

ARCHAISM IN HAN YÜ'S POETRY

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## Abstract

Han Yü has long been considered an ardent supporter of the revival of the ancient ways or the *fugu* movement during the mid Tang. This image of Han is largely based on his prose writings, which generally resemble the simple and unembellished style of the ancients. Nevertheless, while a dedication to *fugu* may be observed in Han's prose, it is not at all evident in his poetry, which follows a highly unique style of its own and contains some of the most bizarre examples of classical Chinese verse.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how Han Yü's poetic style contradicts the principles of *fugu*. In my first chapter, I will define the meaning of *fugu* and explain how it is both a literary movement for recreating the archaic writing style and an intellectual movement for revitalizing Confucian values. I will also make a quick comparison between Han Yü's eccentric poems and his genuine *fugu* poems. The former account for most of his famous works, and the latter only a small fraction of his works. The disparity in number should prove that Han consciously chose to develop a bizarre style in favour of an orthodox *fugu* one.

In the following chapters I will analyze several prominent characteristics of Han

Yü's poetry. Some of these characteristics, such as the use of rare characters and prosaism, may seem archaic at first, but after a systematic analysis, it will become evident that they do not truly resemble the style of the ancients and are more likely to be perceived as being bizarre and unconventional by Tang times. Other prominent features, such as the peculiar imagery, humour, Daoist references, and un-Confucian themes, are more directly contradictory to the orthodox image of *fugu*, and thus reveal Han's desire to distinguish himself from both his contemporaries and those before him. It is therefore reasonable to argue that Han Yü's verse is almost the opposite of *fugu*, for it constantly breaks with tradition and does not show any true interest in returning to an earlier style.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Han Yü 韓愈 (768 ~ 824 A. D.), the famous Confucian prose writer and poet, has long been acknowledged for revitalizing Confucianism and reviving the ancient or *guwen* 古文 style of prose writing in the mid Tang. Because of these accomplishments, later generations glorified Han Yü as a sage-like figure who had an absolute commitment to Confucianism and its concept of *fugu* 復古, the revival of ancient ways. In reality, Han Yü's involvement in the *fugu* movement is a complex issue, and under objective scrutiny, his commitment to the movement does seem less than total from time to time. This is especially true for Han Yü's poetry, which includes a variety of works that fluctuate in their stylistic features. In general, Han Yü tends to reinvent archaic elements and use them in combination with other daringly innovative features that seem nearly contradictory to the idea of returning to antiquity. The result of this amalgamation is a strange new form of poetry that is unprecedented in the earlier tradition and much more complex than a style that is purely an imitation of the past, and as Han Yü's poems vary among themselves, only a handful of his works thoroughly resemble those of ancient times. In other words, although Han Yü is closely associated with the *fugu* movement,

and archaic expressions are indeed used in his verse, it is incorrect to call him only a *fugu* poet. Such a statement is too simple to describe the rich variety of his poetry, and it also fails to point out how archaism actually functions in his poems. Archaism, indubitably, is often part of the bizarre and original style that makes most of Han's poems anything but direct imitations of earlier works.

Nevertheless, before any further discussion, we should first clarify the meaning of *fugu*. Han Yü's *fugu* in prose style was basically a more successful development of an earlier movement in the mid Tang period lead by people such as Li Hua 李華<sup>1</sup> (715~766), Xiao Yingshi 蕭穎士<sup>2</sup> (717~768), Dugu Ji 獨孤及<sup>3</sup> (725~777), Liu Mian 柳冕<sup>4</sup> (?~805), and Liang Su 梁肅<sup>5</sup> (753~793). As Han's predecessors these people aimed at attacking the empty euphuism of *pianwen* 駢文 or parallel prose and advocated a return to a simpler style modeled on the prose pieces of Zhou and Han. They strove for the revival of Confucian values and emphasized the traditional idea that literary compositions were supposed to serve a moral purpose. The ancients' more direct and

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<sup>1</sup> *Jiutangshu*, juan 190, liezhuan 140. Zhu Jianmin 朱建民 ed., *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu* 百衲本二十四史舊唐書, Taipei: Commercial Press, 1988, p. 1454

<sup>2</sup> *Jiutangshu*, juan 190, liezhuan 140. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1454

<sup>3</sup> *Xintangshu*, juan 162, liezhuan 87. Zhu Jianmin 朱建民 ed., *Bainaben ershisishi xintangshu* 百衲本二十四史新唐書, Taipei: Commercial Press, 1988, p. 1277

<sup>4</sup> *Jiutangshu*, juan 149, liezhuan 99. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1154~1155

<sup>5</sup> *Xintangshu*, juan 202, liezhuan 127. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi xintangshu*, p. 1494

less garnished style of writing was therefore a more suitable vehicle for transmitting moral messages, expressing personal ideals, and restoring the Confucian tradition that seemed to be declining at the time.

志非言不形 言非文不彰 是三者相爲用 亦猶涉川者假舟楫而後濟 自典謨缺 雅頌寢 世道陵夷 文亦下衰 (獨孤及 趙郡李公中集序)<sup>6</sup>

If the ideals are wrong, the words will not be given form. If the words are wrong, the writings will not be made manifest. Therefore the three of them ought to be used together, just as a person crossing a river must rely on a boat and an oar and then may cross. Since the *Book of Documents* became defective and the *Book of Songs* was gradually [ignored], morality of the world has declined and [people's] writings have also weakened. (Dugu Ji, "Preface to Volume Two of the Collected Works of Mr. Li<sup>7</sup> in Zhao Commandery")

文之作 上所以發揚道德 正性命之紀 次所以財成典禮 厚人倫之義 又其次所以昭顯義類 立天下之中 (梁肅 補闕李君前集序)<sup>8</sup>

As for composing a piece of writing, at the first level it is the way in which one glorifies morality and rectifies the discipline of one's life; at the second level it is the way in which one determines<sup>9</sup> and forms codes and rites and strengthens the righteousness in people's ethics; and further at a third level it is the way in which one exemplifies the righteous kind [of people] and stands in the centre of all under heaven. (Liang Su, "Preface to Volume One of the Collected Works of Mr. Li, as a Supplement to the Missing")

自屈宋以降爲文者本于哀艷 務於恢誕 亡於比興 失古義矣 (柳冕 與徐給事論文書)<sup>10</sup>

Since the time of Qū [Yuan] and Song [Yü],<sup>11</sup> those who write all base [their works] on

<sup>6</sup> *Quantangwen*, juan 388. Feng Bingwen 馮秉文, *Quantangwen pianmu fenlei suoyin* 全唐文篇目分類索引, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 2001, p. 89

<sup>7</sup> This is Li Hua.

<sup>8</sup> *Quantangwen*, juan 518. Feng Bingwen, *Quantangwen pianmu fenlei suoyin*, p. 958

<sup>9</sup> In this case the character *cai*2 財 is interchangeable with the character *cai*2 裁, which means to determine.

<sup>10</sup> *Quantangwen*, juan 527. Feng Bingwen, *Quantangwen pianmu fenlei suoyin*, p. 958

<sup>11</sup> Qū Yuan 屈原 is the alleged author for most of the works in the anthology *Songs of Chu* 楚辭. Song

melancholy and gorgeousness. They busy themselves on being exaggerated and eccentric and have gone astray from the metaphors and inspirations [of the *Book of Songs*]. This is losing the ancient essence. (Liu Mian, "A Letter to Supervising Secretary Xu That Discusses Literature")

As we can see, these people were concerned with the correlation between the writing style and moral integrity of a prose piece. A piece of writing that did not follow the style of ancient classics could affect people's morality negatively and hinder the author's ability to convey his ideals. Although starting from the Southern Dynasties similar criticism against the growing literary extravagance had never ended, it was limited to sporadic individual comments and people such as Li Hua were the first to organize a wide scale movement. As their successor, Han Yü's stance on prose reform closely paralleled that of Dugu Ji, Liang Su, and Liu Mian. He too ardently protested against the elaborate decoration of *pianwen* and promoted a more ancient and down-to-earth kind of prose writing better suited for the moral purposes of literature. Overall, Han Yü's ideas on literature did not differ much from his predecessors, and the only major distinction was that while those before him promoted their ideals with more discretion, Han was brasher and more active and assumed the role of a teacher in the line of Mencius.<sup>12</sup>

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Yu 宋玉 is supposed to be Qü Yuan's student and a few poems in the anthology are also attributed to him. The *Songs of Chu* are famous for their elaborate descriptive imagery and lyrical expressions of intense frustration and sorrow.



However, although this movement shaped a critical part of Han Yü's beliefs and character, it mostly focused on the writing style of prose. For *fugu* in poetry, we need to take a look at another movement in the early Tang period, initiated by poets such as Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (661~702). During the Sui and the later half of the Southern Dynasties, the dominant poetic form had been the palace style or *gongti shi* 宮體詩. Stylistically speaking this form contained many features that led to the formation of regulated poetry or *lüshi* 律詩. However, in terms of genre and subject matters, the palace poems were very different in their lack of seriousness and almost exclusive emphasis on delicate descriptions. Most of the palace poems were about the beauty of gardens, flowers, ladies, and other delightful courtly matters, and rarely did they contain serious messages of any sort. This was a drastic change from the earlier poetic tradition, since like prose, poetry was viewed as a vehicle for expressing the true ideals and feelings of the author. In addition, as a tradition inherited from the *Book of Songs*, poetry had also been employed to address sociopolitical issues. Both the lyrical and political aspects of poetry were supposed to function in a serious and sincere manner, and never was it appropriate to treat poetry as a literary game of elegant words. As a result, despite its popularity, palace poetry attracted criticism for its meaningless refinement.

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<sup>12</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Essays on Tang and pre-Tang China*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001, p.97

The situation was similar to how *pianwen* was criticized by the *fugu* prose writers, and Chen Zi'ang was one of the pioneer critics in this matter. For example, Chen wrote a poem called "Poem on Long Bamboo" 修竹篇,<sup>13</sup> the preface of which reads:

文章道弊五百年矣 漢魏風骨 晉宋莫傳 然而文獻有徵者 僕嘗暇時觀齊梁間詩 採麗競繁而興寄都絕 每以永嘆 思古人常恐逶迤頹靡 風雅不做 以耿耿也 一昨於解三處見明公詠孤桐篇 骨氣端翔 音情頓挫 光英朗練 有金石聲 遂用洗心飾視 發揮幽鬱 不圖正始之音復睹於茲 可使建安作者相視而笑<sup>14</sup>

The way of literature has been corrupted for five hundred years! The character and backbone of Han and Wei were not passed down to Jin and Song, and there are things that can prove this in the surviving texts. I once read the poems of the Qi and Liang [Dynasties] when I was idle; they collected beautiful [words], competed in being elaborate, and the inspirations and expressions [inherited from the *Book of Songs*] are all cut off. I heaved a long sigh every time [I read them]. I think of how the people of antiquity were constantly afraid that [literature would] insinuate itself into depravity and that the "Airs of States" and "Odes" would no longer be composed. I feel deeply concerned because of this. Yesterday in Mr. Xie's<sup>15</sup> place I saw you sir's "Poem on Chanting about the Lone Paulownia." Its backbone and essence are upright and soar [like birds]; its sound and sentiment have [the proper tonal] delays; it is brilliant, splendid, clear, and refined and has the [splendid] sound of gold and fine stone.<sup>16</sup> I then used it to wash my mind, clean my eyesight, and express my deep and depressed [thoughts]. I never imagined that the sound of Zhengshi<sup>17</sup> can be once again witnessed here. [This poem]

<sup>13</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 83. Luan Guiming 樂貴明 et al., *Quantangshi suoyin Chen Zi'ang Zhang Yue juan* 全唐詩索引陳子昂張說卷, Qinhuangdao: Xiandai chubanshe 現代出版社, 1994, p.71

<sup>14</sup> Wang Lan 王嵐, *Chen Zi'ang shiwen xuanyi* 陳子昂詩文選譯, Chengdu: Bashu shushe 巴蜀書社, 1994, p. 65

<sup>15</sup> The original text says "Xie Number Three," meaning this person ranked the third in his immediate clan. Not much is known about this person beyond his surname.

<sup>16</sup> The sound of gold and fine stone hitting each other is a term often used to describe beautiful music. Because of poetry's close association with music, the term is also commonly used to praise the musical quality of a poem. Moreover, the term also refers to the incorruptibility of metal and stones and can therefore be used to describe the positive moral qualities of a poem.

<sup>17</sup> Name of a reign period under the state of Wei during the Three Kingdoms period, lasted from 240 to 249 CE. The term can also refer to the poetic style during this period, which is a kind of penta-syllabic poetry more developed than the previous Jian'an period but not as refined as the later Jin or Southern Dynasties. Famous poets during this period include Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210~263) and Ji Kan 嵇康 (223~263).

can make the poets of Jian'an<sup>18</sup> look at [it] and smile.

Chen began the tendency of moving away from the palace style poetry and none of the later poetic masters of the high Tang were known for writing palace style poems. The form had since been branded decadent and fallen out of fashion and any serious poet would try to avoid being associated with it. However, this rejection of the palace style was largely limited to theme and subject matter. Stylistics-wise, features developed by the palace style, such as compact language, tonal regulation, and parallel interior couplets, are not thought to be signs of decadence and are passed on to the regulated verse of the High Tang. Although Chen Zi'ang tried to compose some poems in the simpler and more direct style of Han and Wei, he was unable to stop the trend towards regulated poetry.

Therefore, during Han Yü's lifetime, there was a second wave of *fugu*, which aimed to replace the refinement and balance of regulated verse with a conscious primitivism in the choice of poetic devices in order to create a form of poetry that was stylistically closer to the ancient. Although Han Yü achieved such stylistic *fugu* in prose, it is questionable if he managed to do the same in poetry. Just how *fugu* is Han's poetry? Do his poems

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<sup>18</sup> Last reign period under the Eastern Han Dynasty, lasting from 196 to 220 CE. Like Zhengshi, the term often refers to the poetic style during this period, which marks the transition point between the more colloquial penta-syllabic poems and the more literary ones. Famous poets during this period include Cao Cao 曹操 (155~220), his sons, and other prominent figures in the Wei court.

possess the “character and backbone” of the Han and Wei? Or do they resemble the “Airs of States” and “Odes” in the *Book of Songs*? The answer is that while a few of his poems meticulously follow the style of the ancient poems, the majority and the most well-known poems of his are in an strange and extravagantly new style. To illustrate this drastic variation in style, I have chosen two poems by Han Yü, one being a thoroughly archaic piece and the other a flamboyantly innovative piece.

岐山操并序<sup>19</sup>

“Zither Song of Mount Qi, with Preface”

周公爲太王作

It was composed by the Duke of Zhou for King Tai.

我家於豳 自我先公

My home is in Bin,<sup>20</sup>

Since [the time of] my ancestors.

伊我承序 敢有不同

I have inherited the legacy;

How do I dare to differ from it?

今狄之人 將土我疆

Now the people of Di,<sup>21</sup>

Are about to [extend their] root<sup>22</sup> into my land.

民爲我戰 誰使死傷

People are fighting for me;

Who [dares to] cause death and injure [among them]?

<sup>19</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang 陳抗 et al., *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan* 唐詩索引韓愈卷, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1992, p. 224

<sup>20</sup> Name of an ancient state during the Zhou Dynasty. Located to the east of today's Bin County 彬縣 in Shanxi Province 陝西省.

<sup>21</sup> Name of a foreign tribe during the early half of the Zhou Dynasty, mainly active in the north.

<sup>22</sup> The character 土 should be read du4 in this case, which means root.

彼岐有岨 我往獨處

In that land of Qi there are obstacles;

I go and stay there alone.

爾莫余追 無思我悲<sup>23</sup>

Don't you chase after me;

Don't you think of my sorrow.

This poem is one of a ten-poem series called “Zither Songs” 琴操, which consists of close imitations of the *Book of Songs*. Like the rest of the series, “Mount Qi” is composed in the archaic tetrasyllabic meter, and the shifts in rhyme in such a short space also resemble a more primitive rhyming pattern.<sup>24</sup> The language of poem is also simple and repetitive, carrying a feel of natural ruggedness that is characteristic of some of the poems in the “Airs of States” 國風 section of the *Book of Songs*. The preface explaining the purpose of this poem also resembles the “Lesser Prefaces” of the *Book of Songs* (毛詩小序).<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, certain grammatical patterns in the lines also echo what Pulleyblank calls pre-classical Chinese and would seem highly archaic to Tang readers.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 韓昌黎詩繫年集釋, Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 古籍出版社, 1984, p. 1161

<sup>24</sup> For example, the first two couplets rhyme with the characters 公 and 同, which are under the category upper level tone number one 東 in *Guangyun* 廣韻. In the third and fourth couplets the rhyming category changes to lower level tone number ten 陽 with the characters 疆 and 傷. There does not seem to be a rhyme in the fifth couplet and the rhyme changes again to upper level tone number six 脂 in the sixth couplet, which is a rhyming couplet with the characters 悲 and 追.

<sup>25</sup> The short prefaces under the title of each poem in the anthology. These prefaces are written by the traditional commentators and tend to attach socio-political meanings to the poems.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the reversed position between the verb and object in the negative sentence 爾莫余追 is a

Thus stylistically, this poem is a skillful replica of distant antiquity, and in terms of its purpose of composition this poem is also highly consistent with the values of *fugu*. Judging from the preface, this poem seems to be about the two sagely figures Duke Zhou and King Tai, but critics have pointed out that the poem may also indirectly refer to the contemporary situation and the foreign people of Di is possibly a metaphor for the foreign religion Buddhism. Duke Zhou, the speaker of the poem, would thus be Han Yü himself, and the speaker's lonely departure at the end would refer to Han's exile to Chaozhou 潮州 after his "Memorial for the Buddha Bone" 諫佛骨表 in 819.<sup>27</sup> Han Yü is famous for his hostility to both Daoism and Buddhism; he considered Buddhism an inauspicious and pernicious influence on the state due to its alien origin. It is therefore not surprising for him to compare this imported religion with the barbarians that devastated the Zhou Dynasty. With this possible allegorical message in mind, "Mount Qi" resembles the *Book of Songs* even more, since many poems in the "Airs of States" section of the anthology have been traditionally interpreted as sociopolitical allegories. A *fugu* poet such as Chen Zi'ang would have appreciated such expression of social concerns and personal frustrations, and this poem would have been seen not only as a

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feature typical of a more archaic form of classical Chinese.

Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995, p. 103~106

<sup>27</sup> *Xintangshu*, juan 176, liezhuan 101. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi xintangshu*, p.1356

stylistic imitation of the past but a proper successor to the ancient spirit as well.

However, not too many of Han's poems are like this. A large number of his poems differ drastically from this simple and rugged style of archaism, and it was often these not so typically *fugu* poems that became the most well-known of his works. A typical example is the following:

陸渾山火和皇甫湜用其韻<sup>28</sup>

"Mountain Fire of Luhun, in Response to Huangfu Shi<sup>29</sup> and Using His Rhymes"

(Line one to line twenty-seven)

皇甫補官古賁渾 時當玄冬澤乾源

Huangfu was filling in for an office in ancient Luhun;<sup>30</sup>

It was winter at the time and the lakes were dry to their sources.

山狂谷很相吐吞 風怒不休何軒軒

The mountains were wild and the valleys were fierce as they swallowed and spat each other out;

Whoosh, the wind was blowing at full force without stopping.

擺磨出火以自燔 有聲夜中驚莫原

[The wind] shook and ground to produce fire in order to burn by itself;

There were sounds during the night and [the animals] were startled without knowing why.

天跳地蹕顛乾坤 赫赫上照窮崖垠

Heaven jumped and earth leapt and the universe was upside down;

Bright light from the fire shone upward all the way to the edge of the cliffs.

截然高周燒四垣 神焦鬼爛無逃門

Distinctly at the height and in the surrounding, the fire was burning in all four directions;<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 622

<sup>29</sup> Huangfu Shi 皇甫湜 (777~835) was a student of Han Yü and wrote poems and prose pieces in a style similar to Han's. *Xintangshu*, juan 176, liezhuan 101. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi xintangshu*, p. 1358

<sup>30</sup> The character 賁 is supposed to be read *lu* in the fourth tone. It is an ancient variant of the place name appearing in the *Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳, under the "Third Year of Duke Xuan" 宣公三年. (楚子伐賁渾戎 "Chuzi attacked the Rong in Luhun.")  
Xue Ke 雪克, *Xinyi gongyangzhuan* 新譯公羊傳, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1998, p. 369

The gods were scorched; the ghosts were cooked, and there was no place to run.

三光弛隳不復噉 虎熊麋豬逮猴猿

The three lights [of the sun, moon, and stars] are ruined and destroyed and cannot recover  
their brightness again;

The tigers, bears, deer,<sup>32</sup> pigs, including the monkeys and apes,

水龍鼉龜魚與鼃 鴉鷂雕鷹雉鷓鴣

The dragons in the water, the alligators, the turtles, the fish, and the giant tortoises,  
The crows, the owls, the hawks, the eagles, the pheasants, the swans, and the wild chickens,

燐魚煨 燐 孰飛奔

Were all singed, broiled, roasted, and cooked in ashes and who could still fly or run?

祝融告休酌卑尊 錯陳齊攻闢華園

The fire god Zhurong asked for leave and poured wine for guests both lowly and noble;

Red jewellery and red jades were mixed and lined up to build a garden.

芙蓉披猖塞鮮繁 千鐘萬鼓咽耳喧

Hibiscus blooms in disorder and was stuffed with freshness and abundance;

A thousand bells and ten thousand drums were noisy as they stuffed one's ears.

攢雜啾噉沸箴塤 彤幢絳旃紫纛旛

The whispers and shouts were gathered and mixed together as they boiled the bamboo pipes  
and clay flutes;

[There were] vermilion flags and crimson banners and purple gonfalons.

炎官熱屬朱冠禪 髹其肉皮通 髹 髹

The officials of fire and their subordinates of heat [wore] red caps and pants;

They painted their flesh and skin in blackish red which ran all the way to their thighs and  
buttocks.

頰胸垓腹車掀輶 緹顏鞅股豹兩鞵

They sucked in their chests, stuck out their stomachs, and lifted the shafts of their chariots;

[They had] brown faces, stockings on their thighs, and paired leopard skin cases for bows and  
arrows.

霞車虹靷日鞞輶 丹莛綬蓋緋繡<sup>33</sup>

With a chariot made out of rosy cloud and straps made out of rainbow,

[They pulled out] the suns from the wheels of their chariot,

<sup>31</sup> Lit: "four walls."

<sup>32</sup> To be exact, *mi2* 麋 is a subspecies of deer known as Pere David's deer. It is similar to an elk and is now extinct in the wild in China.

<sup>33</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 684~685



Which had rosy tassels, cardinal canopies, and scarlet pennons.

Even at first glance, “Mountain Fire” differs significantly from “Mount Qi” in its overwhelming complexity and length. The entire poem is twice as long as the quoted section just translated. The untranslated part contains further elaborate descriptions of the fire god’s banquet. The language in this poem is also very complex and peculiar, with many rare characters that are hard to understand or pronounce. The overall format of the poem seems like a normal hepta-syllabic ancient poem 古詩, but there are many irregular lines. As a result, the boundary between couplets becomes blurry, creating difficulties for readers. Furthermore, the descriptions in this poem are extravagant and chaotic. The lengthy and dazzling descriptions resemble the *fu* 賦 or prose-poems of early Western Han, but these earlier works rarely contained so many grotesque details. Various animals being roasted and singed by the fire, vicious deities who paint their thighs and buttocks in blackish red, fire gods who suck in their chests and stick out their stomachs, these are highly chaotic and disturbing images unprecedented in earlier verse. The style of this poem is very different from the natural ruggedness of the “Zither Songs” series, and instead it presents a crafted ugliness that is put together to shock or even repulse most readers. In other words, this strange new style is by no mean an imitation of any earlier works, and very little trace of *fugu* can be sensed in such daring innovation.

Furthermore, although the poem is an allegory that takes the fire god as a metaphor for the evil officials in the imperial court, its allegorical element and sociopolitical relevance are severely undermined by the flamboyant descriptions of the fire. The intensity, power, and eccentricity of the imagery will certainly impress readers most strongly, and whatever allegorical message the poem may carry is secondary. It is thus hard for this poem to be seen as being in accordance with the spirit of *fugu*, as the supporters of *fugu* all stress that moral content and expression of sincere feelings should be emphasized over stylistic details.

Out of the three hundred and sixty surviving poems by Han Yü, about ninety-one of them are long ancient poems that consist of more than twenty lines. These poems are either penta-syllabic or hepta-syllabic and resemble the more eccentric style of "Mountain Fire." As for the tetra-syllabic poems like "Mount Qi," there are only about sixteen of them. Perhaps this is because direct imitation of the *Book of Songs* is a rather extreme form of *fugu* and focusing too much on this type of poetry does run a risk of seeming uncreative and formulaic. This is understandable if Han Yü did not wish to dedicate himself entirely to imitation, but why do so many of his works differ so much from both the contemporary and ancient conventions? The simplest answer is that Han

Yü was not strongly committed to *fugu* in his poetry. Unlike his prose, most of Han's verse is not modeled on any particular period in the past. Like "Mountain Fire," most of his poems seem eager to impress readers with their audacious originality and are less interested in reviving the style and spirit of antiquity.

However, in Han Yü's own view, he does not seem to find any contradiction between his eccentric poetic style and *fugu* ideals. In fact, in a letter Han wrote to Liu Zhengfu 答劉正夫書,<sup>34</sup> he points out that his admiration for the strange and unique is an inspiration drawn from reading the ancient texts:

夫百物朝夕所見者 人皆不注視也 及睹其異者 則共觀而言之 夫文豈異於是乎 漢朝人莫不能爲文 獨司馬相如 太史公 劉向 揚雄爲之最 然則用功深者 其收名也遠 若皆與世沈浮 不自樹立 絕不爲當時所怪 亦必無後世之傳也<sup>35</sup>

Nobody would pay attention to the myriad matters which are seen day and night. It is only until people witness something different, that they will look at it together and talk about it. How does writing differ from this? Nobody during the Han Dynasty was incapable of writing, but only Sima Xiangru (179~117 BCE.), the Sima Qian (145~87 BCE.),<sup>36</sup> Liu Xiang (77~6 BCE.), and Yang Xiong (53~18 BCE.) were the best. However, those who made deep efforts had their fame spread far.<sup>37</sup> If they all sank and floated with the rest of the world, without setting up their own [style], then they would definitely not be taken differently at that time, and they would certainly not be transmitted to later generations either.

<sup>34</sup> *Quantangwen*, juan 553. Fèng Bingwen, *Quantangwen pianmu fenlei suoyin*, p. 1025

<sup>35</sup> Chen Jingyun 陳景雲, *Han Changli quanji* 韓昌黎全集, Beijing: Zhongguo shudian 中國書店, 1991, p. 264

<sup>36</sup> As seen in the original text, Sima Qian is often referred to as the Grand Duke of History 太史公, a title that commemorates his compilation of *Shiji* 史記, the *Record of History*.

