), pp. 685–708.

urge to find the one true source of poetry: the Jiangxi poets were deemed to be at fault for their unseemly infatuation with the unreliable methods of a modern poet, but this was because they placed their trust in the wrong model and not because they were wrong to trust in models on principle. In putting their faith in methods during the early Southern Song, and then, during the late Southern Song, in one single infallible method, elite writers were perhaps motivated by the same need for clarity and certainty that drove the Daoxue Confucians in their quest for fundamental and universal truths. Viewed in this light, the two communities of Daoxue scholars and elite writers may be seen to be moving in parallel as they worked out their respective solutions to the pressing problems of their day. But, to the extent that an uneasy relationship with the literary past, coupled with the restless search for models, was already developing within the community of elite writers at a time when Daoxue was still in its infancy, we could also say that, by anticipating some of the concerns that both communities came to share, elite writers helped to prepare the ground for the eventual acceptance of Daoxue's solutions.

In linking the massive cultural restructuring attendant on the rise of Daoxue to the concept of epistemic shift, Fuller has perforce given emphasis to the thirteenth century in his book. However, by opening his narrative at the turn of the eleventh and the twelfth century—the breakdown of the consensual order of the early and mid-Northern Song—he has made sure to locate the origins of the culture of the Southern Song in an era dominated by the intellectual and moral presence of Su Shi and Huang Tingjian. In this way, even as he speaks of the mid-thirteenth century, the late Southern Song, as the epochal moment of the great cultural shift, the author is also inviting us to see the late eleventh and the early twelfth centuries, the late Northern Song, as marking the point of origin of all the changes leading up to and culminating in that shift. The years from 1100 to the Mongol conquest thus form one single continuum, in which many of the features we normally associate with late imperial Chinese culture were already coming into being. By creatively focusing attention on this seminal period, a time of political upheaval, social change, technological innovation, intense intellectual ferment, and feverish artistic production, Michael Fuller reminds us, if we had forgotten it, that the cultural history of the Song dynasty is one of the most interesting, varied, difficult, complex, and rewarding areas in Chinese studies today.

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