<sup>37</sup> Lit: "collected from afar."

Although this comment is more on the writing of prose,<sup>38</sup> it also gives us good insight into how Han Yü views his own poetic style. According to this logic, the strangeness of his verse can be explained as a mutated form of *fugu* as well. In Han's mind, what he did in his poetry was to follow in the footsteps of ancient masters in their attempts at creating an impressive piece of work. Accordingly, striving for the strange and unique is not a contradiction of *fugu*, but part of the truth behind *fugu*. Nevertheless, it is a view few *fugu* activists would agree with, and over the centuries, the daring innovation of his poetry has attracted some of the most severe criticisms of Han Yü:

學詩當以子美爲師 有規矩 故可學 退之於詩本無解處 以才高而好爾 (陳師道 後山詩話)<sup>39</sup>

While learning [to compose] poetry one should make Du Fu (712~770) his teacher. There are rules [in his poetry]; therefore [his style] can be learned. In Han Yü's poetry there is no way to explain the source; [his poems] are good only because he had great talents. (Chen Shidao (1053~1101), *Poetry Talk of Houshan*)

韓退之於詩本無所解 宋人呼爲大家 直是勢利他語 (王世貞 藝苑卮言)<sup>40</sup>

In Han Yü's poetry there is no way to explain the source. People of the Song [Dynasty] called him a great master; this was just an insincere repetition of what influential people had said. (Wang Shizhen (1526~1590), *Fragmented Notes on Art and Literature*)

<sup>38</sup> Sima Xiangru, Sima Qian, Liu Xiang, and Yang Xiong were all famous literary figures of the early Han. All four of them were associated with the writing of prose and not poetry. Among them Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong were particularly well-known for their prose-poems or *fu*, which is categorized as a prose genre.

<sup>39</sup> Yan Yiping 嚴一萍 comp. and ed., *Houshan jushi shihua* 後山居士詩話, Baibu congshu jicheng 百部叢書集成 33, Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan 藝文印書館, 1965, p. 4

<sup>40</sup> Luo Zhongding 羅仲鼎, *Yiyuan zhiyan jiaozhu* 藝苑卮言校注, Jinan: Qilu shushe 齊魯書社, 1992, p. 187

材大者聲色不動 指顧自如 不則意氣立見 李太白所以妙於神行 韓昌黎不免有蹶張之病也 (陸時雍 詩鏡總論)<sup>41</sup>

Those with great talents do not show off<sup>42</sup> in their speech and appearance. They move about<sup>43</sup> casually at will, or their arrogance can be seen immediately. This is the reason why Li Bai (701~762) was marvelous in his [poetic] mastery. Han Yü could not help having the shortcoming of being highly exaggerated. (Lu Shiyong (fl. 1633~1643), "General Introduction to the *Mirror of Poetry*")

What these critics mean by "unexplainable sources" is that Han Yü tends to create phrases and expressions on his own instead of borrowing them from earlier poets. This happens especially when he writes on peculiar subject matter or constructs an exaggerated scene. Take "Mountain Fire" for example, since Chinese poetic tradition lacks a large inventory of words for grotesque or violent scenes, Han has to invent new expressions by combining rare ancient characters in order to create his desired atmosphere. The need for creating new terms makes Han focus less on literary allusions, which can be taken as a fatal flaw in a tradition that stresses lineage and heritage. Clearly the critics who dislike Han Yü do not see anything *fugu* in his verse, while those who appreciate him also tend to praise him for his boldness and originality and give him less credit for reviving antiquity in his poetry.

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<sup>41</sup> Wang Yunwu 王雲五 ed., *Gushijing* 古詩鏡, Siku quanshu zhenben liuji 四庫全書珍本六集 1106 ~ 1113, Taipei: Commercial Press, 1976, p. 57

<sup>42</sup> Lit: "to move."

<sup>43</sup> Lit: "to point with their fingers and look back."

韓退之詩 山立霆碎 自成一法 (蔡條 鐵圍山叢談)<sup>44</sup>

The poetry of Han Yü [is like] a mountain standing up and thunder exploding. It creates a style of its own. (Cai Tao (1080?~1163?), *Miscellaneous Talks of Mount Tiewei*)

爲詩欲氣格豪逸 當看退之李白 ~ 退之於詩知變 則一洗萬古凡馬空也 (何谿汶 竹莊詩話)<sup>45</sup>

If one wishes to be heroic when composing poetry, he should take a look at Han Yü and Li Bai. ~ Han Yü knew how to change [the format of] poetry, and with a single swipe he washed away all the mundane nags of all ages. (He Xiwen (fl. 1196~1206), *Poetry Talk of Bamboo Villa*)

詩之美者莫如韓退之 然詩格之變自退之始 (魏慶之 詩人玉屑)<sup>46</sup>

None can compare with Han Yü in the beauty of poetry; however, the change of the format of poetry also began with Han Yü. (Wei Qingzhi (fl. 1234~1244), *Jade Shards of Poets*)

In the eyes of the pro-Han Yü critics, the ingenuity and power of his verses are the most appreciated qualities. Some agree that Han's style is one that stands out uniquely from those before him, but rarely does a critic relate his daring innovation to any kind of *fugu* or detect any trace of the *fugu* spirit in his poetry.

However, due to Han Yü's well-established status as a pioneer in the *fugu* of prose, contemporary scholars tend to acknowledge him as a *fugu* poet and feel reluctant to discuss how his poetic style contradicts the principles of *fugu*. For example, in Li

<sup>44</sup> Yan Yiping 嚴一萍 comp. and ed., *Tieweishan congtan* 鐵圍山叢談, Baibu congshu jicheng 百部叢書集成 33, Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan 藝文印書館, 1965, p. 42

<sup>45</sup> Chang Zhen'guo 常振國, *Zhuzhuang shihua* 竹莊詩話, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1984, p.10

<sup>46</sup> Shen Qian 沈謙 ed., *Shiren yuxie* 詩人玉屑, Taipei: Shijie shuju 世界書局, 2005, p. 320

Zhuofan's 李卓藩 book *Expounding the Poetic School of Han Yü and Meng Jiao*<sup>47</sup> 韓

孟詩派闡微, he writes:

The *fugu* ideology in the poetry of Han Yü and Meng Jiao was a continuing development of the works of Chen Zi'ang, Li Bai,<sup>48</sup> and Yuan Jie (719~772),<sup>49</sup> which reached a climax in the *fugu* movement in poetry during Tang... [Han Yü's] *fugu* consists of two levels. One is the revival of the ancient ways, and the other is the promotion of ancient style prose and poetry and the rejection of parallel and overly ornate lines.<sup>50</sup>

In Li's book, Han Yü's poetry is regarded as being *fugu* simply because of his rejection of tonal regulation and parallelism, as well as his vaguely defined longing for the "ancient ways" or *gudao* 古道. It seems that writing in the *gushi* 古詩 or the ancient poem format is enough for one to be qualified as a *fugu* poet, and as Li begins discussing the unconventional and bizarre characteristics in Han's ancient poems, the issue of *fugu* is curiously left out and no explanation is given as to how such a strange style fits the principles of *fugu*.

In Charles Hartman's book *Han Yü and the Tang Search for Unity*, we find a

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<sup>47</sup> Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751~814) was a close friend of Han Yü and a well known poet himself. He and Han are considered the two leading figures for the strange and eccentric poetic style of mid Tang. His biography can be found in the *Old Book of Tang* under Han Yü.

*Jiutangshu*, juan 160, liezhuan 110. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1206

<sup>48</sup> Although Li Bai is mostly remembered today for the bold and unconstrained style of his poetry, he actually wrote many archaically styled poems as well, the most famous of which being the "Ancient Style" 古風 series.

<sup>49</sup> Yuan Jie 元結 (719~772) was another *fugu* poet well known for his highly archaic tetra-syllabic poems, which were close imitations of the *Book of Songs*.

*Xintangshu*, juan 143, liezhuan 68. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi xintangshu*, p. 1184

<sup>50</sup> Li Zhuofan 李卓藩, *Han Meng shipai chanwei* 韓孟詩派闡微, Taipei: Tiangong shuju 天工書局, 2001, p. 130

comprehensive discussion of Han Yü's *fugu* theory and approach, but the book's focus is on Han's prose and many of the literary concepts and theories discussed by Hartman are only evident in Han's *guwen* or ancient style prose and not in his verse. For example, when explaining Han Yü's view on *fugu*, Hartman writes:

Han Yü conceived of "Antiquity" (*gu*) as an almost spiritual state, yet a state that stood in dialectical complementarity to "modernity" (*jin*); the two states, although distinct, are ultimately identical, and when each is perfected, "Antiquity is now."<sup>51</sup>

This is an insightful comment on how Han Yü's understood *fugu*; however, to support this statement Hartman quotes a prose piece by Han Yü called "Preface Seeing Off Qi Hao After His Failure at the Examination" 送齊暉下第序.<sup>52</sup> The essay deals with Han Yü's ideas for concrete political reform, a topic that is not broached in his poetry. As Hartman further elaborates on Han's view on *fugu*, he continues to use Han's prose to support his comments and makes little reference to his poetry, and much of Hartman's discussion on *fugu* thus becomes irrelevant to Han Yü's verse. Hartman also fails to mention the drastic differences between Han Yü's prose and poetry, and instead, he attempts to demonstrate a "unity of style" between the two. Hartman's view is correct in the sense that Han tries to blur the genre distinction between prose and poetry by introducing prosaic features to his verse and poetic features to his essays, but in general

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<sup>51</sup> Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the Tang Search for Unity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 217-218

<sup>52</sup> *Quantangwen*, juan 555. Feng Bingwen, *Quantangwen pianmu fenlei suoyin*, p. 138



his essays and poems still appear to be very different. While most of his prose pieces show a concern for the propagation of Confucian ideals and express an orthodox view of *fugu*, his verse includes some highly eccentric creations that defy Confucian poetic traditions.

Among contemporary scholars, Stephen Owen is one of the few who has addressed the topic of *fugu* in Han Yü's poetry in detail. In his book *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, he has pointed out that Han's commitment to *fugu* was something that allowed him to invent a daringly new style of his own:

There were some poets, however, who did try to actualize the ethical and stylistic ideals of *fugu*, and in their hands *fugu* became an instrument of literary change and, more significantly, of literary consciousness. The very idea of "return to antiquity" implies literary reform, a conscious rejection of the contemporary poetry, to re-create an antiquity that was at least partly imaginary. Legitimized by the general acceptance of *fugu* as a literary ideal, such poetry could dare to be original despite the considerable demands of conformity to conventional poetic taste.<sup>53</sup>

Owen recognizes that many features of Han's verse actually signify a pursuit of originality and a desire to break away from the contemporary mainstream rather than an attempt to literally return to the style of the ancients. Nevertheless, Owen does not say that Han Yü gave an insincere allegiance to *fugu*. He sees Han Yü as being genuinely committed to the movement, and consequently, he interprets Han's pursuit of an

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<sup>53</sup> Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975, p. 9

unconventional style as part of the broader frame of *fugu*, in which the word “antiquity” is abstractly used as a symbol for one’s ethical and stylistic ideals, and thus, it does not have to appear in the form of actual archaic devices in the work. However, this definition of *fugu* is quite nebulous, for it basically states that as long as the poet is using antiquity to represent his personal ideals, his works can be considered *fugu*. Under this definition, *fugu* would become irrelevant to the actual stylistic features, which would make the literary movement seem like a meaningless exercise. Moreover, Owen also seems to contradict himself by saying that the prosaisms and archaisms in Han’s verse have achieved an elusive sense of “ancientness” sought by many *fugu* poets,<sup>54</sup> which implies that Han Yü’s poems are also *fugu* due to some archaic qualities in their style. Owen’s comment seems dubious, since many of the seemingly archaic devices in Han’s verse actually cause more weirdness than ancientness. Finally, Owen also says that the ethical focus of Han Yü’s poetry conforms to the high moral standards that are supposed to accompany *fugu*,<sup>55</sup> which is another questionable statement, since a number of Han’s poems defy Confucian moral norms. In other words, although Owen’s book contains some of the most comprehensive discussions about Han Yü’s *fugu* in poetry, it still fails

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<sup>54</sup> Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, p. 17

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, p. 17

to confront certain fundamental contradictions between Han's poetic style and the *fugu* movement.

## Chapter Two: Use of Rare Characters and Expressions

Although various kinds of archaism appear in Han Yü's verse, most of the time it is not used to create truly archaic pieces. It is commoner for Han to use archaic devices to create other desired effects and reinvent them to become parts of his original style. One example for such reinvented archaism is the use of rare and ancient characters as seen in "Mountain Fire." Many of Han's poems are famous for their staggering amount of descriptive details that consist of bizarre Chinese characters or strange phrases. Most of these characters were not commonly used by the Tang time; they belong to the language of the early Han prose-poems or *fu* 賦 and are hardly ever used in poetic works of the Tang before Han Yü. Depending on their sources they may be either unfamiliar or highly obscure to the Tang readers. Since these are dated characters, naturally they originate from ancient sources, but they do not necessarily generate a *fugu* effect. In fact, as Han employs these dated expressions in his poems, the effect is often stunningly bizarre and not reminiscent of orthodox antiquity at all. For example, the following is a section from the "Poem on South Mountain" 南山詩,<sup>56</sup> one of the most well-known

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<sup>56</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 198

## masterpieces by Han Yü:

(line one hundred sixty-five to line one hundred eighty-eight)

或如火熹焰 或若氣饋餽

Some [of the mountain mists] are like the flame of a bright fire;

Some are like the vapor of steaming grains.

或行而不輟 或遺而不收

Some go on without stopping;

Some go astray and are not brought back.

或斜而不倚 或弛而不彀

Some are slanted and do not lean [on anything];

Some are loose and not drawn tight.<sup>57</sup>

或赤若禿鬣 或燠若柴樵

Some [of the mountains] are barren like a bald [head];

Some are smoking like a pile of firewood.

或如龜拆兆 或若卦分繇

Some are like tortoise [shells] that break into patterns;

Some are like hexagrams that split into divinations.

或前橫若剝 或後斷若姤

Some lie horizontally in the front like [the hexagram] *bo*.Some break in the back like [the hexagram] *gou*.

延延離又屬 夬夬叛還遭

Extending over the distance, they part from [each other] and attach to [each other] again.

Resolutely, they turn against [each other] but encounter [each other] again.

喁喁魚闖萍 落落月經宿

Stretching upward like fish's mouths, [the mountain peaks are like] fish that rush between the  
duckweeds;<sup>58</sup>Being lofty and sparse, [the high peaks are like] the moon passing through the constellations.<sup>59</sup>

閭閭樹牆垣 巖巖架庫廩

Being tall and big [the mountains] stand like walls;

Being high and steep [the mountains] are assembled into storerooms and stables.

<sup>57</sup> Lit: "to pull the string of a bow."<sup>58</sup> The duckweed is a metaphor for the trees below the peaks.<sup>59</sup> *Xiu* 宿 are constellations of the zodiac. Here the high peaks that stand out from the rest are compared to the moon, whereas the lower peaks are compared to the stars.

參參削劍戟 煥煥銜瑩琇

Reaching up, [the peaks are] carved like swords and halberds;  
Shining brilliantly, [the mountains are] inset with crystals and beautiful stones.

敷敷花披萼 闐闐屋摧霤

Spreading widely, the flowers cover themselves with calyxes;

Dropping down, houses destroy their eaves.<sup>60</sup>

悠悠舒而安 兀兀狂以狃<sup>61</sup>

Being relaxed, I am comfortable and peaceful;

Being distressed, I am mad and untamed.

“South Mountain” is one of the longest poems by Han Yü. With a total of two-hundred and four lines, Han gives a highly intricate and inventive description of the scenery of Mount Zhongnan 終南山.<sup>62</sup> Like “Mountain Fire,” difficult characters are used throughout this poem. In the quoted section above, there are already several characters and phrases that are hard to comprehend without annotations. For example, the binome *fenliu* 饋飴, “the cooking of grains and the steam that rises up from them,”<sup>63</sup> are extremely uncommon characters that can only be found in obscure sources such as the *Erya* 爾雅, a pre-Han glossary of cryptic terms, and the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, the earliest Chinese dictionary compiled around the middle of the Eastern Han. Other

<sup>60</sup> This is probably describing boulders that roll down the mountain slopes and smash into other rocks.

<sup>61</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 432~435

<sup>62</sup> South of today's Xi'an City 西安市 in Shanxi Province 陝西省.

<sup>63</sup> Originally found in the *Erya*, this phrase here seems to refer to the ripening of grains. (饋飴 稔也 “Fenliu is the ripening [of grains].”) Its meaning of cooked grains and vapour appears later in the *Shuowen*. (饋 脩飯也 飴 飯氣蒸也 “Fen is to cook grains. Liu is the steaming of vapour emitted from cooked grains.”)

Guo Pu 郭璞 ed., *Songben erya* 宋本爾雅, Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan 藝文印書館, 1988, p. 16

Wang Yun 王筠, *Shuowen judu* 說文句讀, Shanghai: Shanghai guji shudian 上海古籍書店, 1983, p. 639

examples in the quoted section include the character *qian* 鬍, “to become bald without side locks,”<sup>64</sup> the character *yong* 喁, “a fish’s mouth that looks up,”<sup>65</sup> and the character *niu* 犢, “the untamed nature of a wild dog.”<sup>66</sup> These characters and phrases can be found in the *Shuowen* and a few other texts dedicated to character etymology, but they are rarely seen outside of these obscure sources. Given their rarity and peculiar meanings, these expressions are far more likely to create a feel of strangeness instead of antiquity. If Han Yü is trying to emulate the archaic style, he would have used more accessible expressions like those of the “Zither Song” series, as *fugu* does not demand extreme complexity in diction.

Furthermore, Han Yü is also very creative in the use of these words. These peculiar characters and phrases are not used in a literal sense; instead they are used to form metaphorical images to describe the mountain. When Han writes the phrase *fenliu*, he borrows the image of the rising steam to describe the ascending mountain mist of Mount Zhongnan instead of referring to actual cooked grain. The balding image of *qian* is also used metaphorically to describe the rocky and barren parts of the mountain that

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<sup>64</sup> 說文: 鬍 鬢禿也 *Shuowen*: *Qian* is the balding of sidelocks.  
Wang Yun, *Shuowen judu*, p. 1218

<sup>65</sup> 說文: 喁 魚口上見也 *Shuowen*: “*Yong* is a fish’s mouth that looks up.”  
Wang Yun, *Shuowen judu*, p. 176

<sup>66</sup> 說文: 犢 犬性驕也 *Shuowen*: “*Niu* is when the nature of a dog is untamed.”  
Wang Yun, *Shuowen judu*, p. 1355

have no vegetation. The reduplication of *yong* also forms an interesting metaphor, which compares the shape of the mountain peaks with the image of numerous fish stretching their mouths upward and waiting for food. Finally, the character *niu* is used almost comically to describe how Han Yü himself is being moved by the powerful scenery; the scenery is so impressive that it excites Han and makes him feel like an untamed beast. This clever usage of obscure expressions shows that Han's focus is on impressing his readers. He wants to show not only that he has fully understood the meaning of these rare characters, but also that he can use them in an inventive and unconventional way. Therefore, in terms of the stylistic function of these characters, *fugu* is at best the secondary concern, and the archaism they may create is merely a byproduct of their obscurity and novelty.

Nevertheless, among the difficult characters, some are more understandable than the ones discussed above, because they have appeared in widely-read sources such as the Confucian classics the *Book of Songs* 詩經 and the *Book of Rites* 禮記. For example, the character *you* 樵 means "to pile up firewood" and appears in the poem "Yü and Pu Trees" 棧樸 in the "Greater Odes" 大雅 section of the *Book of Songs*.<sup>67</sup> The phrase

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<sup>67</sup> 芄芄棧樸 薪之樵之 "Flourishing are the *yu* and *pu* trees; we turn them into firewood and pile them up."

Teng Zhixian 滕志賢, *Xinyi shijing duben* 新譯詩經讀本, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 2000, p. 783



*yanyan* 閶閶 can also be written without the “door” radical as *yanyan* 言言; it means “tall and big” and appears in the poem “Glorious Alas” 皇矣 in the “Greater Odes.”<sup>68</sup>

These characters and phrases were probably not too unfamiliar to an educated Tang Dynasty reader, since the thorough memorization of these Confucian classics was the basic groundwork for all literati education at the time. However, it is also true that such diction had fallen out of conventional poetic use by the Tang period. Upon seeing these characters, a reader would at least find their appearance strange in a penta-syllabic poem, even if he understood their meanings. Furthermore, although characters such as *you* and phrases such as *yanyan* can be traced to the classics, their usage in this poem does not echo the moral significance attached to their source.<sup>69</sup> Instead of being used as allusions to the original texts, they are used in their literal meaning in a descriptive passage. The use of these archaic characters should thus not be equated with *fugu*, as the fundamental goal of *fugu* is to recreate the moral superiority of the ancient instead of merely

<sup>68</sup> 臨衝閑閑 崇墉言言 “The siege towers and battering rams are strong and mighty; walls of [the state of] Chong are tall and big.”

Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 801

<sup>69</sup> According to the “Lesser Prefaces” of the *Book of Songs*, the poems “*Yu* and *Pu* Trees” and “Glorious Alas” is a praise for the brilliance of King Wen of Zhou 周文王.

棫樸 文王能官人也 “*Yu* and *Pu* Trees,’ [it praises] King Wen for his ability of employing people as the right officials.”

皇矣 美周也 天監代殷莫若周 周世世修德莫若文王 “‘Glorious Alas,’ it is a praise for Zhou. Heaven has brilliantly realized that for the replacing of Yin, none was as [suitable] as Zhou. For generations [the royalties of] Zhou cultivated their virtue, and among them none was as [diligent] as King Wen.”

Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 785 and p. 803




readopting archaic words and phrases.

The general tone and structure of the poem do not strongly resemble the solemnity of the classics either. The poem is much more similar to the *fu* or prose-poems of the early Han in terms of its lush descriptive details. Although *fu* is an archaic form of literature, its strong emphasis on lexical elaboration tends to disqualify itself from being an ideal model for *fugu*. It is thus strange for Han to adopt this poetic style of *fu* if *fugu* is his one and only concern. Also, it is worth pointing out that although *yanyan* 言言 is in fact a fairly common phrase in classical Chinese, it is written with the highly obscure character of *yanyan* 閭閭 in this poem. The character *yan* 閭 is interchangeable with *yan* 言,<sup>70</sup> but in the original version of the *Book of Songs*, the phrase is written without the “door” radical as *yanyan* 言言. It is quite strange for Han Yü to use this more obscure variant, and in all likelihood, this decision appears to be for the sake of novelty

<sup>70</sup> Strictly speaking, 閭 should be pronounced *yin* and is only interchangeable with 言 when the character is read as *yin* as well. *Yinyin* 言言 or *yinyin* 閭閭 is supposed to be completely different from *yanyan* 言言. While *yanyan* 言言 means tall and big, *yinyin* 言言 or *yinyin* 閭閭 means to be amiable. The phrase *yinyin* originates from two sources; one is in the “Home Village” 鄉黨 chapter of the *Analects* 論語. (與上大夫言 閭閭如也 “[When Confucius] talks to the high ranking ministers, he is amiable.”) The other source is in the chapter “Jade Tassel” 玉藻 in the *Book of Rites* 禮記. (君子之飲酒也 受一爵而色酒如也 二爵而言言斯 “When a nobleman drinks, his appearance is proper and solemn as he receives a goblet [of wine]; he is amiable as he [receives] two goblets [of wine].”) Thus, 閭閭 can be interchangeable with 言言 only when it is pronounced as *yinyin* and means to be amiable and respectful. When read as *yanyan* and used in the meaning of being tall and big, the phrase is not supposed to be written with the “door” radical. However, under the context of this poem, Han Yü obviously uses 閭閭 to describe the loftiness of the trees that grow on Mount Zhongnan. He has somewhat violated the proper usage of the character for the sake of using the more peculiar character in this line.

Xie Bingying 謝冰瑩 et al., *Xinyi sishu duben* 新譯四書讀本, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1987, p. 176 Jiang Yihua, *Xinyi liji duben*, p. 412

and eccentricity. Once again this shows that Han is more interested in startling his readers rather than being consistent with the *fugu* spirit.

Moreover, in the quoted section there are also creative references to the hexagrams in the *Book of Changes* that would seem highly original rather than *fugu*. For example, the characters *bo* 剝, *gou* 姤, and *guai* 夬 are all names of hexagrams. *Bo*, which consists of five disconnected *yin* 陰 lines at the bottom and one connected *yang* 陽 line at the top , signifies “impending misfortune.”<sup>71</sup> *Gou*, which consists of five *yang* lines at the top and one *yin* line at the bottom , indicates an “inauspicious time for taking a bride.”<sup>72</sup> *Guai*, which consists of five *yang* lines at the bottom and one *yin* line at the top , indicates that “a gentleman is being both firm and cautious in getting rid of evil.”<sup>73</sup> It is interesting to know that the hexagrams *bo* and *gou* are used entirely for their graphic values in the poem, which is a unique technique not seen elsewhere. Han Yü is using the solid and broken lines of the hexagrams to describe the patterns of the

<sup>71</sup> 剝卦第二十三：剝 不利有攸往 “Number Twenty-three, the Hexagram *Bo*.” “*Bo*, [it signifies that] it is disadvantageous to go forth.”

Guo Jianxun 郭建勳, *Xinyi yijing duben* 新譯易經讀本, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1996, p. 185

<sup>72</sup> 姤卦第四十四：姤 女壯 勿用取女 “Number Forty-four, the Hexagram of *Gou*.” “*Gou*, [it signifies that] the woman is [too] strong; do not take this woman [as your bride].”

Guo Jianxun, *Xinyi yijing duben*, p. 341

<sup>73</sup> 夬卦第四十三：揚于王庭 孚號有厲 告自邑 不利即戎 利有攸往 “Number Forty-three, the Hexagram of *Guai*.” “*Guai*, [it signifies that the crime of the wicked one] is publicly announced at the king’s yard. With credibility [the king] instructed that there will be danger [in getting rid of the wicked one]. He informed his cities that it is disadvantageous to raise troops; [only then] will it be advantageous to go forth.”

Guo Jianxun, *Xinyi yijing duben*, p. 333

mountain range. The only significance of the hexagram *bo* is that it has a connected *yang* line at the top and is therefore “laid down horizontally in the front.” Likewise, the hexagram *gou* is only used because it has a disconnected *yin* line at the bottom and is therefore “broken in the back.”<sup>74</sup> Only the hexagram *guai* is used according to its divinatory significance of being firm and resolute, but instead of referring to someone’s moral attitude, it is used to describe the sharpness and steepness of the mountain range. The term is thus removed from its original contextual meaning to describe the scenery and does not reflect the moral significance of its source. Like the *Book of Songs* and the *Book of Rites*, the *Book of Changes* is one of the paramount Confucian classics. However, the *fugu* movement is supposed to revive these classics for their moral superiority and is not about the reinvention and stylistic usage of the classic’s language. The descriptions given by Han Yü in this poem are impressive and original, but it is questionable whether or not they are a form of *fugu*, as Han incorporates archaic language mostly for his own stylistic needs. In other words, the main reason for Han to adopt this kind of language is probably not because of *fugu* but because it helps him to establish a new style that is drastically different from his contemporary colleagues.

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<sup>74</sup> Before Han Yü, poets such as Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385~433) had referred to the *Book of Changes* in their landscape poetry, but they never referred to the shapes of the hexagrams. An example would be the poem “Ascending to the Chamber by the Pond” 登池上樓 by Xie Lingyun.

Li Yunfu 李運富, *Xie Lingyun ji* 謝靈運集, Changsha: Yuelu shushe 岳麓書社, 1999, p. 43

As a result, critics tend to appreciate “South Mountain” for the originality and the skill of language over any archaism it contains. For example, in the Qing anthology *Pure Essence of the Poetry of Tang and Song* 唐宋詩醇 commissioned by emperor Gaozong 高宗 (reigned 1136~1179),<sup>75</sup> “South Mountain” is praised for its powerful and unique style and is not appreciated as a particularly *fugu* piece:

通篇氣脈逶迤 筆勢竦峭 蹊徑曲折 包孕宏深 非此手亦不足以稱題也<sup>76</sup>

The whole poem's vigor is lingering and long lasting; the power of his brush is solemn and lofty. The trails and paths [formed by his words] twist and turn, containing grand and deep [meanings]. If he did not have such skill, [the poem] would not be a match for its subject.<sup>77</sup>

Contemporary scholar Stephen Owen has also commented that “the complex and exotic arabesques performed by these mountains betray an energetic and eccentric talent.” Although Owen sees the theme and sentiment of “South Mountain” to be consistent with *fugu*, he acknowledges the eccentricity of this poem's style and points out that Han's experiment with “assimilating the diction and devices of the then moribund *fu*” is part of the poet's general trend toward “assimilating into poetry a wide variety of elements that hitherto considered to lie outside its scope.”<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the critics that dislike “South

<sup>75</sup> The fourth emperor of the Qing Dynasty, more commonly known by the title of his reign period Qianlong 乾隆.

<sup>76</sup> Liang Shizheng 梁詩正 et al. ed., *Yuxuan tangsong shichun* 御選唐宋詩醇, Sikuquanshu huiyao 四庫全書薈要 462, Taipei: Shijie shuju 世界書局, 1988, p. 201

<sup>77</sup> It means that the beauty of the poem would not be able to match that of Mount Zhongnan.

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975, p. 198

Mountain” also tend to attack it for its over-emphasis on craft and consider it a poor example of *fugu*. For example, the Qing Dynasty critic Yao Fan 姚範 (1702~1771) once wrote the following comments:

南山僅形容瑰奇耳 通首觀之 詞意猶在可增減之中 杜公詩誦之古氣如在喉間<sup>79</sup>

“South Mountain” is only extraordinary in its descriptions. When we look at the whole poem, [we feel that] the sentiment of its words could be increased or decreased.<sup>80</sup> [It is unlike] the verse of Master Du [Fu], whose essence of antiquity can be vividly felt.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, Han’s use of obscure and dated expressions creates a feel of energy and extravagance rather than *fugu*.

This is a major stylistic feature of Han’s poetry and can be observed in many other poems besides “South Mountain.” The following are lines from a few other poems in which Han adopts the cryptic language of the classics.

寄崔二十六立之<sup>82</sup>

“Sent to Cui, Number Twenty-six,<sup>83</sup> Lizhi”

(line eighty-three to line eighty-four)

別來就十年 君馬記騮驪

I have been parted from you for ten years,  
But I remember your horses were fine black stallions.

<sup>79</sup> Yao Fan 姚範, *Yuanhuntang biji* 援鶴堂筆記, Taipei: Guangwen shuju 廣文書局, 1971, p. 1564~1565

<sup>80</sup> It means in some sections of the poem Han Yü’s wording is too strong, whereas in some other sections it is not strong enough.

<sup>81</sup> Lit: “seems to be right within one’s throat.”

<sup>82</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 189

<sup>83</sup> The number twenty-six means the person ranks the twenty-sixth in the same generation of his immediate clan.

The character *gua* 騮 means a yellow horse with black mouth, and *li* 驪 is a black horse. The two characters are found in the poem “Small Chariot” 小戎 in the “Airs of States” 國風 section of the *Book of Songs*.<sup>84</sup>

寄崔二十六立之

“Sent to Cui, Number Twenty-six, Lizhi”

(line eighty-five to line eighty-six)

長女當及事 誰助出帨纈

Your eldest daughter should be old enough to marry now,

[But] who will provide the dowry handkerchiefs?

The character *shui* 帨, which means “a handkerchief,” appears in the poem “There Is a Dead River Deer in the Wild” 野有死麕 in the “Airs of States” section of the *Book of Songs*.<sup>85</sup> The character *li* 纈, meaning “a handkerchief worn by a bride during a wedding,” is found in the poem “East Mountain” 東山 in the same section of the anthology.<sup>86</sup> Both *shui* and *li* are associated with females and are used in Han’s poem as a symbol for the dowry of Cui Lizhi’s daughter.

寄崔二十六立之

“Sent to Cui, Number Twenty-six, Lizhi”

(line one hundred and nine to line one hundred and ten)

<sup>84</sup> 四牡孔阜 六轡在手 騶駼是中 騮驪是驂 “The four stallions are big and mighty; the six reins are held in my hands. A horse with black patterns and a horse with red and black hair are in the middle; a yellow horse with black mouth and a black horse are at the sides.”

Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 339

<sup>85</sup> 舒而脫脫兮 無感我帨兮 “Slowly and lightly, do not shake my handkerchief.”

Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 54

<sup>86</sup> 親結其纈 九十其儀 “Her parents tie up her wedding handkerchief for her; the ceremonies are as many as nine or ten.”

Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 425

過半黑頭死 陰蟲食枯骹

More than half of the young men<sup>87</sup> have died;  
Dark insects feed on their rotten bones.

The character *ci* 骹, meaning “bones with rotten flesh still attached,” appears in the chapter “Monthly Command” 月令 in the *Book of Rites*.<sup>88</sup>

寄崔二十六立之

“Sent to Cui, Number Twenty-six, Lizhi”

(line one hundred and forty-one to line one hundred and forty-two)

乃令千里鯨 么麼微蠡斯<sup>89</sup>

[It] then causes a whale of a thousand *lis* long,  
[To become] insignificant like a small locust.

The character *zhong* 蠡, meaning “a locust-like insect,” is found in the poem “Locust” 蠡斯 in the “Airs of States.”<sup>90</sup>

山南鄭相公<sup>91</sup>

“Minister Duke Zheng<sup>92</sup> from the South of the Mountain”

(line fifteen to line sixteen)

日延講大訓 龜判錯袞轍<sup>93</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Lit: those with black hair.

<sup>88</sup> 毋聚大眾 毋置城郭 掩骼埋骹 “[During this month,] do not gather people into crowds; do not expand the city walls. Cover the bones and bury the bones with rotten flesh [when you see them in the wild].”

Jiang Yihua, *Xinyi liji duben*, p. 230

<sup>89</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 860 ~ 862

<sup>90</sup> 蠡斯羽 詵詵兮 “The locusts are vibrating their wings; they rattle and rattle.”  
Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 13

<sup>91</sup> The complete title of this poem is “Minister Duke Zheng from the South of the Mountain and Vice Director Fan Have Composed Poems and Sent Them to Each Other; I Have Not Seen All of Them; When I Talked to Fan [About This] He Put Them in a Seal and Showed Them to Me; I Followed [Their Rhyme] and Composed Fourteen Rhymed [Couplets] and Presented to Them” 山南鄭相公樊員外酬答爲詩其末咸有見及語樊封以示愈依賦十四韻以獻.

*Quantangshi*, juan 342. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 198

<sup>92</sup> This is Zheng Yuqing 鄭餘慶.

*Jiutangshu*, juan 158, liezhuan 108. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1193



During the day he invites people to lecture on the great instructions [of the sages];

The divination tortoise shells are mixed together with the ceremonial robes.

*Fu* 黻 is a kind of ceremonial robe worn by feudal lords. It appears in the poem

“Zhongnan” 終南 in the “Airs of States” section of the anthology.<sup>94</sup>

月蝕詩效玉川子作<sup>95</sup>

“Poem of Lunar Eclipse, an Imitation of Lu Tong’s<sup>96</sup> Work”

(line three to line four)

森森萬木夜僵立 寒氣熨肩頑無風<sup>97</sup>

The myriad gloomy trees stand frigid at night;

The cold air is angry and strong, and viciously there is no wind [blowing].

The character *bi* 熨 means anger and has appeared in the poem “Vast and Great” 蕩 in

the “Greater Odes” section of the *Book of Songs*.<sup>98</sup>

石鼎聯句<sup>99</sup>

“Stone Tripod Linked Verse”

<sup>93</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 921

<sup>94</sup> 君子至止 黻衣纁裳 “The prince has arrived here; he wears fine ceremonial robe and embroidered skirt.”

Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 347

<sup>95</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 634

<sup>96</sup> Lu Tong 盧仝 (795~835) was a student of Han Yü’s. In the actual title of the poem he is referred to by his style name Yuchaunzi 玉川子 or Mr. Jade River. Lu Tong’s biography can be found in the *New Book of Tang* under Han Yü’s biography.

*Xintangshu*, juan 176, liezhuan 101. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi xintangshu*, p. 1358

<sup>97</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 745

<sup>98</sup> 內熨于中國 覃及鬼方 “Internally you have triggered anger in the central kingdom; it [even] extends to the barbaric places far away.”

Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 877

<sup>99</sup> Supposedly this poem is not written by Han Yü but a record of a series of couplets composed by three people named Liu Shifu 劉師服, Xuanyuan Miming 軒轅彌明, and Hou Xi 侯喜. However, critics have agreed that this is actually a poem composed by Han Yü himself, and that Han is only presenting it as a work of others for the sake of satire and humour. This poem is not included in the *Quantangshi* anthology.

Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 852 ~ 853

(line eleven to line twelve)

謬當鼎鼎間 妄使水火爭

Nonsensically it has been caught between the tripods;

Recklessly it has caused the water and fire to compete.

The character *nai* 鼎 means a large tripod; it has appeared in the poem “Silk Clothes”

絲衣 in the “Hymns of Zhou” 周頌 section of the *Book of Songs*.<sup>100</sup>

(line twenty-five to line twenty-six)

皖皖無刀迹 團團類天成

Smooth and shiny, there is no trace of a blade;

Round and flawless, it looks as if made by heaven.

The character *huan* 皖 for smooth and shiny has appeared in the chapter “Tangong” 檀

弓 in the *Book of Rites*.<sup>101</sup>

(line fifty-nine to line sixty)

全勝瑚璉貴 空有口傳名<sup>102</sup>

[It is said that this tripod] is a whole lot more valuable than [the ancient vessels of] *hu* and *lian*,

but vainly [people's] mouths only spread the fame.

Both *hu* 瑚 and *lian* 璉 are names of ceremonial vessels used to contain grains; they

have appeared in the chapter “Position of the Brilliant Hall” 明堂位 in the *Book of*

*Rites*.<sup>103</sup>

贈劉師服<sup>104</sup>

<sup>100</sup> 自羊徂牛 鼎鼎及簠 “From the lambs to the cows, from the large tripods to the small tripods...”  
Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 1017

<sup>101</sup> 華而皖 大夫之簠與 “It is beautiful and smooth and shiny. Is it the bamboo mat of a minister?”  
Jiang Yihua, *Xinyi liji duben*, p. 80.

<sup>102</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 849 ~ 852

<sup>103</sup> 夏后氏之四璉 殷之六瑚 “The four *lian* vessels of the Xiahou clan, the six *hu* vessels of Yin...”  
Jiang Yihua, *Xinyi liji duben*, p. 440.

<sup>104</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 640

“Presented to Liu Shifu”<sup>105</sup>

(line three to line four)

我今呀豁落者多 所存十餘皆兀艱<sup>106</sup>

Now I am all empty [inside my mouth] and [the teeth] that have fallen are many;

The remaining ones are about a dozen and they are all shaking and unstable.

The character *nie* 艱 means shaking and uneasy; it has appeared under the hexagram *kun*

困 in the *Book of Changes*.<sup>107</sup>

All of the above examples are dated characters and phrases found in the Confucian classics. Like the ones in “South Mountain,” they are adopted for their literal meanings and do not reflect the moral significance which they carry in their sources. They are used as a stylistic feature to make the lines look more unusual. They are also abruptly inserted in lines that do not resemble the archaic language of the classics. The overall effect is therefore more of an eye-catching strangeness rather than the solemnity and righteousness of *fugu*.

Furthermore, as the following examples will demonstrate, Han Yü is also fond of even more obscure expressions found only in the classical dictionaries such as the *Shuowen*.

<sup>105</sup> Liu Shifu 劉師服 was a friend of Han Yü. Very little is known about him except that he passed the *jinshi* examination.

<sup>106</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 843

<sup>107</sup> 上六 困于葛藟 于艱危 “The *yin* line at the top of the hexagram [signifies that] one is trapped in between the vines and is shaking and uneasy.”  
Guo Jianxun, *Xinyi yijing duben*, p. 369

讀東方朔雜事<sup>108</sup>

“Miscellaneous Matters from Reading Dongfang Shuo”

(line seven to line eight)

偷入雷電室 輻輳掉狂車<sup>109</sup>

He sneaks into the room of thunder and lightning;

With the sound of raging carts he turns the mad chariot.

The character *hong* 輻, representing loud noise produced by carts or chariots, can be found in the sixth century dictionary *Yüpian* 玉篇<sup>110</sup> under the “cart” radical.<sup>111</sup> The character *leng* 輳 also means “the sound of carts” and can be found in the tenth century rhyming dictionary *Guangyun* 廣韻 under the lower level tone number seventeen 下平第十七.<sup>112</sup>

山南鄭相公

“Mr. Zheng from the South of the Mountain”

(line seven to line eight)

帝咨女予往 牙纛前坳<sup>113</sup>

God [of heaven] has consulted with you and me [and told us to] go forth;

In front of the ivory army banner,<sup>114</sup> dust is rising.

<sup>108</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 342. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 701

<sup>109</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 904

<sup>110</sup> The *Yupian* is a classical dictionary compiled by Gu Yewang 顧野王 (519~581) during the Liang Dynasty of the Southern Dynasties. It follows the format of *Shuowen* in its arrangement of radicals and characters.

<sup>111</sup> 輻 車聲也 “*Hong*, it is the sound of carts.”

Chinese Character Analysis Group 國字整理小組 ed., *Yupian* 玉篇, Taipei: National Central Library, 1983, p. 267

<sup>112</sup> 輳 車聲 “*Ling*, [it is] the sound of carts.”

Lin Yin 林尹 ed., *Xinjiao zhengqie songben guangyun* 新校正切宋本廣韻, Taipei: Liming wenhua 黎明文化, 1976, p. 201

<sup>113</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 921

<sup>114</sup> It means that the pole of the banner is decorated by ivory.

The character *ben* 坩 means “dust;” it is interchangeable with the character *fen* 坩, which can be found in the *Shuowen jiezi* under the “earth” radical.<sup>115</sup> The character *fo* 拂 means “dust rising” and is found in the *Guangyun* under the entering tone number eight 入聲第八.<sup>116</sup>

寄崔二十六立之

“Sent to Cui, Number Twenty-six, Lizhi”

(line one hundred and one to line one hundred and two)

敦敦憑書案 譬彼鳥黏竊<sup>117</sup>

Diligently I lean against my desk,

Like those birds stuck to the trapping glue.

The character *chi* 竊 means “a kind of sticky glue used to trap birds” and is found in the *Guangyun* under the upper level tone number five 上平第五.<sup>118</sup>

記夢<sup>119</sup>

“A Record of a Dream”

(line nine to line ten)

我亦平行踏 𪚗𪚗 神完骨礪腳不掉<sup>120</sup>

I also walk along with them and tread uneasily,

But my spirit is intact, my bones are sturdy, and my feet do shake.

<sup>115</sup> 坩 塵也 “*Fen* is dust.”

Wang Yun, *Shuowen judu*, p. 1987

<sup>116</sup> 拂 塵起 “*Fo*, [is] dust rising.”

Lin Yin, *Xinjiao zhengqie songben guangyun*, p. 476

<sup>117</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 861

<sup>118</sup> 竊 黏也 ~ 竊 所以粘鳥 “*Chi* is glue. ~ *Chi*, [it is] what is used to glue birds.” (The character appears twice because it has two different pronunciations.)

Lin Yin, *Xinjiao zhengqie songben guangyun*, p. 46 and p. 48

<sup>119</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 342. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 47

<sup>120</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 652

The phrase *qiaoyao* 𪔐𪔐 means “uneasy;” it can be found in the *Yüpian* under the “height” radical 亢部.<sup>121</sup>

豐陵行<sup>122</sup>

“Ballad of Mound Feng”

(line nine to line ten)

逾梁下阪笳鼓咽 嶓嶠遂走玄宮閭<sup>123</sup>

They cross the ford, go down the hill, and the reed pipes and drums are sobbing;

The high mountains then run all the way to the front gate of the dark palace.<sup>124</sup>

The phrase *dienie* 嶓嶠 means “the loftiness of a mountain;” it can be found in the *Guangyun* under the entering tone number sixteen 入聲第十六.<sup>125</sup>

月蝕詩效玉川子作

“Poem of Lunar Eclipse, an Imitation of Lu Tong’s Work”

(line sixty-four to line sixty-five)

於菟蹲於西 旗旄衛毳毳<sup>126</sup>

The tiger crouches in the west;

The [Tian]qi and Mao[tou] stars guard its long hair and fur.<sup>127</sup>

The character *san* 毳 for “long hair” can be found in the *Yüpian*.<sup>128</sup> The character *sha* meaning “a fur coat” is found in both the *Yüpian* and the *Guangyun*.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>121</sup> 𪔐𪔐 不安也 ~ 𪔐𪔐 𪔐𪔐: *Qiao, qiaoyao* is uneasy. ~ *Yao*, [see] *qiaoyao*.  
Chinese Character Analysis Group, *Yupian*, p. 83

<sup>122</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 187

<sup>123</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 463

<sup>124</sup> It refers to Mound Feng, the imperial tomb of Emperor Shunzong 順宗 (761~806), reigned from 805 to 806.

<sup>125</sup> 嶓 嶓嶠高山 “*Die, dienie* is high mountain.”  
Lin Yin, *Xinjiao zhengqie songben guangyun*, p. 493

<sup>126</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 746

<sup>127</sup> The tiger is the guardian beast of the west. It is guarded by the stars Tianqi 天旗 and Maotou 旄頭 because they are both located in the western part of the sky.

滇王掃宮避使者 跪進再拜語噏咿<sup>131</sup>

The king of Dian sweeps his palace and avoids the messengers;






He moves forward as he kneels down, bows repeatedly, and speaks with sobs and with sadness.

The character *wa* 嗟 means “to sob” and is found in the *Shuowen* under the “mouth” radical.<sup>132</sup> The character *yi* 咷 means “to feel sadness” and is found in the fourth century etymology text *Zilin* 字林<sup>133</sup> under the “mouth” radical.<sup>134</sup>

The above examples are highly obscure characters and phrases adopted solely for their eccentricity. Similar to the expressions from the classics, they are used to make the lines look more unfamiliar. Given their extreme rarity, the effect they create is of strangeness and incoherence rather than archaism. There is no need to dig up so many

<sup>128</sup> 髭 毛長兒 “*San*, [it is] the appearance of having long hair.”

Chinese Character Analysis Group, *Yupian*, p. 373

129 玉篇:    ~   胡衣也 Yupian: “Sha, [see] jiasha. ~ Jia, jiasha is the clothes of the Hu people.”

Chinese Character Analysis Group, *Yupian*, p. 373

廣韻: 𧄸𧄸𧄸 毛衣 *Guangyun*: "Sha, jiasha [is] a fur coat."

Lin Yin, *Xinjiao zhengqie songben guangyun*, p. 168

<sup>130</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 393

<sup>131</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 711

<sup>132</sup> 嗚咽也 “*Wa* is to sob.”

Wang Yun, *Shuowen jindu*, p. 164

<sup>133</sup> Similar to the *Yupian*, the *Zilin* is a classical dictionary that follows the format of the *Shuowen*. It was compiled by Lu Chen 吕忱 during the Eastern Jin Dynasty.

<sup>134</sup> 咿 內悲也 “Yi, it is to feel sad inside.”

Ren Dachun 任大椿, *Zilin kaoyi* 字林考逸, Nanjing: Jiangsu shuju 江蘇書局, 1890, p. 43

peculiar characters to capture the essence of the ancient poems, as archaism is often better achieved with simpler language. In fact, as seen before, the more thoroughly *fugu* pieces of Han, such as the “Zither Song” series, do not contain so many bizarre characters and phrases. Finally, as seen in the phrase *yanyan* 閤閤 with the “door” radical, Han has a tendency to choose interchangeable characters that are more uncommon and less understandable, which can only mean that his priority in word choice is strangeness rather than *fugu*. The following are a few examples of this.

劉生詩<sup>135</sup>

“Poem of Mr. Liu”

(line thirteen to line fourteen)

問胡不歸良有由 美酒傾水炙肥牛<sup>136</sup>

[People] ask if there is a reason for his not returning home;

[It is because of] the fine wine that pours like water and the roasting of the rich beef.

The character *zhi* 炙 is a rare variant of *zhi* 炙, which means “to roast meat with fire.”<sup>137</sup>

秋懷詩十一首其九<sup>138</sup>

“Number Nine of the Eleven Poems on Autumn Reminiscence”

(line five to line six)

謂是夜氣滅 望舒實其團<sup>139</sup>

[People] say that the essence of the night has disappeared;

<sup>135</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 615

<sup>136</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 222

<sup>137</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 225

<sup>138</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 288

<sup>139</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 556



[The lunar god] Wangshu has brought down the round [moon].

The character *yun* 霽 is the old way of writing *yun* 隕, which means “to fall” or “to rain down.” It can be found in the *Shuowen* under the “rain” radical<sup>140</sup> and also appears in the chapter “Seventh Year of Duke Zhuang” 莊公七年 in the *Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳.<sup>141</sup>

山南鄭相公

“Mr. Zheng from the South of the Mountain”

(line eleven to line twelve)

茫漫華黑間 指畫變恍欸<sup>142</sup>

Between his brush and ink it is vast and boundless;

His fingers and strokes transforms quickly.

The characters *huanghu* 恍欸 are variants of *huanghu* 恍惚. The expression originates from chapter twenty-one of the *Daodejing* and means “vague and obscure.”<sup>143</sup> Later it also comes to mean “a short period of time.”<sup>144</sup>

In conclusion, although the use of rare, peculiar, and unexpected characters and

<sup>140</sup> 霽 雨也 “Yun is to rain.”  
Wang Yun, *Shuowen jindu*, p. 1638

<sup>141</sup> 恆星不見 夜中星霽如雨 “The stars that were constantly [bright] could not be seen; during the night [shooting] stars fell like rain.”  
Xue Ke, *Xinyi gongyangzhuan*, p. 118

<sup>142</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 921

<sup>143</sup> 道之爲物 惟恍惟惚 “[As for] the Way’s creation of various matters, it is vague and obscure.”  
Yu Peilin 余培林, *Xinyi laozhi duben* 新譯老子讀本, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1973, p. 46

<sup>144</sup> 昭明文選 升天行: 翩翩類迴掌 恍惚似朝榮 “Ballad of Heavenly Ascent” from the *Prose Anthology of Crown Prince Zhaoming*: “It rolls and flips like the turning of one’s hand; it [lasts] as briefly as the morning flowers.”  
Zhou Qicheng 周啓成 et al, *Xinyi zhaoming wenxuan* 新譯昭明文選, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1997, p. 1255

phrases is a signature feature of Han's poetry, its relevance to *fugu* is questionable. It is a feature that does not necessarily agree with the moral goals of the movement. It shows Han's effort in crafting his lines and creating a poem that is strangely original, but it does not make the poem genuinely archaic. It indicates that Han Yü's true desire is to impress or even astonish his readers rather than to recreate the ancient world. Like other aspects of his poetry, this feature is more likely to contradict his commitment to *fugu* than to support it.

### Chapter Three: Peculiar Imagery

The peculiarities in Han Yü's poetry are not limited to its language. In many cases, the imagery of his verse is also extremely bizarre and contradictory to the idea of *fugu*. One cause for this eccentric imagery is that Han's poems contain elaborate descriptions of violence. This is highly unusual because throughout the history of classical Chinese poetry, violence and brutality have been treated as evil and unsightly matters which are unfit for elaboration. Violent images may appear in sociopolitical satires for the sake of criticizing an immoral tyrant or a turbulent age, but the depictions are usually brief and generic and rarely involve specific details. For example, the following are some lines from the "Graveyard Ballad" by Cao Cao 曹操 (155~220):

(line eleven to line sixteen)

鎧甲生虻蝨 萬姓以死亡

Lice are growing inside the armor;<sup>145</sup>

People are dying by tens of thousand.

白骨露於野 千里無雞鳴

White bones are exposed in the wild;

For a thousand *li*<sup>146</sup> there is no rooster crowing.

生民百遺一 念之斷人腸<sup>147</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Because the soldiers never take the armor off.

<sup>146</sup> A *li* 里 is a distance unit roughly equivalent to three hundred and sixty paces 步. The exact length of this unit varies from period to period.

As for the surviving commoners, only one remains [alive] in every hundred;  
When one thinks of this it breaks one's heart.

The poem attacks the various warlords who tore apart the Eastern Han empire and expresses sympathy for those who suffered from the war. Although the lines describe atrocities committed during an extremely violent age, few details are provided. Words such as “people dying by tens of thousand” and “white bones exposed in the wild” only present a vague and formulaic image for the death and suffering of the people. The scene is described from a great distance, where the desolation of a thousand *li* is presented at once. The poem also gives no specific details about how the people were slaughtered; all the killing and destruction are already finished before the lines begin and only the aftermath is described. Nevertheless, in the ancient poems of Han and Wei, this level of violence was sufficient to serve its satirical purpose. Through these controlled descriptions, the reader can already sense the author's strong disapproval of those responsible for the war. Further elaboration of the bloodshed runs a risk of damaging the aesthetic balance of the poem and making it too gruesome to be appreciated as fine literature.

Most of the poems that were considered “ancient” by Tang times exhibit this restraint in the description of violence, but contrary to his predecessors, Han Yü shows

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<sup>147</sup> Feng Baoshan 馮保善, *Xinyi gushi yuan* 新譯古詩源, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 2006, p. 340

little regard for avoiding gruesome scenes in his poetry. For example, the following lines are from the poem "Ballad of a Ferocious Tiger" 猛虎行<sup>148</sup> by Han Yü:

(line five to line twenty-four)

身食黃熊父 子食赤豹驪

[The tiger] eats the father of the yellow bear;

His son eats the cub of the red leopard.

擇肉於熊豹 肯視兔與狸

He chooses his flesh from among bears and leopards;

How would he even look at the rabbits and raccoons?

正晝當谷眠 眼有百尺威

At mid-day he sleeps facing the valley;

The fierceness of his eyes are visible one hundred feet away.

自矜無當對 氣性縱以乖

He is proud and thinks no one can oppose him;

He is dissolute and allows his nature to become perverse.

朝怒殺其子 暮還食其妃

One morning he is angry and kills his cubs;

In the evening he returns and eats his mates.<sup>149</sup>

匹儕四散走 猛虎還孤棲

His peers scatter and run to all four directions;

The ferocious tiger thus returns to his lonely nest.

狐鳴門兩旁 烏鵲從噪之

Foxes cry beside his door;

Magpies follow [the foxes] and bother him with noise.

出逐猴入居 虎不知所歸

He goes out to chase them and monkeys occupy his lair;

The tiger does not know where to return.

誰云猛虎惡 中路正悲鳴

Who says that the ferocious tiger is evil?

He is crying sadly in the middle of the road.

豹來銜其尾 熊來攫其頤<sup>150</sup>

<sup>148</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 341. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 475

<sup>149</sup> Lit: concubines.

A leopard comes to bite his tail;  
A bear comes to tear his jaw apart.

The poem talks about a vicious tiger that not only hunted other animals but also murdered its own kind. Because of its brutality, the tiger was abandoned by its peers and eventually devoured by other beasts. The tiger is clearly a metaphor for an immoral person, which makes the poem a satire like "Graveyard Ballad." But it is different from Cao Cao's poem because "Ferocious Tiger" carries a much stronger criticism in its violent imagery. Unlike "Graveyard Ballad," which only describes the aftermath of violence, this poem describes the tiger's cruelty and its brutal end, allowing the reader to imagine the actions more vividly. The poem is therefore more violent and dynamic with the action of killing taking place in every few lines. The imagery of the poem is particularly gruesome as the tiger devours its own cubs and mates and gets dismembered by other beasts at the end. Such violent scenes may be effective as a form of strong criticism, but they would appear excessive in the eyes of the traditional critics, since an animal being torn to pieces is hardly a scene that fits the expected delicacy of poetry.

This lack of moderation in depicting violence can be observed in other poems by Han as well. "Shooting the Hoot-hoot" 射訓狐<sup>151</sup> is also a strong satire similar to "Ferocious Tiger." Instead of a tiger, this poem uses a demon owl as a metaphor for the

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<sup>150</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1215~1216

<sup>151</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 34

evil that disrupts the world, and also similar to the previous poem, the evil owl meets a gruesome death at the end:

(line nineteen to line twenty-two)

咨余往射豈得已 候女兩眼張睢盱

Alas, I went to shoot [the evil owl] and how can this be stopped?

I waited until your eyes were wide open and looking up.

梟驚墮梁蛇走竇 一矢斬頸群雛枯<sup>152</sup>

The owl was startled and dropped from the beam,

Like a snake rushing to its hole [in the wall].

With a single arrow I cut off [the owl's] neck and all its chicks rotted [with it].

Although the menacing owl receives its just punishment at the end, the graphic account of its death is shocking within the context of traditional poetry. The scene depicted by the lines is quite gruesome, with the decapitated owl head staring into the void and the baby owls killed in their nest. This violent scene is also more skillfully crafted than that in the "Ferocious Tiger." This shows that Han Yü treats violence as something that deserves elaboration, an attitude very different from earlier poets who refrained from depicting violence.

Nevertheless, the level of violence is even higher in some other poems as Han Yü makes more effort to develop in this direction. For example, the "Mountain Fire of Luhun" quoted earlier contains some disturbingly gory images as it describes the banquet of the fire gods:

<sup>152</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 251

紅帷赤幕羅帳藩 盪池波風肉陵屯

Surrounded by red curtains and vermillion drapes

They spread out the raw and cooked sacrificial meat;

In the pool of blood, there were waves and wind, and the flesh piled up a mound.

豁呀鉅壑頗黎盆 豆登五山瀛四尊

A great big valley [turned into a] crystal basin [for their food];

The Five [Holy] Mountains [turned into their] sacrificial vessels,

And the ocean turned into four wine cups.<sup>153</sup>

熙熙醕醕笑語言 雷公擘山海水翻

Cheerfully they emptied their wine cups, urged each other to drink, and talked with laughter. The thunder god split the mountains and the sea water was turned upside down.

齒牙嚼齧舌齶反 電光礮礮礮礮目暖<sup>154</sup>

Their teeth chewed and bit and their tongues and jaws kept moving.

Like lightening and flashing bolts, their red eyes opened widely.

In this passage, the gods are feasting on the animals killed by the mountain fire earlier in the poem. Although the setting is just a figurative banquet, the imagery is extremely bloody and violent. The scene seems like some kind of hell, with flesh piled up into mountains, blood flowing into seas, and savage gods chewing meat. As mentioned before, the style of this poem resembles the *fu* of early Han, but those ancient *fu* rarely contain images that are this grotesque and gory, and it is difficult to find an earlier work that can match the chaos and violence in this poem.<sup>155</sup> With such elaborations, it is clear that Han deliberately destroys the aesthetic balance established in earlier poetry. The

<sup>153</sup> The number four refers to the Four Seas that surround China from each major direction.

<sup>154</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 685

<sup>155</sup> One exception might be Sima Xiangru's description of an imperial hunt in his "Prose-poem of the Supreme Forest" 上林賦. However, the hunting is just one section of the *fu*. The bulk of the *fu* describes the magnificent scenery of the hunting park, which does not contain any violence at all.



violent imagery is therefore a part of an eccentric design that shocks his reader at the expense of genuine archaism.

Furthermore, Han Yü also includes violent images to describe glorious events. This is highly unusual, because traditionally, a poem that deals with a just conquest is restrained in its depiction of violence. Descriptions of the actual fighting are usually indirect and vague if not completely omitted. The focus of such poems is always on the moral superiority of the victor instead of the fighting, and as the following example will demonstrate, such tightly controlled descriptions of violence have existed since the time of the *Book of Songs*.

大明

“Great Brightness”

(line forty-three to line fifty-six)

殷商之旅 其會如林

The army of Yinshang,

Their banners [stood] like a forest.

矢于牧野 維予侯興

[King Wu] addressed [the troops] at Muye:<sup>156</sup>

“I am going to launch the attack now.

上帝臨女 無貳爾心

The superior god [of heaven] is above you;

Do not alter your will [to fight]!”<sup>157</sup>

牧野洋洋 檀車煌煌

[The land of] Muye was vast;

<sup>156</sup> An ancient place name, roughly located in the southern region of today's Qi County 淇縣 in Henan Province.

<sup>157</sup> Lit: “do not make two out of your mind.”

The chariots made of pteroceltis were bright and magnificent.

駟騶彭彭 維師尚父

The four red horses with white bellies were strong,

Oh, the [grand] preceptor Lord Shang<sup>158</sup>

時維鷹揚 涼彼武王

Was like an eagle soaring [in the sky],

As he assisted that King Wu.

肆伐大商 會朝清明<sup>159</sup>

He released [the troops] to attack the great Shang;

Within a morning there was the clarity and brightness [of victory].

“Great Brightness” is a poem from the “Greater Odes” section of the *Book of Songs*.

The first half of the poem praises the founders of the Zhou Dynasty while the second glorifies their conquest of the tyrannical Shang. Nevertheless, in spite of this war-related theme, there is no account of the actual combat. The poem only describes the magnificence of the Zhou army and the brilliance of its commanders, and after these descriptions, the battle is quickly won “within a morning” without any mentioning of killing and bloodshed. This strong tendency to avoid violent images is more or less the same for other poems that deal with warfare in the anthology and is carried on to later poetry as part of the poetic tradition. It is thus ironic that among the verses of Han Yü, the most staggering amount of violence is found in a tetra-syllabic poem that mimics the

<sup>158</sup> This refers to Lu Shang 呂尙 (approx 1143~1021 BCE.), an important minister who assisted King Wu 武王 (?~1044 BCE.) in his conquest of Shang, more commonly known as the Grand Duke of Jiang 姜太公 or Jiang Ziya 姜子牙.

<sup>159</sup> Teng Zhixian, *Xinyi shijing duben*, p. 772~774

archaism of the *Book of Songs*, the “Poem on the Sagely Virtue of Yuanhe”<sup>160</sup> 元和聖德詩.<sup>161</sup> With a total of more than two hundred and fifty lines, the poem is a highly elaborated encomium to the accomplishments of the emperor Xianzong 憲宗 (reigned 806~821).<sup>162</sup> In terms of its metre, language, and theme, this poem is a close imitation of the “Odes” and “Hymns” in the *Book of Songs*. However, while most of the poem consists of long lists of solemn and glorious descriptions, there is one section that would have struck a contemporary reader as being shockingly violent:

(line ninety-five to line one hundred and twenty)

關窮見窘 無地自處

Pi<sup>163</sup> was pursued to the limit and trapped [from all sides];

There was no more place for him to be.

俯視大江 不見洲渚

He looked down at the great river,

And could not see any sandbar or islet.

遂自顛倒 若杵投臼

Then he [jumped into the river] upside down,

Like a pestle being thrown into a mortar.

取之江中 枷脰械手

[The imperial soldiers] dragged him out of the river,

And put a cangue around his neck and a wooden shackle on his hands.

<sup>160</sup> Yuanhe is a reign period of emperor Xianzong 憲宗 (778~821), lasting from 806 to 821. During the beginning of the Yuanhe period, the Tang court enjoyed a brief recovery of military strength and suppressed several rebellious military commissioners. This temporary restoration of imperial authority is known as the Yuanhe Restoration 元和中興.

<sup>161</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 66

<sup>162</sup> *Jiutangshu*, juan 14, benji 14. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 134~153

<sup>163</sup> This is Liu Pi 劉闢 (?~806). He was a military commissioner who revolted against the Tang court in 806 CE. This revolt was suppressed by the imperial forces of emperor Xianzong within a year. *Jiutangshu*, juan 140, liezhuan 90. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1093~1094

婦女纍纍 啼哭拜叩

The wives [of Pi] were bound in ropes;  
They wailed and cried as they bowed and begged [for mercy].

來獻闕下 以告廟社

They were taken to be presented at the palace,  
In order to inform [the spirits] in the imperial shrine.

周示城市 咸使觀睹

They were taken and shown around the city walls and markets;  
Everyone was made to watch them.

解脫攀索 夾以砧斧

They were released from the long chains of ropes,  
And were caught between the blades and axes.

婉婉弱子 赤立傴僂

The young and weak sons [of Pi]  
Stood naked while bending [their torsos].

牽頭曳足 先斷腰膂

[The executioners] pulled their head and dragged their legs;  
They first cut [them in half from] their waists and spines.

次及其徒 體骸撐拄

Then [the execution] reached [Pi's] followers;  
Their limbs and bodies [were piled up as] they piled on top each other.

未乃取闕 駭汗如寫

At the end they took Pi,  
Whose fearful sweat flowed down like a torrent.

揮刀紛紜 爭剗膾脯<sup>164</sup>

The swinging knives were numerous and disorderly  
As they competed in slicing him into shreds of flesh.

The above section describes the capture and execution of the rebel military commissioner Liu Pi. On the surface, these graphic accounts seem to praise Xianzong's ability to punish evil, but such brutal details of the death of Liu Pi and his family probably only

<sup>164</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 628

trigger repulsion and disbelief in the reader. Although group execution was considered just punishment for the revolting generals, it was never appropriate to elaborate on such a bloody scene in poetry. Although the rest of the poem closely emulates the solemn and archaic style of the "Odes" and "Hymns," these depictions of overt and excessive violence prevent the poem from becoming a truly *fugu* piece. Women and children being dragged to their death, people being chopped in half at their waists, and the piling up of dismembered corpses, are images of sadistic violence and are hardly acceptable for any kind of respectable literature. They form a strong contrast to the glorious and dignified praise that the rest of the poem consists of, and if Han Yü is concerned about *fugu*, he would have avoided images of such cruelty and made this poem more similar to the "Great Brightness" or other war poems in the *Book of Songs*. The reason for Han to include these brutal details has been unclear to critics and scholars. Some have thought that he was using such language to scare the remaining rebel forces that still occupied parts of the empire. Nevertheless, this kind of persuasion through fear can hardly be consistent with the principles of the mid Tang *fugu* movement, which stressed the moral and educational function of literature. Also, there are other critics that simply think Han had bad taste in poetry. Among those who disapproved of Han, the Song literatus Su Zhe 蘇轍 (1039~1112) presented a particularly strong attack in his essay "Five Defects

of Poetry” 詩病五事。 In Su Che’s view, anyone who claims to be a promoter of *fugu* is not supposed to write about such senseless violence:

此李斯頌秦所不忍言 而退之自謂無愧于雅頌 何其陋也<sup>165</sup>

This is something that even Li Si<sup>166</sup> could not bear to say when he praised Qin, yet Han Yü self proclaimed that he was not ashamed [of deviating] from the “Odes” and “Hymns.” Just how despicable this is!

Although Han’s reason for including these lines is uncertain, their effect of startling the reader is obvious. Like the dazzling array of bizarre characters, the brutal imagery is something that violates both contemporary and earlier conventions and is used as a tool for creating shock. It is a tactic that is hardly consistent with the ideas of *fugu*, which sees poetry as a vehicle for moral instruction or expressing personal feelings. If a mild level of violence is sufficient to criticize immorality and convey the poet’s indignation, there should be no need to describe the unsightly violence with further details, let alone elaborating it into one’s stylistic signature.

Moreover, besides violence, there are other forms of peculiar images in Han’s poems. The themes of these poems may be conventional, but they are often conveyed through strange scenes or situations atypical of earlier verse. For example, the following is the

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<sup>165</sup> Su Zhe 蘇轍, *Luancheng sanji* 樂城三集, Sikuquanshu huiyao 四庫全書薈要 383, Taipei: Shijie shuju 世界書局, 1988, p. 263

<sup>166</sup> Li Si (?~210 BCE.) was the prime minister who assisted the notorious First Emperor of Qin (259~210 BCE.) in his persecution of Confucians. The short-lived dynasty of Qin is frequently used as a symbol for tyranny.

poem "First Time Eating Southern Food, Given to Yuan Number Eighteen the Chief Musician" 初南食貽元十八協律.<sup>167</sup>

蟹實如惠文 骨眼相負行

The horseshoe crab<sup>168</sup> indeed looks like the Huiwen [cap];<sup>169</sup>

With boney eyes<sup>170</sup> they walk while carrying one another.

蠔相黏爲山 百十各自生

The oysters stick to each other to form mountains;

In hundreds and tens they grow on their own.

蒲魚尾如蛇 口眼不相營

The tail of the reed fish<sup>171</sup> is like a snake;

Its eyes and mouth do not work with each other.<sup>172</sup>

蛤即是蝦蟆 同實浪異名

[What the southerners call] *ha* is actually a toad;

They are the same in reality but are carelessly given different names.

章舉馬甲柱 鬥以怪自呈

The octopus and the horse-armor mussel,<sup>173</sup>

Vie [with one another] by revealing their strangeness.

其餘數十種 莫不可歎驚

As for the other several tens of kinds,

None can refrain from sighing with surprise [when looking at them].

我來禦魑魅 自宜味南烹

<sup>167</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 341. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 690

<sup>168</sup> This is *limulus*, also known as the king crab. The Chinese believed that they carried each other on their backs when moving underwater.

<sup>169</sup> A large cap traditionally worn by military officials and is often exquisitely decorated. It is called the Huiwen cap because supposedly it was designed by King Huiwen of Zhao 趙惠文王 during the Warring States period.

<sup>170</sup> This probably means that the creature's eyes look like parts of its bone, which is a reference to the creature's hard exterior shell.

<sup>171</sup> The reed fish probably refers to a species of ray, which has a large and flat body and a long tail.

<sup>172</sup> This refers to the fact that the creature's eyes are located on the top of its flat body, while its mouth is on the bottom.

<sup>173</sup> More commonly known today as the *yao* mussel 瑤柱.

I have come to fend off the evil ghosts and spirits,  
So naturally it is appropriate for me to taste southern cooking.

調以鹹與酸 芼以椒與橙

I season [the food] with salt and vinegar,<sup>174</sup>

And stew it with pepper<sup>175</sup> and orange.

腥臊始發越 咀吞面汗驛

The rancid stench begins to smell worse,  
While chewing and swallowing my face sweats and turns red.

惟蛇舊所識 實憚口眼噤

Only the snake is something that I knew from before;  
I am indeed scared of the viciousness of its mouth and eyes.

開籠聽其去 鬱屈尚不平

I open the cage and let it go;

Feeling pent up and wronged, it is still discontent.

賣爾非我罪 不屠豈非情

Selling you was not my fault;

Since I did not kill you, have I no compassion?

不祈靈珠報 幸無嫌怨并

I do not hope for the reward of a spirit pearl;<sup>176</sup>

I will feel lucky if you do not hate me.

聊歌以記之 又以告同行<sup>177</sup>

I might as well write a poem to record this,

And to inform those who travel with me.

This poem was probably written around 819 CE., when Han Yü was exiled to the remote southern prefecture of Chao 潮州.<sup>178</sup> The work opens with an impressive array of

<sup>174</sup> Lit: saltiness and sourness.

<sup>175</sup> This is the Sichuan pepper or *huajiao* 花椒, not the modern day pepper or *hujiao* 胡椒, which was not introduced to China until the Ming Dynasty.

<sup>176</sup> This refers to the story of "Marquis Sui's Pearl" 隨侯之珠 in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. In this story the Marquis of Sui saved an injured snake, and the snake then picked up a pearl from the river to repay his kindness.

Xiong Lihui 熊禮匯, *Xinyi huainanzi* 新譯淮南子, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1997, p. 278

<sup>177</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1132~1133



southern seafood. Although they may be common in China nowadays, these sea creatures were unimaginable candidates for food to a ninth century northerner, and yet, from the attention to the details, it is obvious that Han was highly intrigued by the very weirdness of these animals. Surrounded by these bizarre dishes, it is also ironic that the only familiar item on the menu, and the only animal Han was sympathetic to, was a sinister looking snake. The overall theme of the poem is not apparent; Han Yü could be using the snake as a metaphor for an ungrateful person whom he once helped, or the poem could be a self-ridicule on the frustration of being exiled to the far south. Although both interpretations are within the realm of conventional poetry, it is undeniable that the bizarre imagery of this poem is unexpected within the dignified context of *fugu*. Oddly shaped sea creatures being cooked into stinking dishes, an established scholar eating them while sweating and flushing, and a vicious serpent that sparks off sympathy and homesickness instead of disgust, are interesting and unique images, but they do not provoke righteousness and morality, nor do they remind the reader of the ideal ancient world in any way.

Another poem that is particularly notable for its imagery is Han's "Suffering from

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<sup>178</sup> The east most prefecture of Lingnan Circuit 岭南道. The capital of this prefecture was Haiyang 海陽, present day Chouzhou City 潮州市 in Guangdong Province.

the Cold” 苦寒.<sup>179</sup> The poem uses the severe coldness as the symbol for the lack of the emperor’s grace. The poem describes how various gods and creatures, including the speaker himself, are suffering from the cold and desperately wishing for warmth to come, which makes its allegorical message more explicit than “First Time Eating Southern Food.” Nevertheless, the images presented in this poem are just as eccentric and startling as the last, especially when the speaker describes his own injury from the cold in the following lines:

(line nineteen to line forty-eight)

而我當此時 恩光何由沾

And [since] it is at a time like this,

How can we even be touched upon by the gracious light?

肌膚生鱗甲 衣被如刀鎌

Scales and shells grow on my skin,

And my clothes and quilt are like knives and sickles.

氣寒鼻莫嗅 血凍指不拈

The air is cold and my nose is unable to smell anything.

My blood is frozen and my fingers are unable to grasp.

濁醪沸入喉 口角如銜箝

Coarse wine enters my throat [as if it is] boiling,

And the corners of my mouth [are frozen solid] as if I am gagged.

將持匕箸食 觸指如排籤<sup>180</sup>

I am about to pick up the spoon and chopsticks to eat,

But when [the utensils] touch my fingers it is like arranging divination stalks.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>179</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 301

<sup>180</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 154

<sup>181</sup> This interpretation assumes that the divination stalks refer to the fingers. Others such as Stephen Owen seem to think that the divination stalks refer to the utensils, which means that the fingers are so frozen that handling eating utensils is as slow and awkward as arranging divination stalks. Stephen Owen, *The*

In spite of the poem's orthodox allegorical theme, the imagery of these descriptions is extremely eccentric. The poet uses "scales and shells" to describe the cracking of one's skin due to severe cold while the clothes and quilts that are supposed to protect one from coldness become "knives and sickles" and cause only pain to the cracked skin. As the poem moves on, the rest of the speaker's body falls victim to the cold as well. His nose can no longer smell; his blood is frozen; his mouth becomes rigid and stiff as if gagged, and his fingers also deform so badly that they resemble the thin brittle slips used for divination. These hyperbolic descriptions portray an unsightly but carefully crafted image: one that would make the reader fascinated by both its originality and its departure from normal aesthetics. Even though the suffering from the cold implies criticism of the ruler's impotence, such moral significance are likely to be overshadowed by the many descriptive details that are grotesque and clever at the same time.

Moreover, there are other scenes from Han's poems that are equally weird without being so exaggerated. For example, in the poem "Alas! the Ballad of Mr. Dong" 嗟哉董生行,<sup>182</sup> Han Yü writes:

(line twenty-three to line thirty-three)  
 嗟哉董生孝且慈 人不識 惟有天翁知  
 Alas! Mr. Dong is both filial and loving.

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*Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, p. 214

<sup>182</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 599

People do not recognize this, only the Lord of Heaven knows.

生祥下瑞無休期

[Heaven] creates auspiciousness and sends down good fortune without end.

家有狗乳出求食 雞來哺其兒

In his home there is a dog nursing [its puppies]. [When] it goes out to look for food,

The chicken comes to nurse its puppies.

啄啄庭中拾蟲蟻 哺之不食鳴聲悲

It pecks and pecks in the yard and picks up insects and ants

To feed the [the puppies], but they do not eat and the crowing [of the chicken] is sad.

徬徨躑躅久不去 以翼來覆待狗歸

It hesitates and lingers, and for a long time it does not leave.

With its wings it covers [the puppies] and waits for the dog to return.

嗟哉董生誰將與儔<sup>183</sup>

Alas, Mr. Dong! Just who will be able to match [your righteousness]?

Supposedly Han Yü wrote this poem to comfort a friend of his named Dong Zhaonan 董召南, who had failed the *jinshi* 進士 examination. The main point of the poem is that although Dong's morality was not appreciated by the state, it was recognized by heaven, and in gratitude for Dong's virtue, heaven caused a miracle to occur. However, instead of using more graceful animals such as a horse or a bird, heaven decided to convey the miracle through a bizarre interaction between a chicken and a dog. Although chickens and dogs were associated with reclusion in certain literature,<sup>184</sup> this image of a chicken

<sup>183</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 80

<sup>184</sup> In the eightieth chapter of the *Daodejing* 道德經, there is the following passage: 鄰國相望 雞犬之聲相聞 民至老死不相往來 "Let the neighboring states gaze at each other [over distance], and let the sounds of chickens and dogs be heard from each other, so that the people will grow old and die without having had any dealings with one another." The chapter envisions a harmonious world where states are kept in relative isolation from each other to prevent warfare. People are also described as living in a semi-reclusive fashion as in small farming communities. The chickens and dogs here symbolize the peace and tranquility of the peasants. Due to their appearance in this passage, the two animals have been used as a symbol of reclusion.

that nurses puppies is nonetheless bizarre if not comical. It is an original invention by Han Yü since never before have the two animals been described as nursing each other. There are many other animals that have been conventionally used as symbols of moral integrity, but instead of following the traditional pattern Han has chosen to create his own peculiar symbolism.

Finally, Han Yü is also one of the few who does not avoid describing filth in his verse:

病中贈張十八<sup>185</sup>

"During Sickness, sent to Zhang Number Eighteen"

(line one to line two)

中虛得暴下 避冷臥北窗<sup>186</sup>

My body is exhausted<sup>187</sup> as I am having a severe diarrhea;  
To seek shelter from the cold I have lain beside the north window.

譴瘧鬼<sup>188</sup>

"Condemning the Malaria Ghost"

(line seven to line eight)

求食歐泄間 不知臭穢非<sup>189</sup>

It seeks food among the vomit and excrement,  
And does not know that stench and filth are bad.

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Yu Peilin, *Xinyi laozhi duben*, p. 158

<sup>185</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 3

<sup>186</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 63

<sup>187</sup> Lit: my inside is empty.

<sup>188</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 342. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 44

<sup>189</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 264

While an earlier poet would never have included such foul images in his verse, Han Yü went against earlier poetic conventions. This mention of unsightly human functions, along with the shocking and eccentric imagery of his other poems, constitutes an experiment in the bizarre which challenges the aesthetic standards of earlier Chinese poetry. In other words, Han's poems sometimes "regard ugliness as beauty" 以醜爲美, which is a tendency noticed by many critics and often interpreted as a reaction to the refinement and balance found in the poetry of the High Tang. However, this search for new aesthetics not only departs from the conventions of the High Tang but also all the earlier traditions. It reflects a desire to break away from the past and establish something new, which is not at all consistent with the idea of *fugu*.

## Chapter Four: Humour

Another stylistic feature of Han that is atypical of *fugu* is the use of humour. Given its serious concern for Confucian ethics and literary orthodoxy, the *fugu* movement is inherently incompatible with wittiness and jokes, and yet Han Yü's verses often contain comical descriptions and remarks. For example, in the second poem of "Two Poems Written At the End of Huangfu Shi's Poem on the Garden Pond of Gong'an"<sup>190</sup> 讀皇甫湜公安園池詩書其後二首,<sup>191</sup> Han wrote:

我有一池水 蒲葦生其間

I have a pond of water;

Reeds and cattails are growing inside it.

蟲魚沸相嚼 日夜不得閒

The insects and fish [look as if they are being] boiled as they chew on each other;

Day and night they are never idle.

我初往觀之 其後益不觀

At first I used to go and look at it;

Gradually I stopped looking after a while.

觀之亂我意 不如不觀完

Looking at it disturbs my mind;

It would be better if I did not look.

用將濟諸人 舍得業孔顏

By using [one's literary talent], one will be able to save many people;

By abandoning it [and passing it down to disciples],

<sup>190</sup> Gong'an 公安 was a city in Jing Prefecture 荊州 of Shannan East Circuit 山南東道, south of present day Shashi City 沙市市 in Hubei Province.

<sup>191</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 341. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 43

One could achieve the feats of Confucius and Yan [Hui].<sup>192</sup>

百年詎幾時 君子不可閒<sup>193</sup>

Just how long is a hundred years?<sup>194</sup>

A gentleman cannot stay idle.

This poem is a response to a poem called “Garden Pond of Gong’an” 公安園池 written by Han’s student Huangfu Shi. Huangfu’s original poem is no longer extant but apparently it used the petty fish and insects in a pond to satirize its author’s enemies, and suffered from having too many trifling details.<sup>195</sup> Huangfu’s immature composition thus prompted Han Yü to write this poem to point out his flaws, and the pond being described here refers in fact to the poem written by Huangfu Shi. Han Yü’s is supposed to be a serious poem where a teacher instructs his student on the proper literary approach, and yet the poem looks more like a light-hearted joke at Huangfu’s expense. First, Han Yü pokes fun at the wordiness of Huangfu’s poem with a witty exaggeration, saying that the insects and fish struggle with each other day and night without resting. Then, as a further mockery, Han comments on the poem in very crude language and comically repeats the word “look” 觀 four times from line five to line eight, making this poem a stylistically odd candidate for *fugu*. It may be true that the language of a *fugu* poem

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<sup>192</sup> Confucius’ top disciple.

<sup>193</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1084

<sup>194</sup> Implies the maximum lifetime of a human being.

<sup>195</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1084



should be down-to-earth and free from meaningless refinement, but it is never supposed to be so crude that it excites laughter.

We assume Han's attitude towards literature is primarily serious, but here the seriousness is undermined by the humorous device. If Han Yü were a strictly *fugu* poet, the proper approach to literature would be his greatest concern and would certainly not be a joking matter.

The purer *fugu* poets would also be startled by the fact that in Han Yü's poems even the most iconic figures of Confucian sagehood could be mentioned humorously. For example, in the poem "Answering Liu Zongyuan's<sup>196</sup> Eating Toads" 答柳柳州食蝦蟇,<sup>197</sup> Han wrote the following:

(line one to line sixteen)

蝦蟆雖水居 水特變形貌

Although a toad lives in water,

[Among the creatures of] water it has an especially weird shape and look.

強號爲蛙蛤 於實無所校

Ones that can cry loudly are called frogs,

But in reality there is no way in which they differ.

雖然兩股長 其奈脊皴皸

Although its two thighs are long,

What can it do about the wrinkling and blistering of its spine?

跳躑雖云高 意不離潭淖

<sup>196</sup> Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773~819) is a well-known prose writer and an acquaintance of Han Yü. In the original title he is referred to by his studio name Liuzhou 柳州. *Jiutangshu*, juan 160, liezhuan 110. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1209

<sup>197</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 341. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 711

Although it can jump high,  
 Its mind does not leave the muddy swamp.  
 鳴聲相呼和 無理祇取鬧  
 The sounds of its calling echo with others;  
 It cannot be reasoned with and only make a ruckus.  
 周公所不堪 灑灰垂典教  
 It is something that the Duke of Zhou could not bear;  
 He spread out ash<sup>198</sup> and taught it a lesson.  
 我棄愁海濱 恆願眠不覺  
 I have abandoned the shore of the sorrowful sea,  
 I keep wishing to sleep without waking.  
 叵堪朋類多 沸耳作驚爆<sup>199</sup>  
 [But] I cannot bear the large number of its friends;  
 They boil my ears and cause startling explosions.

Like "First Time Eating Southern Food," this poem was written when Han was exiled to Chaozhou and deals with the strange experiences he had in the south. But rather than being purely bizarre, the descriptions in this poem are more comical. The toads are depicted as ugly and dirty, but also playful creatures that "cannot be reasoned with and only make a ruckus," a colloquial expression that carries a joking tone. The metaphor that compares the noise of toads to a thundering explosion is another amusing hyperbole; but the most interesting part of the poem has to be the sage Duke of Zhou's suffering under the toads' noisy croaking, which obliges him to lay down his laws and teachings to this disgusting creature.

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<sup>198</sup> A method of driving away frogs and toads.

<sup>199</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1138

Confucian sages are also referred to humorously in Han's "Poem of Two Birds" 雙鳥詩.<sup>200</sup> The poem is about two magical birds that have sent the world into chaos with their loud singing, and describing their destructive power, Han Yü wrote the following:

(line twenty-nine to line thirty-eight)

不停兩鳥鳴 百物皆生愁

If you do not stop the two birds from singing,  
The myriad beings will all be sorrowful.

不停兩鳥鳴 自此無春秋

If you do not stop the two birds from singing,  
From now on there will be no more spring or autumn.

不停兩鳥鳴 日月難旋轉

If you do not stop the two birds from singing,  
It will be difficult for the sun and moon to turn the shafts [of their chariots].<sup>201</sup>

不停兩鳥鳴 大法失九疇

If you do not stop the two birds from singing,  
The great law [of the universe] will lose its nine constituents.

周公不爲公 孔丘不爲丘<sup>202</sup>

The Duke of Zhou will no longer be a duke;  
Confucius will no longer be a fucius.

The last couplet of the quoted section makes little logical sense and should be best taken as a witty and humorous statement. In the line "*kong qiu bu wei qiu*," Han Yü has formed a pun with Confucius' given name Qiu 丘, which also meant "hill." The line can thus be translated as "Confucius will no longer be a fucius" or "Confucius will no

<sup>200</sup> This probably refers to the myth that the sun and moon are dragged out to the sky by chariots of gods. "Difficult to turn the shafts" of the sun and moon thus suggests possible deviation of these heavenly bodies from their normal orbit.

<sup>201</sup> This line is probably based on the myth that the sun and moon are dragged to the sky by the chariots of gods.

<sup>202</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 836

longer be a hill.” While it is comprehensible for the Duke of Zhou to cease being a duke, it does not make any sense for Confucius to stop being a hill or a “fucius.”<sup>203</sup> Although this humour does not necessarily form an insult to the sage, it is highly unfitting to the serious context of *fugu*; and for those who are committed to the restoration of Confucian values, joking about the ultimate master is hardly an acceptable poetic device.

Humour does not appear merely sporadically in Han’s verses; rather, it is pervasive.

The following poem is written entirely in a comical manner:

嘲鼾睡二首其一<sup>204</sup>

“Number One of the Two Poems on Mocking the Snoring Sleep”

澹師晝睡時 聲氣一何猥

When Master Dan<sup>205</sup> sleeps during the day,

Just how loud<sup>206</sup> is his sound and breath?

頑飈吹肥脂 坑谷相崑崙

A violent gale blows on his rich body fat,

The pits and valleys [of his body] pile up high and uneven.

雄哮乍咽絕 每發壯益倍

Sometimes his vigorous shouting is suddenly swallowed and stopped,

But every time it resounds forth it becomes several times louder.

有如阿鼻尸 長喚忍眾罪

<sup>203</sup> Some have suggested that the second *qiu* in the sentence means “great” or “eminent” and does not refer to Confucius’ name. The line should thus be translated as “Confucius will no longer be great.” Although this translation makes the couplet seem less whimsical, it does not undo the pun in the original Chinese.

Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 838

<sup>204</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 345. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 591

<sup>205</sup> This poem is written to a monk called Danran. 澹然, secular name Zhuge Jue 諸葛覺. Not much is known about him except that he once met Han Yü and Meng Jiao in Luoyang in 807.

<sup>206</sup> Lit: “the barking of a dog.”

It is like the corpses in the purgatory of *Avici*,<sup>207</sup>

Who [have to] wail for all eternity and bear all their crimes.

馬牛驚不食 百鬼聚相待

The horses and bulls<sup>208</sup> are startled and cannot eat;

Hundreds of ghosts gather together and wait [for the snoring to stop].

木枕十字裂 鏡面生瘡癩

The wooden pillow cracks in the shape of a cross;

The surface of a mirror forms rashes and tiny swellings.

鐵佛聞皺眉 石人戰搖腿

When an iron Buddha hears [the snore] he knits his brows;

Stone men shiver and shake their legs [as they suffer from the snore].

孰云天地仁 吾欲責真宰

Who said that heaven and earth are merciful?

I would like to reproach the True Lord of all creations.

幽尋虱搜耳 猛作濤翻海

[When the snore is] quiet it follows the lice that forage in one's ears.

[When the snore is] loud it forms waves that roll in the ocean.

太陽不忍明 飛御皆惰怠

The sun could not bear to shine;

The flying chariots<sup>209</sup> all become lazy.

乍如彭與鯨 呼冤受菹醢

[It sounds] just like Peng [Yue]<sup>210</sup> and Qing [Bu],<sup>211</sup>

<sup>207</sup> A Sanskrit word meaning "without intermission." It refers to the lowest and worst level of hell, where suffering continues without an end.

<sup>208</sup> Refers to the Buddhist belief that hell is run by demons who have the body of a human and the head of an animal, in particular the heads of bulls and horses.

<sup>209</sup> Refers to the same myth in footnote 10.

<sup>210</sup> Peng Yue 彭越 (?~196 BCE.) was a meritorious general serving under Liu Bang 劉邦 (256~195 BCE.), the founder of Han Dynasty. After the establishment of the dynasty, Peng Yue was suspected of plotting a revolt and was executed by Empress Lu 呂后 (241~180 BCE.). The punishment he received was called *haixing* 醢刑, which involved chopping the corpse into minced meat after the execution. *Shiji*, juan 90, liezhuan 30. Zhang Liansheng 張連生 ed, *Bainaben ershisishi shiji* 百衲本二十四史史記, Taipei: Commercial Press, 1948, p. 912

<sup>211</sup> Qing Bu 黥布 (?~195 BCE.) was a general originally serving under Xiang Yu 項羽 (232~202 BCE.) but who later defected to Liu Bang. After seeing meritorious generals such as Han Xin 韓信 (?~196 BCE.) and Peng Yue successively executed, Qing Bu feared that he might suffer the same fate and revolted against Liu Bang. His forces were defeated by the imperial troops, and he was later captured and

Who wailed for being wronged as they were chopped into mincemeat.

又如圈中虎 號瘡兼吼餒

It is also like a tiger fallen into a trap,

Who cries for its wound and roars for its starvation.

雖令伶倫吹 苦韻難可改

Although [the Yellow Emperor] ordered Linglun<sup>212</sup> to blow [pipes],

The bitter tune [of the snore] is hard to change.

雖令巫咸招 魂爽難復在

Although [he Lord of Heaven] ordered Wuxian<sup>213</sup> to invoke [the dead],

[Damaged by the snore], their souls can hardly stay intact.

何山有靈藥 療此願與採<sup>214</sup>

Which mountain may contain the spiritual medicine?

To cure this [snore] I would like to go pick it.

This whole poem consists of hilariously exaggerated descriptions of a snoring monk. It may be possible to interpret this poem as an attack on Buddhism, and take the terribly loud snore as a metaphor for the disorder caused by the foreign religion. However, given the comical image of a fat snoring monk, it is difficult to treat this poem as a serious satire. From start to finish the poem is filled with humorous elements. In the first line, Han already pokes fun at the monk by saying that he sleeps during the day. In

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executed.

*Shiji*, juan 91, liezhuan 31. Zhang Liansheng, *Bainaben ershisishi shiji*, p. 915

<sup>212</sup> Linglun 伶倫 is a legendary musician said to have composed and organized music for the Yellow Emperor.

<sup>213</sup> Wuxian 巫咸 is a legendary shaman who was a master of divination. He is mentioned in several different sources, and here Han Yü is probably referring to his appearance in the poem "Encountering Sorrow" 離騷 in the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭 because he is explicitly connected with the summoning of spirits in these lines: 巫咸將夕降兮 懷椒糈而要之 "Wuxian is about to summon [spirits] in the evening; I carry pepper and fine sacrificial rice to welcome him."

Huang Shouqi 黃壽祺 et al. ed, *Chuci* 楚辭, Taipei: Taiwan guji chubanshe 台灣古籍出版社, 1996, p. 36~37

<sup>214</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 666

the second line he further ridicules the monk by describing his snore with a character that originally refers to the barking of a dog. Han Yü then makes fun of the monk's chubbiness, comparing his layers of flabby skin to the pits and valleys of a mountain. As the poem goes on, the monk's snore is exaggerated further and further. The power of the horrendous snore reaches far beyond the living and is able to startle the demons in hell, deform and break objects, frighten inanimate statues, and throw the whole universe off balance. It is also interesting that with the use of Buddhist terminology such as "Avici" and "bearing with the crimes" the tone of the hyperbole becomes particularly sarcastic and amusing. From line twenty-one to twenty-eight, historical figures such as Peng Yue and Qing Bu and legendary figures such as Linglun and Wuxian are introduced to further exaggerate the snore. These figures are all treated seriously in esteemed historical or literary sources such as the *Record of History* 史記 and the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭. Their appearance here thus forms a sharp contrast to the comical context of the poem and adds another dimension to the humour. Furthermore, the poem ends in a comical hyperbole. The "spiritual medicine" in line twenty-nine is none other than the magical herbs used by Daoist alchemists to create elixirs. Han Yü wishes to use this medicine of tremendous value only to cure the monk's annoying snoring, a ridiculous waste of the magical elixir that promises immortality. In other words, even if the poem

has a serious theme, its gravity is undermined by the recurring humorous devices. After all, suffering from someone's snoring is a comical situation unfit for conveying any serious idea, and poems such as "Mocking the Snoring Sleep" would probably seem frivolous to a *fugu* poet who treats literature as a critical tool for the urgent moral renewal of the world.

Other poems of Han Yü that are meant to be read somewhat more seriously frequently contain a similar kind of hyperbolic humour, even though this may be at odds with the poem's serious theme. For example:

苦寒

"Suffering from the Cold"

(line thirteen to line eighteen)

日月雖云尊 不能活烏蟾

Although the sun and the moon are said to be noble,

They cannot sustain the lives of the [Sun] Crow and the [Moon] Toad.<sup>215</sup>

羲和送日出 恆怯頻窺覷

As Xihe<sup>216</sup> sends off the sun,

He is timid and scared and repeatedly peeks [looking for the winter god].

炎帝持祝融 呵噓不相炎<sup>217</sup>

The Blazing Emperor<sup>218</sup> holds Zhurong<sup>219</sup> in his arms;

They huff and puff but cannot light a fire on each other.

<sup>215</sup> Refers to the myth that a crow lives on the sun and a toad on the moon. The implication is that the world has turned so cold that even these mythical creatures can no longer survive.

<sup>216</sup> The sun god, believed to drag the sun to the sky with his chariot every morning.

<sup>217</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 154

<sup>218</sup> A legendary sage king from early antiquity, believed to have become the god of fire and summer after he died.

<sup>219</sup> The name of a fire god.



Unlike "Mocking the Snoring Sleep," "Suffering from the Cold" is clearly a poem that carries a serious message. The whole poem is based on a metaphor that compares the emperor's lack of grace to a devastating cold spell. The myriad beings that suffer from the cold thus represent the commoners that suffer from the ruler's unsatisfactory governance. Nevertheless, when Han describes the extreme severity of the cold, he has included a few witty and comical lines that contrast sharply with the seriousness of the theme. In lines thirteen and fourteen, the power of the cold is said to exceed even that of the sun and the moon, thus killing the mythical creatures that live on them. While it may not be hard to imagine the Moon Toad freezing to death in the chilly night sky, it is wittily hyperbolic to say that even the Sun Crow living on the burning sun cannot survive the cold. Moreover, from line fifteen to eighteen, the sun and fire gods also seem laughable as they are distressed by the cold. Xihe, the mighty god that carries the sun in his chariot now becomes fearful and is nervously peeking for the dreadful winter god. The Blazing Emperor and the fire god Zhurong, who supposedly control the element of fire, now have to desperately hug each other for warmth as they struggle to rouse a flame. Instead of desolation and gloom, Han Yü has decided to use wittiness and humour to enrich his lines, an unlikely choice for describing a murderous cold that is part of a serious moral symbolism.

This conflicting blend of comic and serious elements forms a special kind of black humour in Han Yü's poetry, where a depressing or even hopeless situation is ironically depicted with humour. Unlike the *fugu* poets' clear and direct expression of feelings, Han's black humour may perplex readers with its ambivalence. For example, the following is a poem where Han Yü writes about the aging and deterioration of his own body in a strangely joking manner:

贈劉師服

"Presented to Liu Shifu"

羨君齒牙牢且潔 大肉硬餅如刀截

I envy you sir for your molars and incisors that are firm and clean;

Like knives they cut the large meat and hard pastries.

我今呀豁落者多 所存十餘皆兀艱

Nowadays my [mouth] has become wide open; [the teeth] that have fallen are many,

And the dozen that remain are all shaky and unsteady.

匙抄爛飯穩送之 合口軟嚼如牛呵

The spoon picks up mushy cooked rice and steadily delivers it [to my mouth];

I close my mouth and chew softly like a cow chewing cud.

妻兒恐我生悵望 盤中不釘栗與梨

My wives and children are scared by me and have become depressed;

On the plates they no longer put<sup>220</sup> chestnuts and pears.<sup>221</sup>

祇今年纔四十五 後日懸知漸莽鹵

Just this year I am only forty-five years old;

In the future I can anticipate that [my mouth] will gradually become more desolate.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Lit: "to store food."

<sup>221</sup> The chestnuts and the pears are an allusion to a poem by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365~427) called "Scolding My Son" 責子: 通子垂九齡 但覓梨與栗 "My son Tong is about to be nine years old, and he only knows to look for pears and chestnuts." In this poem Tao writes that his youngest son named Tong 通 cared only about looking for pears and chestnuts when he was nine years old. By alluding to this poem, Han Yü is saying that he could no longer eat the same food as the young people.

Wen Honglong 溫洪隆, *Xinyi Tao Yuanming ji* 新譯陶淵明集, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 2002, p. 199

朱顏皓頸訝莫親 此外諸餘誰更數

[Those with] rosy complexion and unblemished necks<sup>223</sup>

Are startled and would not come near;

As for all the rest of them, who can even count [the ones that shun me for my appearance]?

憶昔太公仕進初 口含兩齒無贏餘

I remember that when the Grand Duke [of Jiang] began his official career,

His mouth only had two teeth and there were nothing else left.<sup>224</sup>

虞翻十三比豈少 遂自惋恨形於書

As for Yu Fan,<sup>225</sup> [who had still] thirteen, how could he have fewer [teeth than the Duke]?

Thus he felt regretful and expressed his feelings in a letter.

丈夫命存百無害 誰能點檢形骸外

If the life of a gentleman could be preserved, it would not cause any harm,<sup>226</sup>

[But] who can maintain<sup>227</sup> the exterior of one's form and body?<sup>228</sup>

<sup>222</sup> The phrase *manglu* is the same as *lumang* 鹵莽. Originally it means weeds growing on barren land. *Lu* is a kind of salty soil that cannot be used to cultivate crops, and *mang* means weed or wild grass. The phrase is used here to describe the Han Yü's own mouth, which will lose even more teeth in the future and look empty and desolate like a piece of wild barren land.

<sup>223</sup> Could be a reference to either young people or beautiful women.

<sup>224</sup> The Grand Duke was a very old man when he started serving King Wen of Zhou. However, the fact that he had only two teeth is probably Han Yü's own imagination. In the book *Xunzi* 荀子, he is said to be so old that he had lost his teeth, but there is nothing that suggests he still had two teeth left:

舉太公於州人而用之~夫人年七十有二齒困然而齒墜矣 "[King Wen] selected the Grand Duke from the people in the region and employed him. ~ He was seventy-two years old. He had no teeth and all his teeth had fallen."

Wang Zhonglin 王忠林, *Xinyi xunzi duben* 新譯荀子讀本, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1978, p. 201

<sup>225</sup> Yu Fan 虞翻 (164~233) was an important minister in the state of Wu during the Three Kingdoms period. When Sun Quan 孫權 (182~252) claimed the imperial title in 229, Yu Fan wrote a memorial to both congratulate the new emperor and lament his old age. However, in the memorial Yu only said that his "hair has turned white and his teeth have fallen" 髮白齒落, and there was never any reference to the exact number of his teeth. Like the two teeth of the Grand Duke, the thirteen teeth of Yu Fan is just a number made up by Han Yü.

*Sanguozhi*, juan 57, *Wushu* 12. Zhang Liansheng 張連生 ed., *Bainaben ershisishi sanguozhi* 百衲本二十四史三國志, Taipei: Commercial Press, 1937, p. 655

<sup>226</sup> Lit: "there is not a single harm out of a hundred."

<sup>227</sup> Lit: "to examine and inspect for the purpose of maintenance."

<sup>228</sup> This is an allusion to the *Zhuangzi*. In the chapter "Sign of Virtue Complete" 德充符, a man with a crippled leg named Shentu Jia 申徒嘉 is studying under a master with another able-bodied man named Zheng Zichan 鄭子產. Zheng despises Shentu for his handicap, and as a reply to his disrespect, Shentu

巨縵東釣儻可期 與子共飽鯨魚膾<sup>229</sup>

If fishing in the east with a giant string<sup>230</sup> is something that can be expected,

I would like to get full on minced whale meat with you.

The poem begins with an odd and comical compliment to a friend's teeth. Han Yü first envies his friend for his firm and "clean" dental condition. While the firmness of the teeth is a sign of physical health and youth, the cleanness is more of a joking remark. In the next line, Han hilariously exaggerates his friend's dental health, comparing his teeth to knives that cut through the hard-to-chew food with ease. Together with the crude and direct wording, these two lines open the poem in a surprisingly joking manner. Then Han Yü moves on to talk about the poor condition of his own teeth; the humorous tone continues at first, but it gradually becomes more depressing as the poem goes on. Han first states that, unlike his friend, many of his teeth have fallen. This is supposed to be a

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lectures Zheng saying: 吾與夫子遊十九年矣 而未嘗知吾兀者也 今子與我遊於形骸之內 而子索我於形骸之外 不亦過乎 "I have wandered with the master for nineteen years, and he never once noticed that I am a man with a crippled leg. Now you and I are wandering in the [spiritual] interior of our forms and bodies, and yet you look for me in the [physical] exterior of our forms and bodies. Is this not erroneous?"

Without knowing the original passage one may be tempted to interpret *xinghai wai* 形骸外 as "matters existing beyond one's body," but in fact it should be interpreted as the "physical exterior of one's body."

Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi* 莊子今註今譯, Taipei: Commercial Press, 1975, p. 166

<sup>229</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 843

<sup>230</sup> This is another allusion to the *Zhuangzi*. In the chapter "External Things" 外物, the Prince of the State of Ren 任公子 tries to catch a giant fish in the East Ocean by using a large hook and a giant black rope as his fishing pole and fifty cows as his bait. When he finally catches the fish, it is so large that it is enough to feed thousands of people. The story later explains that the catching of the giant fish is a metaphor for one's ambition. Those who fish from the ocean will be rewarded with a good catch while those who fish from the ditches and streams will only be rewarded with petty results. The story also compares the fishing to statecraft, saying that someone who has not heard of the fishing style of the Prince of Ren will naturally be unable to govern a state.

Chen Guying, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, p. 769

depressing sight, as the falling of teeth is an abrupt and drastic sign of aging unlike the whitening of hair or the wrinkling of skin. Nevertheless, Han has seen fit to comically exaggerate this disturbing image with the expression *xiahuo* 呀豁, which is normally used to describe the spaciousness of a vast and wide open terrain. The poet then describes the way he eats the mushy cooked rice, and comically compares his slow and difficult chewing to a cow's chewing cud. In addition, the fact that the rice is "steadily" delivered to his mouth also indicates calmness and a lack of distress. So far it seems that Han Yü is not troubled by the loss of teeth and feels comfortable enough about it to make jokes. However, as the poem goes on the tone becomes more serious. In line seven, Han's family is now scared and depressed by the deterioration of his dental health, and in the next line, the allusion to Tao Yuanming's poem is only there to signify the loss of youth and contains no humorous element. Then in lines nine and ten, Han's distress for the rapid deterioration of his body is expressed more explicitly, as the poet becomes conscious of his present age and starts envisioning an even more severe decline in the future. In the next couplet, the distress increases as Han's aging appearance causes exclusion from the people around him.

However, from line thirteen the tone of the poem again switches to being more optimistic and humorous. The wise and eminent Grand Duke of Jiang is described as an

old man with only two teeth left, and even more comical is the third century strategist Yu Fan's 虞翻 (164~233) ridiculous competition with the Grand Duke in having the fewest teeth. It seems that Yu Fan wishes to lose more teeth to resemble the meritorious Grand Duke, and when he realizes he has nearly a dozen more teeth than the Duke, he expresses an unusual "regret" for being too fit and having teeth that are too healthy. Between these two couplets Han Yü's attitude towards aging contrasts with the earlier distress and becomes wittily optimistic. Through the comical interaction between the two historical figures, Han is saying that the wisdom and experience gained from one's age is more valuable than a youthful body, and that the physical signs of aging are things to be proud of or even desired.

Nonetheless, in lines seventeen and eighteen, Han contrarily implies an anxiety about aging and death. First, in line seventeen, Han Yü suggests that a person's desire to hold on to his life is a natural and harmless thing; but in the next line, he regretfully points out that despite the harmlessness of the wish, it is impossible to sustain the physical body permanently. It is also interesting that the allusion to the *Zhuangzi* in line eighteen actually carries an opposite message from the original text. In the original passage, the physical "exterior of the body" 形骸外 is said to be inferior to the spiritual "interior of the body" 形骸內. In this poem, however, it is the exterior that has been

given primary importance. The poet has referred to the exterior as something desirable, and implicitly lamented the fact that it is able to be “maintained” 檢點. By contradicting the transcendent Daoist philosopher, Han has reintroduced the worries regarding aging and death, and reversed the comical atmosphere derived from the previous jokes. The poem thus repeatedly shifts between being lighthearted and depressing and conveys an ambivalent emotion that both amuses and disturbs the readers.

Finally, the second allusion to the *Zhuangzi* at the end of the poem is also worth contemplating. On the surface it seems optimistic, as in the original passage the catching of the giant fish is not merely a whimsy of the imagination but a metaphor for ambition. With this implication in mind it seems that Han Yü is turning the ending back to the hopeful side, saying that if someone wishes to accomplish something great with him, he will provide his service in spite of his aging body and thus “get full on whale meat.” In addition, since Han has specified that the whale meat be shredded, it seems that he is prepared to adapt to imperfect circumstances (like bad teeth) and is optimistic about the future.

However, since Han has just alluded somewhat negatively to the *Zhuangzi* in the previous line, one may be tempted to assume that the fishing of the giant whale also carries a message opposite from the original. Perhaps Han is again twisting *Zhuangzi*'s

words and mocking his story as an impossible fantasy, which would then end the poem on a dimmer and more pessimistic note. After all, if Han is indeed hopeful about the future, it would make more sense for him to phrase the last couplet affirmatively, without using the conditional word “if” 儻. In other words, with the odd but well-balanced blend of humour and gravity, optimism and pessimism, this poem is neither completely serious nor comical. The real message of the poem is also ambiguous because of this, and it is hard to tell whether the piece is an expression of grief over aging or a self-encouragement.

Another poem by Han Yü is composed in a similar fashion, showing that the poet indeed has a unique sense of humour on the deterioration of his dental health:

落齒<sup>231</sup>

“Falling Teeth”

去年落一牙 今年落一齒

Last year an incisor [of mine] fell;

This year a molar fell.

俄然落六七 落勢殊未已

Suddenly six or seven fell,

And this falling streak has yet to stop.

餘存皆動搖 盡落應始止

The remaining ones are all moving and shaking;

It is only when they have all fallen that [the falling] should stop.

憶初落一時 但念豁可恥

I remember when the first tooth fell,

I only thought that the gap was embarrassing.

<sup>231</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 427



儻常歲落一 自足支兩紀  
 If one falls each year,  
 They would be enough to last for two decades.<sup>233</sup>  
 如其落併空 與漸亦同指  
 If they should fall all at once,  
 It is also the same as if they had [fallen] gradually.  
 人言齒之落 壽命理難恃  
 People say that with the falling of teeth,  
 The length of your life naturally becomes hard to count on.  
 我言生有涯 長短俱死爾  
 I say that [all] lives have their limits;  
 Long or short, we all die in the end.  
 人言齒之豁 左右驚諦視  
 People say that with the gapping of teeth,  
 Those on your left and right will stare at you in shock.  
 我言莊周云 木雁各有喜  
 I say that Zhuang Zhou<sup>234</sup> has once said:  
 "The tree and the goose each has its own joy."<sup>235</sup>  
 語訛默固好 嚼廢軟還美  
 My speech may be defective, but it is better to be silent;  
 I can no longer chew, but soft foods are still delicious to me.  
 因歌遂成詩 持用詫妻子<sup>236</sup>  
 For this I sing and then made this poem;  
 I shall take it to startle my wife and children.

Similar to "Presented to Liu Shifu," this poem uses a bizarre sense of humour to deal with a disturbing sign of aging: the falling of teeth. From the beginning, this poem fails to resemble a serious piece due to the constant repetition of the word *luo* 落, "to fall."

Out of the thirty-six lines in the poem, *luo* is repeated fifteen times, a frequency that

<sup>233</sup> In fact it is twenty-four years, as *ji* 紀 is actually a period of twelve years.

<sup>234</sup> This is the actual name of Zhuangzi.

<sup>235</sup> This is another allusion to the *Zhuangzi*, explained later in the main text.

Chen Guying, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, p. 545

<sup>236</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 171~172

People say that with the gapping of teeth,  
 Those on your left and right will stare at you in shock.  
 我言莊周云 木雁各有喜  
 I say that Zhuang Zhou<sup>234</sup> has once said:  
 "The tree and the goose each has its own joy."<sup>235</sup>  
 語訛默固好 嚼廢軟還美  
 My speech may be defective, but it is better to be silent;  
 I can no longer chew, but soft foods are still delicious to me.  
 因歌遂成詩 持用託妻子<sup>236</sup>  
 For this I sing and then made this poem;  
 I shall take it to startle my wife and children.

Similar to "Presented to Liu Shifu," this poem uses a bizarre sense of humour to deal with a disturbing sign of aging: the falling of teeth. From the beginning, this poem fails to resemble a serious piece due to the constant repetition of the word *luo* 落, "to fall." Out of the thirty-six lines in the poem, *luo* is repeated fifteen times, a frequency that inevitably makes the poem sound crude and comical. Moreover, although "Falling Teeth" is more detailed than "Presented to Liu Shifu," it is also more casual in its presentation. Han Yü has described the successive falling of his teeth as if it were a joke, and with the recurring character *luo*, which was pronounced like *lak* with the sharp and abrupt entering tone 入聲 in medieval Chinese,<sup>237</sup> one can almost sense a comical

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<sup>235</sup> This is another allusion to the *Zhuangzi*, explained later in the main text. Chen Guying, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, p. 545

<sup>236</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 171~172

<sup>237</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991, p. 204

rhythm as the teeth fall one after another. In addition, Han mocks his initial reactions to this alarming sign of aging, as he exaggerates his fear in telling of turning his head upside down and being afraid to rinse his mouth. However, despite the seeming lack of concern, this poem actually carries darker implications than "Presented to Liu Shifu." While in the previous poem the poet's degree of hopefulness is ambiguous, in this poem the inevitability of death is made much more explicit. From line twenty-five to twenty-eight, the poet has envisioned his impending death and pointed out that there is no significant difference between dying young and dying old, conveying a depressing and pessimistic thought in spite of the indifferent tone of the lines.

Furthermore, the poem's allusion to the *Zhuangzi* in line thirty-two also requires some explanation. The tree and goose refer to a story in the chapter "Mountain Tree" 山木, in which a large tree escapes from being felled because its gnarled trunk is useless to the woodsmen, while a goose is slaughtered for a feast because it is unable to honk and warn its master about the approach of strangers. Although they are both useless to men, the tree and the goose end up with very different fates, and through this contradiction, Zhuangzi tries to introduce the possibility of transcending both usefulness and uselessness.

In the context of this poem, it would seem that the useless tree and goose refer to

those who have lost their teeth like Han Yü; but while the joy of the tree is easy to understand, it is difficult to see what the joy of the goose could possibly be. Just a few lines earlier, Han says that a long life and a short one are the same in their eventual end, so perhaps here he is taking a step further by saying that even life and death are essentially the same, thus allowing the slaughtered goose to be as joyful as the surviving tree. Also, from line thirty-three, we see that Han Yü's loss of teeth has impaired his speech, implying that he probably considers his condition to be closer to the goose that cannot honk. On the other hand, one may think that this is reading too much into Han's use of the allusion and decide to interpret the poem positively instead. Since in lines thirty-three and thirty-four, Han Yü does point out the "benefits" of being silent and unable to chew, it is possible to take this poem as a self-encouragement. The poet may also be simply poking fun at the Daoist philosopher, pointing out the obvious contradiction in Zhuangzi's teaching, and with the poem ending in the practical joke of "startling the wife and children," it is also reasonable to regard the whole poem as a witty joke on an unlikely subject matter. In any case, it is certain that with its peculiar sense of humour and potentially dark implications, "Falling Teeth" is anything but the stereotyped verse that laments one's old age and death. Like "Presented to Liu Shifu," this poem leaves its readers with a lingering ambivalence by joking about something that

is not supposed to be funny.

Although such black humour allows Han Yü to form a very unique style, it is at odd with the principles of *fugu*. Ideally, a well composed *fugu* verse is supposed to be a serious and sincere expression that connects the poet directly with the reader, and yet in the two poems above, we have seen not only a compromised seriousness but also a deliberate attempt to create ambiguity. Moreover, even if we ignore the disturbing aspect of Han's humour, the comically exaggerated images, laughably crude language, and jokes at the expense of revered Confucian sages are still features hardly appropriate to the movement that aims to revitalize Confucianism. Due to the consistent use of such comical techniques, Han Yü's verse should not be considered an example of *fugu*, and it may perhaps even have been intended to be a deliberate challenge to the movement.

## Chapter Five: Use of Empty Words and Unconventional Caesura

Another prevalent feature of Han Yü's verse is his common use of function words. Traditionally, nouns, verbs, and adjectives are called the real words or *shizi* 實字 because they are words that convey concrete meanings. Words that perform the grammatical functions in a sentence are called the empty words or *xuzi* 虛字 because they carry no specific meanings by themselves.<sup>238</sup> Typical examples of these include the objective pronoun *zhi* 之, the subjective relative pronoun *zhe* 者, objective relative pronoun *suo* 所, the instrumental co-verb *yi* 以, the third-person possessive pronoun *qi* 其, and so on.

These empty words are typical of formal prose writing and tended to be omitted in poetry as the poetic language became more compact and delicate. When the penta-syllabic poems and the *yuefu* 樂府 poems were first developed in the Han Dynasty, certain empty words did appear quite frequently, but by Tang times their use became much rarer and most poets would try to avoid them to save space for more concrete

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<sup>238</sup> Some empty words can carry concrete meanings as well. For example, *zhi* 之 and *yi* 以 can function as full verbs meaning "to go" and "to use" respectively. *Suo* 所 can also be a full noun meaning "place." However, they will lose their grammatical function and appear in different positions of the sentence if they are being used as verbs or nouns.

Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 47 and 68

images and descriptions. As an example of the early ancient poems, the following is the ninth poem of the Han penta-syllabic series “Nineteen Ancient Poems” 古詩十九首:<sup>239</sup>

庭中有奇樹 綠葉發華滋  
 There is a splendid tree in the yard;  
 Between its green leaves flowers bloom and flourish.  
 攀條折其榮 將以遺所思  
 I grab the branch and break off its flower;  
 I am going to give it to the one **whom** I miss.<sup>240</sup>  
 馨香盈懷袖 路遠莫致之  
 Fragrance fills up my chest and sleeves,  
 But the road is far and no one can deliver it.  
 此物何足貴 但感別經時<sup>241</sup>  
 How is this thing worth valuing?  
 I only feel sentimental that we have parted for a long time.

In this poem, empty words such as *qi*, *yi*, *suo*, and *zhi* are used. The insertion of these characters makes the poem's structure less compact than the later ones. It is different from the tight organization of Tang's regulated verse, and contemporary poets of Han Yü would try to avoid using such empty words in a short poem like this. For example, the possessive pronoun *qi* and the instrumental co-verb *yi* are likely to be omitted to make rooms for more descriptions, since without them the line is still understandable from the

<sup>239</sup> The series is considered to have been compiled during the end of Eastern Han. Commentators have agreed that the poems are written by multiple authors, but the exact date and authorship of each poem are impossible to determine. It was first recorded in *Zhaoming wenxuan* 昭明文選 (Literary selection of Crown Prince Zhaoming) compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501~531) during the Liang Dynasty.

<sup>240</sup> Lit: **With it**, I am going to give to the one **whom** I miss.

<sup>241</sup> Feng Baoshan 馮保善, *Xinyi gushi yuan* 新譯古詩源, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 2006, p. 283

word order and context. In line three, “Grab branch and break off flowers” 攀條折榮 is as understandable as “Grab branch and break off **its** flowers” 攀條折其榮, and under the tighter structure of Tang poetry, the character *qi* is likely to be substituted by another full noun or adjective to enrich the imagery. Likewise, in the next line if one only writes “Going to give to the one whom I miss” 將遺所思 without the instrumental co-verb *yi*, it is still understandable from the context that the speaker is going to do the action of giving **with** the flowers.

As for the phrase *suosi*, it is a short relative clause meaning “the one whom I miss” or “the one whom I think of.” Although *suo* cannot be omitted, such wording may be too rigid and prosaic according to the later poetic standard. It is likely to be replaced by phrases such as *guren* 故人 or *youren* 友人 meaning “friend.” This would make the line seem more concrete because both of these phrases contain a full adjective and a full noun, whereas *suosi* contains an empty word and a full verb.

In line six, the objective pronoun *zhi* is not entirely necessary either, as the direct object is often omitted in poetry if it is understood from the context. It could be omitted like the *qi* and *yi* in earlier lines, or it may be replaced by another noun with a specific meaning. The empty words thus cause redundancy and crudeness in this poem, but at



the same time they also give a natural ruggedness that cannot be achieved in the later, more polished poetry. The poem may be unrefined, but it is more spontaneous and carries a simple beauty of its own.

This beauty of simplicity and ruggedness is something that Han Yü cultivated. As a result, he often uses the empty words in his poems to emulate the redundancy and crudeness of early poetry. The following are a few examples:

秋懷詩十一首其八

“Number Eight of the Eleven Poems on Autumn Reminiscence”

(line fifteen to line sixteen)

其言有感觸 使我復悽酸<sup>242</sup>

There are moving sentiments in his words;  
They cause me to feel sorrowful again.

岐山下二首<sup>243</sup>

“Two Poems on Beneath Mount Qi”

(line five to line six)

丹穴五色羽 其名爲鳳皇<sup>244</sup>

[A bird with] the five-colored feathers of Danxue,<sup>245</sup>

Its name is phoenix.

病鷗<sup>246</sup>

“Sick Owl”

<sup>242</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 554

<sup>243</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 224

<sup>244</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 18

<sup>245</sup> Name of a mythical mountain associated with phoenix.

<sup>246</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 341. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 3

(line twenty-one to line twenty-two)

丐汝將死命 浴以清水池<sup>247</sup>

I saved your life that was going to end;

I bathed you **with** a pond of clear water.

和侯協律詠筍<sup>248</sup>

“In Response to Chief Musician Hou,<sup>249</sup> A Song on Bamboo Shoots”

(line nineteen to line twenty)

詎可持籌算 誰能以理言<sup>250</sup>

How can one hold the bamboo splints and calculate [the fortune]?

Who can explain this **with** principles?

赴江陵途中<sup>251</sup>

“On the Way to Jiangling”

(line ninety-one to line ninety-two)

生平企仁義 所學皆孔周<sup>252</sup>

For my whole life I have striven for benevolence and righteousness;

**What** I have learned is all from Confucius and [the Duke of] Zhou.

夜歌<sup>253</sup>

“Song of the Night”

(line five to line six)

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<sup>247</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1024

<sup>248</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 344. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 230

<sup>249</sup> This is Hou Xi 侯喜, was one of Han Yü's students. Not much is known about him except that he passed the *jinsshi* 進士 examination in 803 after having studied under Han Yü.

<sup>250</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 982

<sup>251</sup> The complete title is “On the Way to Jiangling, Sent and Presented to the Three Scholars of the Imperial Academy: Wang Number Twenty the Rectifier of Omissions, Li Number Eleven the Reminder, and Li Number Twenty-six the Dice Director” 赴江陵途中寄贈王二十補闕李十一拾遺李二十六員外翰林三學士.

*Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 420

<sup>252</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 289

<sup>253</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 139

樂哉何所憂 所憂非我力<sup>254</sup>

Happiness Alas! What is it **that** I worry about?

**What** I worry about is not [within the limit of] my power.

此日足可惜贈張籍<sup>255</sup>

"This Day Is Indeed a Pity, Presented to Zhang Ji"<sup>256</sup>

(line eleven to line twelve)

思之不可見 百端在中腸<sup>257</sup>

I think of **him** but cannot meet [him];

There are a hundred thoughts in my heart.

孟東野失子<sup>258</sup>

"Meng Jiao Lost His Son"

(line eleven to line twelve)

地祇爲之悲 瑟縮久不安<sup>259</sup>

The god of earth felt sad for **him**;

He was fidgeting and uneasy for a long time.

The use of empty words thus seems to be the most truly *fugu* feature of Han's verse; however, after a systematic comparison, one may detect some subtle differences between the use of empty words in Han's verse and that of the authentic ancient poems.

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<sup>254</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 151

<sup>255</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 730

<sup>256</sup> Zhang Ji (766~830) was a friend of Han Yü. *Jiutangshu*, juan 160, liezhuan 110. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1206

<sup>257</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 84

<sup>258</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 226

<sup>259</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 675

One example is the character *zhe*, which forms a relative clause where the relative pronoun is the subject of the relative clause.<sup>260</sup> When it appears in the *yuefu* or ancient poems of the Han and Wei, it usually cannot be omitted. Most of the time it appears in phrases such as “the one who sees” 觀者, “the one who is beautiful” 美者 and “the one who helps me” 助我者, and is required for the relative construction. The following are a few examples of such cases:

古詩十九首其五

“Number Five of the Nineteen Ancient Poems”

(line thirteen to line fourteen)

不惜歌者苦 但傷知音稀<sup>261</sup>

I do not pity the bitterness of the one **who** sings;  
I only feel sad that [those who] understand her music are few.

古詩十九首其十二

“Number Twelve of the Nineteen Ancient Poems”

(line eleven to line twelve)

燕趙多佳人 美者顏如玉<sup>262</sup>

In [the region of] Yan and Zhao, there are many fair ladies;  
Those **who** are beautiful, their faces are like jade.

陌上桑

“Mulberry on the Path”

(line seventeen to line eighteen)

耕者忘其犁 鋤者忘其鋤<sup>263</sup>

<sup>260</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 66~67

<sup>261</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 278

<sup>262</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 287

<sup>263</sup> A *yuefu* poem from the Han Dynasty, it is likely the modification of a folk song. Exact date and

Those **who** are plowing forget about their plows;  
 Those **who** are hoeing forget about their hoes.

孤兒行

“Ballad of the Orphan”

(line forty-two to line forty-three)

助我者少 啗瓜者多<sup>264</sup>

Those **who** help me were few;  
 Those **who** ate melons were many.

悲憤詩

“Poem of Sorrow and Indignation”

(line seventy-nine to line eighty)

觀者皆歔歔 行路亦嗚咽<sup>265</sup>

Those **who** are watching are all sighing;  
 The pedestrians are also sobbing.

美女篇

“Poem on a Beautiful Woman”

(line fifteen to line sixteen)

行徒用息駕 休者以忘餐<sup>266</sup>

The pedestrians stop walking because of [her];  
 Those **who** are resting forget about their meals due to [her].

七哀詩

“Poem on Seven Sorrows”

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authorship are unknown. The poem was first recorded in *Gujinzh* 古今注 (Commentary on the antiquity and the present) during the Jin Dynasty.

Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 228

<sup>264</sup> A *yuefu* poem from the Han Dynasty, it is likely the modification of a folk song. Exact date and authorship are unknown.

Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 242

<sup>265</sup> This is a penta-syllabic poem by the female poet Cai Yan 蔡琰 (177~?) during the end of Eastern Han.

Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 200

<sup>266</sup> This is a penta-syllabic poem by Cao Cao's son Cao Zhi 曹植 (192~232) during the Wei Dynasty.

Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 372

(line five to line six)

借問歎者誰 言是宕子妻<sup>267</sup>

May I ask who is the one **who** sighs?

They say she is the wife of a vagabond.

In all of the above examples *zhe* cannot be omitted or else the relative clause will change into a verb, an adjective, or a full sentence. They are different from phrases such as *jinzhe* 今者, literally meaning “the time that is now.” In this case the phrase is semantically the same without *zhe*, since *jin* 今 is already a noun meaning “now.” The relative construction is optional and serves more of an emphatic function for introducing a topic.<sup>268</sup> The phrases *jinzhe* may thus be loosely translated as “as for now” or “just now.”

This kind of optional *zhe* seldom appears in the ancient poems of the Han and Wei, but in Han Yü’s verse it is much more prevalent and there are numerous examples where the character is unnecessarily inserted:

赴江陵途中

“On the Way to Jiangling”

(line one hundred and three to line one hundred and four)

昨者京使至 嗣皇傳冕旒<sup>269</sup>

As for yesterday, a messenger from the capital arrived,

<sup>267</sup> Also a penta-syllabic poem by Cao Zhi.  
Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 408

<sup>268</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 74

<sup>269</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 289

[saying that the] succeeding emperor has inherited the crown.

歸彭城<sup>270</sup>

“Returning to the City Walls of Peng”

(line twenty-five to line twenty-six)

昨者到京城 屢陪高車馳<sup>271</sup>

As for yesterday I arrived at the capital,  
And repeatedly I rushed while accompanying the tall carriages.

送靈師<sup>272</sup>

“Sending Off Mastering Ling”

(line fifty-one to line fifty-two)

昨者至林邑 使君數開筵<sup>273</sup>

As for yesterday he arrived at Linyi,<sup>274</sup>  
And caused the ruler to host several banquets.

感春四首其四<sup>275</sup>

“Number Four of the Four Poems Inspired by Spring”

(line seven to line eight)

今者無端讀書史 智慧只足勞精神<sup>276</sup>

As for now, I am reading books and histories for no reason,  
And the wisdom is only good for wasting my energy.

喜侯喜至贈張籍張徹<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 412

<sup>271</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 120

<sup>272</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 369

<sup>273</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 203

<sup>274</sup> Name of an ancient state south of China, located in the mid-south of today's Vietnam, better known as Champa.

<sup>275</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 338. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 525

<sup>276</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 373

<sup>277</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 399

“Joy about Hou Xi’s Arrival, Presented to Zhang Ji and Zhang Che”<sup>278</sup>

(line twenty-one to line twenty-two)

今者誠自幸 所懷無一欠<sup>279</sup>

**As for** now, I indeed feel lucky

That there is not a single loss in what I have.

遊青龍寺贈崔大補闕<sup>280</sup>

“Traveling to Green Dragon Monastery,

Presented to Cui the Eldest<sup>281</sup> and the Rectifier of Omissions”

(line twenty-five to line twenty-six)

思君攜手安能得 今者相從敢辭懶<sup>282</sup>

I [used to] think of you and wish to hold your hands, but how could this be possible?

**As for** now, [I am finally able to] follow you, how would I dare to refuse you with an excuse?

送惠師<sup>283</sup>

“Sending Off Master Hui”

(line one to line two)

惠師浮屠者 乃是不羈人<sup>284</sup>

**As for** Master Hui the monk,<sup>285</sup>

He is indeed an unrestrained person.

驚驥<sup>286</sup>

<sup>278</sup> Zhang Che was another student of Han Yü. Not much is known about him either except that he also passed the *jinshi* examination after having studied under Han Yü.

<sup>279</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 620

<sup>280</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 370

<sup>281</sup> This is Cui Qun 崔羣; his biography can be found in the *Old Book of Tang*. *Jiutangshu*, juan 159, liezhuan 109. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1201

<sup>282</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 563

<sup>283</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 369

<sup>284</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 193

<sup>285</sup> *Futu* 浮屠 was originally the transliteration of the Sanskrit word *Buddha*, but later it could also refer to Buddhist pagodas and monks.

<sup>286</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 476



“The Inferior Horse and the Fine Horse”

(line one to line two)

駑駘誠齷齪 市者何其稠<sup>287</sup>

The inferior horse is indeed petty;  
As for the market place, just how many of [those horses] are there?

月蝕詩效玉川子作

“Poem of Lunar Eclipse, an Imitation of Lu Tong’s Work”

(line seventeen to line eighteen)

念此日月者 爲天之眼睛<sup>288</sup>

I think of these things **that** are the sun and the moon;  
They are the eyes of heaven.

送僧澄觀<sup>289</sup>

“Sending Off Monk Chengguan”

(line nineteen to line twenty)

愈昔從軍大梁下 往來滿屋賢豪者<sup>290</sup>

In the past when I followed the army in Daliang,<sup>291</sup>  
In and out of the whole house there were those **who** were worthy and heroic.

In all of the above examples, *zhe* is placed after a noun for the sake of emphasis rather than relative construction. In particular there is a tendency to use *zhe* to mark time such as *jinzhe*, “the time that is now” or “as for now” and *zuozhe*, “the time that is yesterday” or “as for yesterday.” *Zhe* is also emphatic and optional in phrases such as *futuzhe* 浮

<sup>287</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 115

<sup>288</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 746

<sup>289</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 342. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 325

<sup>290</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 128

<sup>291</sup> Present day Kaifeng 開封 in He’nan Province 河南.

屠者, *shizhe* 市者, *riyuezhe* 日月者, and *haojiezh* 賢豪者, because without the empty word, these phrases already carry the meanings of “Buddhist monk,” “market,” “sun and moon,” and “the wise and heroic ones” respectively.

This kind of wording is highly typical of prose and unconventional for poetry. Although the early poems of the Han and Wei did have a tendency to include empty words, their use of *zhe* was never as redundant and prosaic as Han Yü’s. This indicates that even in the use of empty words, Han is trying to create a new style of his own and not merely recreating the style of the ancients.

Another empty word that is used more prosaically in Han Yü’s poems is the character *zhi*. *Zhi* is an empty word with several grammatical functions, but in the ancient poems of the Han and Wei, it is almost always used as the objective pronoun meaning “it,” “him,” “her,” or “them.” The following are a few examples:

古詩十九首其六

“Number Six of the Nineteen Ancient Poems”

(line three to line four)

采之欲遺誰 所思在遠道<sup>292</sup>

I pick it, and whom should I give [it] to?

The one whom I think of is in a far away place.

有所思

<sup>292</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyan*, p. 280

“There Is Something on My Mind”

(line four to line nine)

雙珠玳瑁簪 用玉紹繚之

A hairpin [decorated] with twin pearls and tortoise shells.

I entwined it with a piece of jade.

聞君有他心 拉雜摧燒之

I heard that you had a new love,

[So] I bent, broke, smashed, and burned it.

摧燒之 當風揚其灰<sup>293</sup>

I smashed and burned it;

Facing the wind I let fly its ash.

悲憤詩

“Poem of Sorrow and Indignation”

(line line forty-nine to line fifty)

有客從外來 聞之常歡喜<sup>294</sup>

There is a traveler coming from outside;

[When] I hear about **this** I am always glad.

蒿里行

“Graveyard Ballad”

(line fifteen to line sixteen)

生民百遺一 念之斷人腸<sup>295</sup>

As for the surviving commoners, only one remains [alive] in every hundred;

When one thinks of **this** it breaks one's heart.

苦寒行

“Ballad of Suffering from the Cold”

(line three to line four)

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<sup>293</sup> A Han *yuefu* poem that is included as one of the “Eighteen Cymbal Songs of the Han” 漢鐃歌十八曲. Exact date and authorship are unknown.  
Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 220

<sup>294</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 200

<sup>295</sup> A penta-syllabic poem by Cao Cao 曹操 (155~220).  
Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 340

羊腸坂詰屈 車輪爲之摧<sup>296</sup>

The slope of Yangchang<sup>297</sup> twists and turns;  
The wheels of carriages are destroyed because of it.

七哀詩

“Poem on Seven Sorrows”

(line fifteen to line sixteen)

驅馬棄之去 不忍聽此言<sup>298</sup>

I rush my horse, leave **them**, and go away,  
[For] I cannot bear to listen to these words.

As seen above, when *zhi* is not being used as a full verb meaning “to go,” it is mostly used as an objective pronoun in the early *yuefu* and penta-syllabic poems. Although the empty word can function in other ways, the other functions are more typical of prose and rarely appear in verse.

In Han Yü’s poems however, *zhi* is not limited to being an objective pronoun and is often used for its other, more prosaic functions. For example, in the following lines, *zhi* is used as a subordination marker similar to the English preposition “of” or apostrophe s:

此日足可惜贈張籍

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<sup>296</sup> Also a penta-syllabic poem by Cao Cao.  
Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 341

<sup>297</sup> Literally the “Sheep Intestine Slope,” supposed to be the name of a place located to the southeast of today’s Huguan County 壺關 in Shanxi Province 山西.  
Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 342

<sup>298</sup> This “Poem of Seven Sorrows” is written by Wang Can 王粲 (177~217), one of the Seven Gentlemen of Jian’an 建安七子. It is a different poem from the one written by Cao Zhi quoted previously.  
Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 416

"This Day Is Indeed a Pity, Presented to Zhang Ji"

(line one hundred and thirty-three to line thirty-four)

淮之水舒舒 楚山直叢叢<sup>299</sup>

The river water of Huai is slow;

The Chu mountains are straight and clustered together.

岳陽樓別竇司直<sup>300</sup>

"Parting From Rectifier Dou<sup>301</sup> at Yueyang Chamber"<sup>302</sup>

(line forty-one to line forty-two)

時當冬之孟 隙竅縮寒漲<sup>303</sup>

At this time it is the first month of winter;

The cracks and holes [of the building] shrink as the cold increases.

薦士<sup>304</sup>

"Recommending a Gentleman"

(line sixty-seven to line sixty-eight)

悠悠我之思 擾擾風中蠹<sup>305</sup>

Vast and far away are the thoughts of mine;

Disorderly is the banner in the wind.

嗟哉董生行<sup>306</sup>

"Alas the Ballad of Mr. Dong"<sup>307</sup>

<sup>299</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 85

<sup>300</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 620

<sup>301</sup> This is Dou Xiang 竇庠, a friend of Han Yü. His biography can be found in the *Old Book of Tang* under his brother Dou Qun 竇群. *Jiutangshu*, juan 155, liezhuan 105. Zhu Jianmin, *Bainaben ershisishi jiutangshu*, p. 1181

<sup>302</sup> A famous scenery spot by Lake Dongting 洞庭 in today's Hunan Province 湖南.

<sup>303</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 317

<sup>304</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 382

<sup>305</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 528

<sup>306</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 599

<sup>307</sup> This is Dong Zhaonan 董召南, a friend of Han Yü. He is mentioned in an essay by Han Yü called "Preface of Sending off Dong Zhaonan" 送董召南序; other than this not much is known about him.

(line thirty-four to line thirty-six)

時之人夫妻相虐兄弟爲讎

[As for] people of this age, the husbands and wives abuse each other and the brothers make  
enemies out of each other.

食君之祿 而令父母愁<sup>308</sup>

They consume the ruler's stipend,  
And cause their parents to worry.

石鼓歌<sup>309</sup>

"Song of the Stone Drum"

(line sixty-five to line sixty-six)

石鼓之歌止於此 嗚呼吾意其蹉跎<sup>310</sup>

The song of the stone drum ends at this point;  
Alas, my will is surely disappointed.

符讀書城南<sup>311</sup>

"Han Fu<sup>312</sup> Studying at the South of the City Wall"

(line seven to line eight)

欲知學之力 賢愚同一初<sup>313</sup>

[If] you wish to know the power of knowledge,  
[Then you should know that] the wise and the foolish start from the same point.

In the above examples, *zhi* is used to indicate subordination between nouns by the formula N2 *zhi* N1, in which N1 is the head of the phrase and N2 is the modifier.<sup>314</sup>

<sup>308</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 80

<sup>309</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 80

<sup>310</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 795

<sup>311</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 341. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 708

<sup>312</sup> This is Han Yü's son.

<sup>313</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1011

<sup>314</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 61

When used in this way, *zhi* can often be omitted. For example, *wosi* 我思 is “my thought” and *wozhisi* 我之思 is “the thoughts of mine;” the two are completely the same in meaning and equally understandable. Likewise, phrases such as *dongzhimeng* 冬之孟 can also be rewritten as *mengdong* 孟東 to convey the same meaning of “the first month of winter.” The subordination marker *zhi* is therefore more clumsy and redundant than the objective pronoun *zhi* and is more typical of the less compact structure of prose, and even in the primitive poetry of the Han and Wei, it is difficult to find *zhi* being used as a subordination marker.

In addition, besides using *zhi* to indicate subordination, Han Yü also has a tendency to use *zhi* as a nominalizer, which is an even more prosaic usage of the empty word.

The following are some examples:

忽忽<sup>315</sup>

“Time Passes Quickly”

(line one to line two)

忽忽乎余未知生之爲樂也 願脫去而無因<sup>316</sup>

Oh time passes quickly, I am yet to know the joy in life<sup>317</sup>

And I wish to be relieved and go away without any more connection [to this world].

落齒<sup>318</sup>

<sup>315</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 338. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 260

<sup>316</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 107

<sup>317</sup> Lit: life's **making** of joy.

## “Falling Teeth”

(line twenty-five to line twenty-six)

人言齒之落 壽命理難恃

People say that with the **falling** of teeth,  
One's life will naturally be hard to rely on.

(line twenty-nine to line thirty)

人言齒之豁 左右驚諦視<sup>319</sup>

People say that [with] the **gapping** of teeth,  
[People] by one's left and right will be startled and start looking [at him] carefully.

## 符讀書城南

“Fu Studying at the South of the City Wall”

(line one to line four)

木之就規矩 在梓匠輪輿

When a tree is taken to the rulers and compasses,<sup>320</sup>

It is up to the carpenters and carriage makers.

人之能爲人 由腹有詩書<sup>321</sup>When a person is able to be a [virtuous] person,<sup>322</sup>

It is because he has [the knowledge of] poetry and books inside him

The above examples all contain verb phrases formally nominalized by inserting *zhi* between the subject and the verb. A short sentence such as “teeth fall” 齒落 is thereby changed into a noun phrase such as “falling of teeth” or “teeth's falling” 齒之落.<sup>323</sup> Nevertheless, this kind of marked nominalization is not always required. In classical

<sup>318</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 427

<sup>319</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 172

<sup>320</sup> Lit: A tree's **drawing near** to rulers and compasses, is in the carpenters and carriage makers.

<sup>321</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1011

<sup>322</sup> Lit: A person's **being able** to be a virtuous person, is because he has poetry and books in his stomach.

<sup>323</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 64



Chinese, verbs or verb phrases may be treated as nouns simply by being placed in the noun position.<sup>324</sup> This is especially true for poetry, where the grammatical rules do not need to be followed as rigorously as prose. Even without *zhi*, the verb phrase “life makes joy” 生爲樂 can be understood as a noun phrase “life’s making of joy” since it is placed after the verb “to know” 知. Similarly, phrases such as “teeth fall” 齒落 can also be automatically understood as “the falling of teeth” or “when teeth fall” as they are put after the verb “to say” 言.

Moreover, there is no need to nominalize some of the verb phrases in these lines. In the ancient poems of the Han and Wei, lines such as “a tree’s drawing near to rulers and compasses” 木之就規矩 are much more likely to be written as a full sentence “a tree draws near to rulers and compasses” 木就規矩. *Zhi* and the nominalization would not be necessary and an extra noun or adjective is likely to be inserted to fit the meter. Therefore, to mimic the ancient style more closely, Han Yü could have re-written the couplet into something like this:

材木就規矩 在梓匠輪輿

A timber tree draws near to the rulers and compasses;

[Such an act] is in the hands of carpenters and carriage makers.

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<sup>324</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 62~63

Even without the nominalization, the meaning of the couplet can be understood within the context of the second line. Likewise, the next couplet in the same poem can also be re-written in the following way:

眾人能爲人 由腹有詩書

Many people are able to be [virtuous] people;

[Such a result] is because they have [the knowledge of] poetry and books inside them.

The re-written couplets without nominalization seem much more natural and are more typical of ancient penta-syllabic poems. If Han had truly wished to recreate the archaic style, he could have easily re-written the lines to do so, but instead he chooses to write the lines with formally marked nominalizations that resemble the rigidity of prose writing. It is yet another example where Han makes his poems overly prosaic to create his own style.

Furthermore, Han Yü's most prosaic use of the empty word *zhi* occurs when it appears in combination with *suo* to form a relative clause. For example, in the following lines he writes:

瀧吏<sup>325</sup>

"Government Clerk by the Torrent"

(line sixty-five to line sixty-six)

凡吏之所訶 嗟實頗有之<sup>326</sup>

<sup>325</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 341. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 495

All the things **that** the clerk scolded [me for],  
 Alas, I am indeed guilty of quite a lot of them.

示兒<sup>327</sup>

“Instructing My Son”

(line nine to line ten)

前榮饌賓親 冠婚之所於

Under the southern eaves I provide banquets for the guests and relatives;  
 That is **how** I treat [the guests] during the coming of age ceremonies and weddings.

(line thirty-one to line thirty-two)

問客之所爲 峨冠講唐虞<sup>328</sup>

[When] I ask what is it **that** the guests do;  
 [The ones with] tall caps speak of Tang and Yu.<sup>329</sup>

In this construction, *zhi* is placed optionally before *suo* to formally express the subject of the relative clause.<sup>330</sup> This arrangement is optional as the subject is already apparent from the syntax. Both “*lizhisuohe*” 吏之所訶 and “*lisuohe*” 吏所訶 can be clearly understood as “what the clerk scolds,” and likewise, both “*kezhisuowei*” 客之所爲 and “*kesuowei*” 客所爲 can be understood identically as “what the guests do.”

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<sup>326</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 110

<sup>327</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 342. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 99

<sup>328</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 952

<sup>329</sup> Tang and Yu are ancient **sage** dynasties prior to Xia. This means the guests of Han Yü are all well educated and morally superior.

<sup>330</sup> In addition, relative clauses with the empty word *zhe* never contain *zhi* since *zhe* already indicates that the relative pronoun is the subject of the relative clause.

Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 68

In other words, the empty word *zhi* only makes the subject of the relative clause more explicit in these lines and is completely optional. Like the empty word *zhe* when it is placed after a noun, *zhi* in this case serves an emphatic function rather than an actual grammatical function. This optional usage of *zhi* is extremely prosaic and is almost never seen in poetry. Examples from early ancient poems would show that *suo* was mostly used without *zhi* to form a relative clause:

古詩爲焦仲卿妻作

“An Ancient Poem Composed for Jiao Zhongqing’s Wife”

(lines two hundred and eighty-one and eighty-two)

果不如先願 又非君所詳<sup>331</sup>

As expected, things are not like how I wished for earlier.

Moreover, they are not something **that** you sir could know in details.

箜篌引

“Lute Ballad”

(line thirteen to line fourteen)

久要不可忘 薄終義所尤<sup>332</sup>

The old friends cannot be forgotten;

Ending [a friendship] in stinginess is **what** the righteous ones despise.

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<sup>331</sup> This poem is more commonly known by its first line “A Peacock Flies Southeast” 孔雀東南飛; it is a long narrative poem about the tragic love between a minor official named Jiao Zhongqing 焦仲卿 and his wife Liu Lanzhi 劉蘭芝. The story is believed to be a true event that took place during the Jian’an 建安 period (196~220). The poem is the modification of a long folk song whose author cannot be identified. It was first recorded in the *New Chantings of the Jade Terrace* 玉臺新詠 compiled around 545 by Xu Ling 徐陵 (507~583).

Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyan*, p. 262

<sup>332</sup> A penta-syllabic *yuefu* poem by Cao Zhi. The poem’s title is the same as an earlier *yuefu* poem of the Han era, but its content and format has nothing to do with the original poem.

Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyan*, p. 365

## 室思

“Thoughts in a Room”

(line five to line six)

重新而忘故 君子所猶譏<sup>333</sup>

Valuing the new and forgetting about the old,  
This is **what** a gentleman rebukes and ridicules.

Although relative clauses containing *suo* are common in the early penta-syllabic and *yuefu* poems, it is difficult to find a line where *suo* is accompanied with *zhi*, as the subject of the relative clause is already implicitly expressed through syntax. Typically the insertion of *zhi* only appears in prose where there is no limitation on line length. Its appearance in poetry is thus redundant even by the crude standard of early ancient poems, and would only cause awkwardness rather than archaism.

Lastly, besides using common empty words in unusual and prosaic ways, Han Yü also uses empty words that are rarely seen in ancient poems. One example of this is the empty word *gou* 苟, which forms a conditional or “if” clause.<sup>334</sup> The empty word is seldom used in the poems of the Han and Wei periods, but in Han Yü’s verse it appears quite frequently:

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<sup>333</sup> A penta-syllabic poem by Xu Gan 徐幹, one of the Seven Gentlemen of Jian’an.  
Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 426

<sup>334</sup> *Gou* could also function as a full verb meaning “to be careless of.”  
Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 152

江漢答孟郊<sup>335</sup>

“The Long River and River Han, Answering to Meng Jiao”

(line nine to line ten)

苟能行忠信 可以居夷蠻<sup>336</sup>

If one can be loyal and trustworthy,  
Then one will be able to live [among] the barbarians.<sup>337</sup>

海水<sup>338</sup>

“Sea Water”

(line eleven to line twelve)

苟非鱗羽大 蕩薄不可能<sup>339</sup>

If not for their large scales and feathers,  
There is no way they could surge and soar.

送區弘南歸<sup>340</sup>“Sending off Ou Hong<sup>341</sup> Returning South”

(line thirty-three to line thirty-four)

處子窈窕王所妃 苟有令德隱不腓<sup>342</sup>

The virgin is graceful and is what a king would take as a concubine;<sup>343</sup>  
If he has great virtue then his reclusion would not be a problem.

<sup>335</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 315

<sup>336</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 919

<sup>337</sup> An allusion to a passage in the *Analects*. 衛靈公: 言忠信 行篤敬 雖蠻貊之邦行矣  
“Duke Weiling:” “[If one] speaks of loyalty and trustworthiness and behaves with sincerity and respect, then even the state of barbarians will be within reach.”  
Xie Bingying, *Xinyi sishu duben*, p. 249

<sup>338</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 345. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 367

<sup>339</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 125

<sup>340</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 369

<sup>341</sup> This Ou Hong seems to be a student of Han Yü. He is mentioned in a poem by Han Yü’s friend Zhang Ji called “Sending off Ou Hong” 送區弘; other than this not much is known about him.

<sup>342</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 576

<sup>343</sup> The word virgin or *chuzi* 處子 is used here as a metaphor for a recluse or *chushi* 處士. In addition, being taken as a king’s concubine is a metaphor for holding an official post.

苦寒<sup>344</sup>

“Suffering from the Cold”

(line forty-five to line forty-six)

鸞皇苟不存 爾固不在占<sup>345</sup>

If the simurghs and phoenixes could not live,  
Then you certainly do not need a divination [to know your fate].

寄崔二十六立之

“Sent to Cui, Number Twenty-six, Lizhi”

(line fifty-three to line fifty-four)

苟無飢寒苦 那用分高卑<sup>346</sup>

If there is no suffering from hunger and cold,  
How do we differentiate the high and the lowly?

One reason for *gou*'s rarity in early verse is that it is functionally identical with two other more common empty words: *ruo* 若 and *ru* 如. Both of them mean “if” and are placed in the same position as *gou*. In the ancient or *yuefu* poems of the Han and Wei, the “if” clauses are mostly formed by either *ruo* or *ru*. Had Han Yü substituted *gou* with either *ruo* or *ru*, his poems would have resembled the ancient style more. This again shows that recreating the ancient style is not Han's top priority when he employs empty words in his verse.

Finally, Han Yü also has a tendency to use the empty word *ju* 詎, which is used in

<sup>344</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 447

<sup>345</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 154

<sup>346</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 860

rhetorical questions that expect a negative answer, and carries the same function as *qi*

豈.<sup>347</sup> Similar to *gou*, *ju* is a more obscure variant of its commonly seen counterpart *qi*.

In the early ancient or *yuefu* poems, *qi* is nearly always used instead of *ju* as the primary way of forming a rhetorical question, and yet in Han Yü's poems, *ju* is used in many lines:

感春五首其四<sup>348</sup>

"Number Four of the Five Poems Inspired by Spring"

(line five to line six)

音容不接祗隔夜 凶訃詎可相尋來<sup>349</sup>

We cannot hear nor see each other and happen to be separated by the night;

**How could** the misfortune and death<sup>350</sup> come looking for us?

寄崔二十六立之

"Sent to Cui, Number Twenty-six, Lizhi"

(line one hundred and thirteen to line fourteen)

觀名計之利 詎足相陪裨<sup>351</sup>

Look at the [vain] titles and calculate their benefits;

**How could** they be enough to compensate [your loss]?

早春雪中聞鶯<sup>352</sup>

"Hearing an Oriole in the Snow during Early Spring"

(line nine to line ten)

風霜徒自保 桃李詎相親<sup>353</sup>

<sup>347</sup> Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar*, p. 144

<sup>348</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 525

<sup>349</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 731

<sup>350</sup> Lit: obituary or the new of someone's death.

<sup>351</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 862

<sup>352</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 343. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 561



[Amidst] the wind and frost one only protects himself;  
**How could** the peach and plum [remain] intimate with each other?

盆池五首其四<sup>354</sup>

“Number Four of the Five Poems on the Basin Shaped Pool”

(line one to line two)

泥盆淺小詎成池 夜半青蛙聖得知<sup>355</sup>

The mud basin is shallow and small; **how could** it form into a pool?  
 In the middle of the night the frog quickly knows about this.

閒遊二首其一<sup>356</sup>

“Number One of the Two Poems on a Leisurely Walk”

(line five to line six)

獨坐殊未厭 孤斟詎能醒<sup>357</sup>

Sitting alone, I have not yet felt satisfied;  
 Pouring [wine] all by myself, **how could** I stay awake?

If archaism were Han's stylistic focus, he would have substituted all the *ju* with *qi*, as the latter is much more commonly used in early verse. It is a simple modification that would make his style closer to the ancients. For someone as well trained in literature as Han Yü, this must be obvious. The empty words must be deliberately selected to maintain some distance from the ancients and establish an original style of his own.

Han Yü also likes to use unconventional caesura in his verse, another seemingly

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<sup>353</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 354

<sup>354</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 343. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 667

<sup>355</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 947

<sup>356</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 344. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 658

<sup>357</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1031

archaic feature that does not truly contribute to a style of *fugu*. Conventionally in a penta-syllabic verse, the caesura is supposed to occur between the second and the third characters of the line. This is followed throughout the development of penta-syllabic poetry; only a handful of the earliest ancient poems contain violations of this rule. A few of these early exceptions contain caesura between the third and the fourth characters:

## 悲憤詩

“Poem of Sorrow and Indignation”

(line thirty-nine)

比蒼者/何辜<sup>358</sup>

That man with grey hair, / what crime did he commit?

## 苦寒行

“Ballad of Suffering from the Cold”

(line three)

羊腸坂/詰屈<sup>359</sup>

The slope of Yangchang / runs long and twisted.

A few other cases contain caesura between the first and the second characters:

## 悲憤詩

“Poem of Sorrow and Indignation”

(line twenty-nine)

要/當以停刃<sup>360</sup>

I shall / put a blade next to you.<sup>361</sup>

## 贈婦詩

“A Poem Presented to My Wife”

<sup>358</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 200

<sup>359</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 341

<sup>360</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 199

<sup>361</sup> Lit: put you to a stopping blade.

(line nineteen)

傷/我與爾身<sup>362</sup>

It hurts / both you and me.

The unconventional caesura is similar to the use of empty words as they are both qualities of the earlier and more primitive verse, but the occurrence of unconventional caesura is much rarer. Even in the earliest penta-syllabic poems created during Han times there were very few cases of this, and it disappeared very quickly as the penta-syllabic meter matured. By the end of the Wei Dynasty, the conventional caesura between the second and the third characters was already the most fundamental rule in composing poetry, and by Tang times, it was nearly impossible to see any violation of the caesura rule.

One rare exception of this is Du Fu, who placed the caesura between the third and the fourth characters in the following line:

北征<sup>363</sup>

“Journey to the North”

(line 2)

閏八月/初吉<sup>364</sup>

It was the eighth intercalary month, / the first day of that month.

Nevertheless, such cases are very rare in Du Fu's verse. It is possible that Du Fu was

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<sup>362</sup> This is a poem written by the Eastern Han poet Qin Jia 秦嘉. His life dates are uncertain, but he is unknown to have served as an official during the reign of Emperor Huandi 桓帝, which lasted from 147 to 167.

Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 185

<sup>363</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 217. Luan Guiming 樂貴明 et al., *Quantangshi suoyin Du Fu juan* 全唐詩索引 杜甫卷, Qinhuangdao: Xiandai chubanshe 現代出版社, 1994, p. 368

<sup>364</sup> Liu Zhonghe 劉中和, *Dushi yanjiu* 杜詩研究, Taipei: Yizhi shuju 益智書局, 1968, p. 102

the inspiration for Han Yü to alter his caesura, but the rare occurrence means that Du never fully incorporated this feature into his style.

Han Yü on the other hand, includes a peculiar amount of unconventional caesura in his verse and allows it to become one of the most striking characteristics of his poetic style:

薦士<sup>365</sup>

“Recommending a Scholar”

(line twenty-five)

有窮者/孟郊<sup>366</sup>

There is a man in poverty / named Meng Jiao.

此日足可惜贈張籍<sup>367</sup>

“Today Is Indeed Regrettable, Presented to Zhang Ji”

(line one hundred and thirty-three)

淮之水/舒舒<sup>368</sup>

The water of River Hwai / is calm and steady.

符讀書城南

“Han Fu Reading in the South of the City Wall”

(line two)

在/梓匠輪輿

It is up to / the carpenters and carriage makers.

(line four)

由/腹有詩書<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p 433

<sup>366</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 528

<sup>367</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p 163

<sup>368</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 85

<sup>369</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1011

It is because / he has [the knowledge of] poetry and books inside him.

(line twenty)

乃/一龍一豬<sup>370</sup>

They then [turned out to be] / a dragon and a pig.

讀東方朔雜事

“Miscellaneous Matters from Reading Dongfang Shuo”

(line fifteen)

曰/吾兒可憎<sup>371</sup>

She says: / This son of mine is hateful.

孟東野失子並序<sup>372</sup>

(line forty-four)

“Meng Jiao Lost His Son, with a Preface”

賢/聞語而遷<sup>373</sup>

The worthy ones / hear the words and change [their ways].

Arguably, this use of unconventional caesura can be considered a form of stylistic *fugu*, but it is a very extreme form of *fugu* since such caesura occurred very rarely in the ancient poems to begin with. Unlike the use of empty words, which can be appreciated as a rugged but natural characteristic, the caesura variation is more of an imperfection that was quickly rectified by the evolution of poetry. In other words, although it is an archaic feature, it is not strongly associated with the natural and simple beauty of antiquity. Especially during Tang times, when the conventional caesura was already the

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<sup>370</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 1011

<sup>371</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 904

<sup>372</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 124

<sup>373</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 675

most basic rule of poetry, such an arrangement would seem more like a bizarre anomaly than an imitation of the ancient style.

Unconventional caesura can be found in Han's hepta-syllabic verse as well. This is peculiar because as a more recently developed meter, the hepta-syllabic poetry contains even fewer precedents of caesura variations. Since its first appearance, the caesura of the hepta-syllabic poetry has been set between the fourth and the fifth characters of the line, as can be observed in Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187~226) "Ballad of the Song of Yan" 燕歌行, one of the earliest examples of hepta-syllabic poetry.<sup>374</sup> Later, when the meter was further developed during the fifth century, some minor variations in caesura did occur. For example, in the following poem by Bao Zhao 鮑照 (420?~466), the caesura sometimes occurs between the second and the third characters instead:

擬行路難十八首其一

"Number One of the Eighteen Imitations of 'Harshness of Travel'"

(line one)

奉君/金卮之美酒<sup>375</sup>

I present you / fine wine in a golden goblet.

其二

"Number Two"

(line seven to line eight)

外發/龍麟之丹綵 內容/麝芬之紫煙<sup>376</sup>

<sup>374</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 353~354

<sup>375</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 880

<sup>376</sup> Feng Baoshan, *Xinyi gushiyuan*, p. 881

Outside it emits / the red silkiness of dragons and unicorns;  
 Inside it contains / the purple mist of musk and fragrance.

However, such unconventional caesurae are a lot rarer than those in the penta-syllabic poems. Also unlike its penta-syllabic counterpart, such variation did not appear until as late as the fifth century, which was only four hundred years away from Han Yü and could hardly be considered ancient in mid-Tang. In addition, this unconventional caesura is a rather isolated case and reflects Bao Zhao's personal style rather than the general development of the meter. Therefore, when Han Yü changed the caesura in his hepta-syllabic poems, it only shows the influence of a specific poet and does not invoke any flavor of antiquity.<sup>377</sup> Moreover, to make his lines even more peculiar, Han's variation in caesura also differs from Bao's and occurs between the third and the fourth characters instead:

送區弘南歸

"Sending Ou Hong Back to the South"

(line twelve)

落以斧/弓以繹徽

I chop it with an axe / and pull it with a rope.

(line eighteen)

嗟我道/不能自肥

Alas! Our doctrine / is unable to make itself flourish.

(line thirty-six)

子去矣/時若發機<sup>378</sup>

<sup>377</sup> It is also worthwhile to notice that Bao Zhao's use of *zhi* to indicate subordination also resembles Han Yü's style.

<sup>378</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 576

You have left; / it was as fast as shooting a crossbow.

陸渾山火

“Mountain Fire of Luhun”

(line fifty-five)

溺厥邑/囚之崑崙

I will flood their land / and imprison them in [Mount] Kunlun.

(line fifty-nine)

雖欲悔/舌不可捫<sup>379</sup>

Although I am going to regret this / my tongue cannot be stopped.

Han Yü has also written lines that consist entirely of nouns, which presents an even stranger arrangement of caesura. In the following line for example, there is either no caesura at all or the caesura can be placed anywhere within the line, a highly bizarre arrangement for classical Chinese poetry:

陸渾山火

“Mountain Fire of Luhun”

(line fourteen)

鴉鵂鵂鵂鵂鵂<sup>380</sup>

Crows, owls, hawks, eagles, pheasants, swans, and wild chickens.

While the unusual caesura may be barely taken as a form of *fugu* in Han's penta-syllabic poems, it does not make sense to argue the same for his hepta-syllabic poems, for the truly ancient hepta-syllabic poems never contained such atypical caesura. These oddly structured lines in Han's verse thus seem only strange and hardly archaic. They do not signify an attempt to return to an earlier style but an attempt to break the existing rules of

<sup>379</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 685

<sup>380</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 685



poetry.

The fundamental effect of the unconventional caesura, and that of the empty words, is to demolish the existing conventions of poetry and make Han's poems seem closer to prose. Nevertheless, this prosaism in poetry does not necessarily create archaism. For example, the following is one of Han's most prosaic poems, and regardless of its prosaism, it does not resemble any ancient poems of the Han and Wei:

謝自然詩<sup>381</sup>

"Poem of Xie Ziran"<sup>382</sup>

果州南充縣 寒女謝自然

In Nanchong District of Guo Prefecture,

There was a poor girl named Xie Ziran.

童駿無所識 但聞有神仙

She was naïve as a child and there was not much that she knew;

She only heard that there are gods and immortals.

輕生學其術 乃在金泉山

She renounced her livelihood to learn their magic;

She was then on Gold Spring Mountain.

繁華榮慕絕 父母慈愛捐

Wealth and prestige were cut off from her;

Her parents' loving kindness was in vain.

凝心感魑魅 恍惚難具言

<sup>381</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 336. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 39

<sup>382</sup> Xie Ziran was a famous Daoist Priestess of the Tang Dynasty who, according to the legend, achieved immortality. Her biography is included in the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 or the *Extensive Record of the Reign of Great Tranquility*: 謝自然者 其先充州人 父寰居果州南充 ~ (貞元十年)十月十一日 入靜室之際 有仙人來召 即乘麒麟昇天 "As for Xie Ziran, her ancestors were from Chong Prefecture. Her father Huan lived in Nanchong in Guo Prefecture. ~ On the eleventh day of the tenth month (of 795 A. D.), an immortal came to summon her when she entered a quiet room. She then rode on a unicorn and rose to heaven."

Wang Deyi 王德毅 ed., *Congshu jicheng sanbian taiping guangji* 叢書集成三編太平廣記, Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi 新文豐出版公司, 1997, p. 334

She concentrated her mind to move the ghostly spirits;  
It was vague and mysterious and could not be fully described by words.

一朝坐空室 雲霧生其間

One morning she sat in an empty room;

Cloud and fog rose from its space.

如聆笙竽韻 來自冥冥天

[She felt] as if listening to the tune of bamboo pipes,

That came from the dark secluded heaven.

白日變幽晦 蕭蕭風景寒

The white sun became dim and shady;

Bleakly the wind and scenery were cold.

簷楹暫明滅 五色光屬聯

[Between] the eaves and pillars [light] shined and disappeared for a while;

Lights of five colors were joined together.

觀者徒傾駭 躑躅詎敢前

Those who were watching were only startled;

They hesitated and who dared go forth?

須臾自輕舉 飄若風中煙

In a short while she rose up by herself,

And was floating like mist in the wind.

茫茫八紘大 影響無由緣

Vast, the eight far ends of earth were enormous,

And yet there was no more trace of her shadow and sound.

里胥上其事 郡守驚且歎

The village elder reported this event upward;

The commandery governor was surprised and gasped.

驅車領官吏 賸俗爭相先

He rushed the carriages and led the officials;

The vulgar commoners competed to be the first [to see her].

入門無所見 冠履同蛻蟬

They entered the door and there was nothing they could see;

Her cap and straw sandals were like peeled off cicada shells.

皆云神仙事 灼灼信可傳

People all said it was a phenomenon of the immortals;

Fervently they believed it to be true and spread the word.

余聞古夏后 象物知神姦

I heard that the ancient king of Xia,  
Recorded the shapes of various matters to let [people] know about the divine and the evil.

山林民可入 魍魎莫逢旃

People could enter the mountains and forests,  
Without encountering evil spirits and demons.

逶迤不復振 後世恣欺謾

After a long time [such good practice] no longer thrived,  
And the later generations lied and deceived without moderation.

幽明紛雜亂 人鬼更相殘

Darkness and brightness were mixed in a disorderly way;  
Humans and ghosts also harmed each other.

秦皇雖篤好 漢武洪其源

Although the [First] Emperor of Qin was truly obsessed [with such magic],  
It was [Emperor] Wu of Han who glorified its foundation.

自從二主來 此禍竟連連

Since these two rulers had arrived,  
This disaster was repeated again and again.

木石生怪變 狐狸騁妖患

Trees and rocks gave rise to strange transformations;  
Foxes roamed freely to cause evil disasters.

莫能盡性命 安得更長延

If one is unable to live his life to the utmost,  
How can he further lengthen [his life]?

人生處萬類 知識最爲賢

As one encounters various matters in his life,  
Knowledge is the most valuable thing.

奈何不自信 反欲從物遷

Sadly she did not believe in herself;  
Instead she wished to transform following the [supernatural] matters.

往者不可悔 孤魂抱深冤

Those who have already gone can no longer feel regret;  
Their lone souls hold deep grudges.

來者猶可誠 余言豈空文

Those who will arrive can still be warned;

My words are not just an empty saying.<sup>383</sup>

人生有常理 男女各有倫

There is a constant principle in one's life;

Men and women each have their moral order.

寒衣及飢食 在紡織耕耘

[The way to have] clothes when you are cold and food when you are hungry,

Is in weaving and farming.

下以保子孫 上以奉君親

Going downward one may use it to protect his sons and grandsons;

Going upward one may use it to support his ruler and parents.

苟異于此道 皆爲棄其身

If one differs from this practice,

Then it is all the same as abandoning one's life.

噫乎彼寒女 永託異物群

Alas that poor girl,

She will forever be among the supernatural creatures.<sup>384</sup>

感傷遂成詩 昧者宜書紳<sup>385</sup>

I felt sad and thus made the poem;

Those who are obscured [from the truth] should remember it well.

This poem contains both the unconventional caesura in line sixty (在/紡織耕耘 Is / in weaving and farming.) and a large number of empty words such as *suo*, *qi*, and *zhe*. The first half of the poem is reminiscent of biographical prose, especially in the way it begins by stating the hometown of Xie Ziran. The second half also resembles a formal treatise in its heavily didactic instruction in the reality of the world and the proper way to live.

As a result, some classical critics have dismissed this poem as "rhymed prose."<sup>386</sup>

<sup>383</sup> Lit: how are my words an empty writing?

<sup>384</sup> These are the negative supernatural matters such as ghost or demons.

<sup>385</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 28 ~ 29

<sup>386</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 35

This tendency for Han Yü to “use prose to make poetry” 以文爲詩 is noticed and debated over by many critics, and some, such as Charles Hartman, are inclined to interpret this as a form of *fugu*. According to Hartman, Han “forged a unified literary style by blurring the artificial distinctions between the various genres that were a legacy of Six Dynasties and early Tang literary practice.” Hartman also draws ideological significance from this unity of literary style and compares it to the unity of *wen* 文, the writing, and *dao* 道, the way of moral harmony. Subsequently, when he discusses the later literati’s appreciation of Han’s prosaism, he further comments that the “genre cross-fertilization” in Han Yü’s works represents his “unique ability to forge a style catholic and unified enough to absorb all that was best from antiquity.”<sup>387</sup> Hartman implies that the boundary between the literary genres was a relatively modern invention during Han Yü’s time, and that by breaking this boundary, Han was trying to recapture the essence of the ancients. Particularly, he attributes the genre distinction to the *Wenxuan* 文選, the sixth century literary anthology compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501~531), the Zhaoming Crown Prince of Liang. However, a simple fact remains that even before the time of the *Wenxuan*, people did not write verses as prosaic as Han Yü’s. Among the ancient poems of the Han and Wei, one could never be able to find a poem as

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<sup>387</sup> Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the Tang Search for Unity*, p. 213~216

didactic as "The Poem of Xie Ziran." This is because even in the very early stage of Chinese literature, there was a tendency to reserve didactic content for prose and lyrical content for poetry. Though primitive with their empty words and occasionally irregular caesura, archaic verses such as the "Nineteen Ancient Poems" are still lyrical in nature and are distinctly different from didactic prose pieces. Therefore, regardless of its possible ideological significance, at a stylistic level Han's extreme prosaism in poetry should not be equated with *fugu* and should be recognized as an innovative amalgamation of genres.

## Chapter Six: Un-Confucian Qualities

Han Yü's verse is also contradictory to *fugu* due to some of its "un-Confucian" qualities, particularly the poet's frequent reference to Daoist sources. Although there is nothing explicitly anti-Daoist in the principles of *fugu*, it is fundamentally a Confucian movement. It would thus be reasonable to expect a *fugu* poet to allude predominantly to Confucian sources in his works. However, this is not the case for Han Yü's verse. Previously, in the poems "Presented to Liu Shifu" and "Falling Teeth," we already saw a clear interest in the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*; and in Han's other poems, there are many more examples where he alludes to Daoist texts:

叉魚<sup>388</sup>

"Spearing Fish"

(line nineteen to line twenty)

濡沫情雖密 登志事已違<sup>389</sup>

Although [the fish] intimately wet each other with their saliva,  
Their ambition to leap over [the Dragon Gate]<sup>390</sup> is already unlikely [to be fulfilled].

The fish's "wetting each other with their saliva" is an allusion to the chapter "Great

<sup>388</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 343. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 131

<sup>389</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 215

<sup>390</sup> The leaping should refer to the legend of the *Longmen* or Dragon Gate Waterfall. According to the legend, a fish will turn into a dragon if it swims against the current and leaps over the waterfall.

Master” 大宗師 in the *Zhuangzi*. The original passage preaches the meaninglessness of arguing over morality and compares such an act to two fish’s futile struggle to stay alive on land by wetting each other with their saliva.<sup>391</sup> In this poem, however, the allusion is wittily detached from its allegorical message to describe the fish caught by Han Yü and his friends on a fishing trip.

岳陽樓別竇司直

“Parting from Rectifier Dou at the Yueyang Terrace”

(line seventeen to line eighteen)

猶疑帝軒轅 張樂就空曠

It also makes one think that the [Yellow] Emperor Xuanyuan

Has set up music in the open space.

(line sixty-one to line sixty-two)

屠龍破千金 爲藝亦云亢<sup>392</sup>

[Zhu Pingman] spent a thousand [pieces of] gold [to learn] how to slay a dragon;

In terms of achieving a skill, [such an act] may also be called superb.

The Yellow Emperor’s music alludes to an episode in the chapter “Heavenly Movement” 天運 in the *Zhuangzi*. In the original passage, the music played by the Yellow Emperor is said to be so profound that it encompasses all aspects of the universe and causes confusing emotions in its audience.<sup>393</sup> In this poem however, it is simply used to

<sup>391</sup> 泉涸 魚相與處於陸 相呴以濕 相濡以沫 不如相忘於江湖 與其譽堯而非桀也 不如兩忘而化其道 “When the springs dry up and the fish are left stranded on the ground, they spew each other with moisture and wet each other down with spit - but it would be much better if they could forget each other in the rivers and lakes. Instead of praising Yao and condemning Jie, it would be better to forget both of them and transform yourself with the Way.” (Burton Watson’s translation)

Wang Yunwu 王雲五 ed, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi* 莊子今註今譯, Taipei: Commercial Press, 1975, p. 196

Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi: basic writings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 31

<sup>392</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 316~317



describe the sound of the waves in Lake Dongting. The slaying of the dragon refers to another story in the chapter "Lie Yukou" 列禦寇 in the *Zhuangzi*. In the chapter, a man named Zhuping Man 朱泚漫 spends all his wealth to learn how to slay a dragon, but after he has mastered the skills he cannot find any way to use them, probably because there is no dragon to slay.<sup>394</sup> Originally this meaningless act is compared with the unnecessary military expansion of the various warring states, but in this poem Han Yü somehow twists the original message and sees something admirable in its very futility.

歸彭城<sup>395</sup>

"Returning to the City Walls of Peng"<sup>396</sup>

(line twenty-one to line twenty-two)

食芹雖云美 獻御固已癡<sup>397</sup>

While eating celery one may say it is delicious,

But one would surely be idiotic if one presented it to the emperor.

The man who enjoys celery refers to a story in the chapter "Yang Zhu" 楊朱 in the *Liezi* 列子, a Daoist text attributed to the philosopher Lie Yukou 列禦寇 in the fifth century

<sup>393</sup> 帝張咸池之樂于洞庭之野 吾始聞之懼 復聞之怠 卒聞之而惑 蕩蕩默默 乃不自得 "When Your Majesty performed the Xianchi music in the wilds around Lake Dongting, I listened, and at first I was afraid. I listened some more and felt weary, and then I listened to the end and felt confused. Overwhelmed, speechless, I couldn't get hold of myself." (Burton Watson's translation)

Wang Yunwu, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, p. 402-403 Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi : basic writings*, p. 65

<sup>394</sup> 朱泚漫學屠龍於支離益 殫千金之家 三年技成 而無所用其巧 "Zhuping Man studied the art of butchering dragons under Crippled Yi. It cost him all the thousand pieces of gold he had in his house, and after three years he'd mastered the art, but there was no one who could use his services." (Burton Watson's translation)

Wang Yunwu, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, p. 911 Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi : basic writings*, p. 148

<sup>395</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 247

<sup>396</sup> This is today's Xuzhou City 徐州 in Jiangsu Province.

<sup>397</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 120

BCE. In the story there is a peasant who could not afford good clothes and shelter, and to keep himself warm he exposes himself to the sun. The peasant finds the sunbath to be very comfortable and decides to recommend it to his king. At that point a wealthy man in the neighborhood tells the peasant that he once knew a man who liked to eat celery. The man recommended celery to the wealthy people in the neighborhood, but they all hated the taste and became sick. The wealthy man then points out that the peasant's ignorance is just like that of the man who likes celery.<sup>398</sup>

In Han Yü's poem, the allusion is used to refer to Han's own plan of remonstrating with the emperor. Although the poet has an ambition to save the state from its decline, he realizes that such an attempt is as foolish as recommending celery as a delicacy to the emperor. Similar to the previous reference to the *Zhuangzi*, there is a small twist in Han's usage of the allusion. Originally, the story of the peasant is meant to point out the

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<sup>398</sup> 昔者宋國有田夫 常衣縕黯 僅以過冬 暨春東作 自曝於日 不知天下之有廣廈陰室 綿纈狐貉 顧謂其妻曰 負日之暄 人莫知者 以獻吾君 將有重賞 里之富室告之曰 昔人有美戎菽 甘棠莖芹萍子者 對鄉豪稱之 鄉豪取而嘗之 蜚於口 慘於腹 眾哂而怨之 其人大慚 子此類也 “Once upon a time in the state of Song there was a farmer. He always wore hemp and linen and was barely able to last through winter. When spring arrived he started working on the field. He exposed himself under the sun and did not know that there were large buildings, warm rooms, fine cotton, and fox fur in the world. He looked to his wife and said: ‘No one knows about the warmth of being exposed to the sun. If I tell my king about this I shall receive a handsome reward.’ A wealthy man in the village then told him: ‘Once upon a time, there was a man who found soybeans to be delicious, and the stems of hemp and the seeds of celery and duckweed to be sweet. He told the local gentry about this and the gentry tasted them. [The food] stung them in their mouths and made their stomachs sick. People ridiculed and blamed the man and he was very ashamed. You are just like him.’”

Xiao Dengfu 蕭登福, *Liezi guzhu jinyi* 列子古注今譯, Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe 文津出版社, 1990, p. 665

stupidity of the character, but in this poem Han Yü implies sympathy for the character by using the story to ridicule himself. And since Han's "foolish" ambition is based on the noble concern of revitalizing the state, there is also the implication that the truly foolish ones are those who reject Han Yü in real life, who would correspond to those who laugh at the peasant in the story.

雜詩四首其四<sup>399</sup>

"Poem Number Four of Four Miscellaneous Poems"

(line three to line four)

獨有知時鶴 雖鳴不緣身<sup>400</sup>

[Among all the birds] only the crane that knows time [is different].

Although it sings, it does not let [the insects] come near its body.

The crane that knows time refers to a passage in the chapter "Lecturing on the Mountain" 說山 in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, another famous Daoist text from the Han Dynasty. In the passage it is said that roosters can notify people of dawn while cranes can tell the time of midnight, but in spite of their usefulness they end up being eaten by men. On the other hand, ferocious beasts and poisonous insects are dangerous to men, but they are able to keep their forests and gardens safe because of their ability to harm people.<sup>401</sup>

<sup>399</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 342. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 29

<sup>400</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 246

<sup>401</sup> 雞知將旦 鶴知夜半 而不免於鼎俎 山有猛獸 林木爲之不斬 園有螫蟲 藜藿爲之不采 "The rooster knows when it is about to dawn; the crane knows when the night is half finished, and yet they are unable to escape from the tripods and chopping boards. If a mountain has ferocious beasts, because of them the forests and trees will not be cut down. If a garden has insects that sting, because of them the vegetables and beans will not be picked."

Xiong Lihui 熊禮匯, *Xinyi huainanzi* 新譯淮南子, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1997, p. 844

However, the crane that is eaten in the original passage is praised in Han Yü's poem instead. Contrary to the source, Han Yü portrays the crane that "knows time" as a wise bird that does not follow the rest of the noisy flocks in their petty search for food.

Furthermore, besides including Daoist references in parts of his verse, Han Yü has also written poems that are entirely based on a Daoist allusion. An example is the following poem "Presented to Sui Lizhi" 贈崔立之:<sup>402</sup>

昔者十日雨 子桑苦寒飢  
In the past, during the rain that lasted for ten days,  
Master Sang suffered from cold and hunger.  
哀歌坐空室 不怨但自悲  
He sang sadly while sitting in an empty room;  
He did not blame anyone and only felt sorrowful.  
其友名子輿 忽然憂且思  
His friend named Master Yu  
Suddenly felt worried and thought of him.  
褰裳觸泥水 裹飯往食之  
He rolled up his garment to walk into the mud and water;<sup>403</sup>  
He wrapped cooked grain and went to feed [Master Sang].  
入門相對語 天命良不疑  
He entered the door and they talked facing each other;  
They certainly did not question the fate prescribed by heaven.  
好事漆園吏 書之存雄辭  
The curious official from Qiyuan<sup>404</sup>  
Wrote down this account to preserve their powerful words.

<sup>402</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 339. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 601

<sup>403</sup> Lit: rolled up his clothes and touched the mud and water.

<sup>404</sup> This is the Daoist sage Zhuangzi. According to his biography in the *Shiji*, Zhuangzi used to be an official in a city called Qiyuan, which was located near today's Caozhou City 曹州 in Shandong. *Shiji*, juan 61, liezhuan 1. Zhang Liansheng, *Bainaben ershisishi shiji*, p. 721

千年事已遠 二子情可推

With a thousand years in between, this incident is already far away,

But the friendship of the two is still admirable.

我讀此篇日 正當寒雪時

The day when I read this chapter

Was just around the time of cold snow.

吾身固已困 吾友復何爲

I myself am certainly in distress;

Just what could I do for my friend?

薄粥不足裹 深泥諒難馳

The thin congee is not [thick] enough to be wrapped,

And I imagine that the deep mud is hard to gallop in.

曾無子輿事 空賦子桑詩<sup>405</sup>

I have not done any deed that is similar to that of Master Yu,

So vainly I compose the poem of Master Sang.

This poem is based on a story in the chapter "Great Master" in the *Zhuangzi*. In the original passage a man named Master Yu worries that his friend Master Sang might be sick, so he goes to visit him with some food. When he is at Master Sang's home he hears him singing sadly about his father and mother and heaven and men. When Master Yu asks about the singing, Master Sang replies that he is pondering the reason for his predicament, and since neither his parents nor heaven have any reason to cause him harm, his distress must be caused by fate.<sup>406</sup> The moral of this story is that one should accept

<sup>405</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 624-625

<sup>406</sup> 子輿與子桑友 而霖雨十日 子輿曰 子桑殆病矣 裹飯而往食之 至子桑之門 則若歌若哭 鼓琴曰 父邪 母邪 天乎 人乎 有不任其聲而趨舉其詩焉 子輿入 曰 子之歌詩 何故若是 曰 吾思夫使我至此極者而弗得也 父母豈欲吾貧哉 天無私覆 地無私載 天地豈私貧我哉 求其爲之者而不得也 然而至此極者 命也夫 "Master Yu and Master Sang were friends. Once it rained incessantly for ten days. Master Yu said to himself, Master Sang is probably having a bad time, and he wrapped up some rice and took it for his friend to eat. When he got to Master Sang's gate, he heard something like singing or crying,

one's fate and be content; but in Han's poem, this message is largely overlooked and the focus is shifted to the friendship between Master Yu and Master Sang, which is of little importance in the original passage.

Once again we see a clever twist in Han Yü's use of this allusion. This poem is not at all about Master Sang's enlightened view on fate; it is about Master Yu's noble act of helping his friend in distress. From there Han extends the story to refer to his own situation and laments how he is unable to offer any help to his own friend. While Master Yu was at least capable of bringing some humble provisions to his friend, Han Yü is too poor to do even that. The poem thus carries an entirely different theme and sentiment from the story it alludes to. Like the previous examples, the variation in the use of this allusion is a display of the poet's creativity. Moreover, the use of so many Daoist allusions also reveals a strong interest in Daoist literature, in particular the *Zhuangzi*. Such a tendency is rather unexpected from a *fugu* poet who is supposed to be heavily Confucian-minded.

In addition, Han Yü also includes in his verse many Daoist legends and myths, the

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and someone striking a lute and saying: Father? Mother? Heaven? Man? It was as though the voice would not hold out and the singer were rushing to get through the words. Master Yu went inside and said, "What do you mean - singing a song like that!" "I was pondering what it is that has brought me to this extremity, but I couldn't find the answer. My father and mother surely wouldn't wish this poverty on me. Heaven covers all without partiality; earth bears up all without partiality - heaven and earth surely wouldn't single me out to make me poor. I try to discover who is doing it, but I can't get the answer. Still, here I am - at the very extreme. It must be fate." (Burton Watson's translation)

Wang Yunwu, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, p. 229 Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi : basic writings*, p. 37

very same thing he dismisses as superstitions. The following are a few examples:

晝月<sup>407</sup>

“Morning Moon”

(line one to line two)

玉碗不磨著泥土 青天孔出白石補<sup>408</sup>

The jade bowl<sup>409</sup> is unpolished and stained by mud and dirt;

In the blue sky a hole appears and is filled by a white stone.

The hole in the sky and the stone filling it refers to the legend of Nuwa 女媧, a goddess who once restored order to the world and prevented it from breaking down. One of the things she did was to forge a five-color stone to fill up a hole in the sky. Although this is a very common legend, it carries a strong Daoist flavor nonetheless, and can be found in Daoist sources such as the chapter “Examining the Darkness” 覽冥 in the *Huainanzi*.<sup>410</sup>

月蝕詩效玉川子作

“Poem of Lunar Eclipse, an Imitation of Lu Tong’s Work”

(line seventy to line seventy-two)

烏龜怯姦怕寒 縮頸以殼自遮

The turtle<sup>411</sup> fears the evil and is afraid of cold;

It shrinks its neck and covers itself with its shell.

終令夸蛾扶汝出<sup>412</sup>

<sup>407</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 345. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 501

<sup>408</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 240

<sup>409</sup> A metaphor for the moon.

<sup>410</sup> 於是女媧鍊五色石以補蒼天 “Thus Nuwa forged a five-color stone to fill up [the hole] in the blue sky.”

Xiong Lihui 熊禮匯, *Xinyi huainanzi* 新譯淮南子, Taipei: Sanmin shuju 三民書局, 1997, p. 290

<sup>411</sup> The turtle refers to Xuanwu 玄武, the guardian beast of the north.

<sup>412</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 746

In the end you cause Kua'e to gouge you out.

Kua'e 夸娥 is the name of a god and can also be written 夸娥. According to a legend in the chapter "Questions of Tang" 湯問 in the *Liezi*, Kua'e's two sons once helped Yugong 愚公, the foolish old man, to remove the two mountains that were blocking the path around his home.<sup>413</sup>

劉生詩

"Poem of Mr. Liu"

(line eleven to line twelve)

山獠 譟譟猩猩愁 毒氣燄體黃膏流<sup>414</sup>

The ape-men make noises as the gibbons play;

The poisonous gas scorches the body as the yellow fat flows out.

The ape-man or *shansao* 山獠 can also be written 山臊. It is a kind of baboon-like creature that lives in the mountains, and in ancient times was believed to be a kind of mountain demon that harassed people. It is mentioned in the *Classic of Magic and Wonder* 神異經 written by Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154~93 BCE.) during the Western Han Dynasty.<sup>415</sup>

<sup>413</sup> 帝感其誠 命夸娥氏二子 負二山 一厝朔東 一厝雍南 "The Lord was moved by their sincerity. He ordered the two sons of god Kua'e to carry the two mountains and put one in the east of Shuo[fang] and the other in the south of Yong[zhou]." Xiao Dengfu, *Liezi guzhu jinyi*, p. 446

<sup>414</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 222

<sup>415</sup> 西方深山中有人焉 身長尺餘 袒身 捕蝦蟹 性不畏人 見人止宿 暮依其火以炙蝦蟹 伺人不在 而盜人鹽以食蝦蟹 名曰山臊 "There are humanoid creatures in the deep mountains of the west. They are several feet tall, naked, and catch shrimps and crabs for a living. They do not fear people, and when they see people stop over to camp, they will sit next to the campfire and use it to cook shrimps and crabs. When they see that people are not around, they will steal people's salt to eat shrimps and crabs. They are called *shansao*."

Yan Yiping 嚴一萍 comp. and ed., *Shenyijing* 神異經, Baibu congshu jicheng 百部叢書集成 16, Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan 藝文印書館, 1965, p. 18



驚驥<sup>416</sup>

“The Nag and the Stallion”

(line seventeen to line eighteen)

飢食玉山禾 渴飲醴泉流

When [the stallion] is hungry it eats the grain of the Jade Mountain;

When it is thirsty it drinks from the current of a sweet spring.

(line twenty-one to line twenty-four)

惟昔穆天子 乘之極遐遊

Alas, in the past, Mu the Son of Heaven

Rode [the stallion] to wander to the ends of earth.

王良執其轡 造父挾其轡<sup>417</sup>

Wang Liang held his reins;

Zaofu carried his shafts.

The Jade Mountain is a mythical mountain mentioned in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* 山海經. According to the text, this mountain is the residence of the Queen Mother of the West 西王母, one of the supreme deities in Daoism. Mu the Son of Heaven is King Mu of Zhou 周穆王 (?~922 BCE.), the fifth king of the Western Zhou Dynasty.<sup>418</sup> The king is associated with many myths and is said to have become an immortal after traveling to the Kunlun Mountain 崑崙山 and encountering the Queen Mother of the West. Many legendary accounts of his can be found in the *Biography of Mu the Son of Heaven* 穆天子傳. Wang Liang was a very skillful horse rider during the Spring and Autumn Period, and Zaofu was an excellent chariot driver from Zhou

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<sup>416</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 337. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 476

<sup>417</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 115

<sup>418</sup> *Shiji*, juan 4, diji 4. Zhang Liansheng, *Bainaben ershisishi shiji*, p. 47

times. While the former figure is not associated with any myth, the latter is mentioned in the *Biography of Mu the Son of Heaven* as Mu's chariot driver.<sup>419</sup> As for the sweet spring, it is a generic myth that appears in many sources. For example, in the *Shiji*, a passage says that a spring that tastes sweet can be found in the mythical Kunlun Mountain.<sup>420</sup>

海水<sup>421</sup>

"Sea Water"

(line one and line two)

海水非不廣 鄧林豈無枝<sup>422</sup>

It is not that the sea water is not vast;

How is there not a branch in the Forest of Deng?

The Forest of Deng is a legendary forest said to stretch across thousands of *li*. It is mentioned in the chapter "Question of Tang" in the *Liezi*.<sup>423</sup>

Moreover, other than being sporadically used, Daoist or Daoist flavored legends also constitute the main imagery in some of Han Yü's poems:

<sup>419</sup> 天子主車 造父爲御 "The son of heaven led the chariot and Zaofu was his driver."

Guo Pu 郭璞 ed., *Mutianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳, Taipei: Guangwen shuju 廣文書局, 1981, p. 38

<sup>420</sup> 河出崑崙 崑崙其高二千五百餘里 日月所相避隱爲光明也 其上有醴泉 瑤池 "The [Yellow] River originates from [Mount] Kunlun. Kunlun is two thousand and five hundred miles high. It is illuminated as the sun and the moon descend there; at its peak there is a sweet spring and a jade pool." *Shiji*, juan 123, *liezhuan* 63. Zhang Liansheng, *Bainaben ershisishi shiji*, p. 1153

<sup>421</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 345. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 367

<sup>422</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 125

<sup>423</sup> 夸父不量力 欲追日影 ~ 未至 道渴而死 棄其杖 尸膏肉所浸 生鄧林 鄧林彌廣數千里焉 "Kuafu overestimated his strength and wished to chase after the shadow of the sun. ~ Before he could reach it, he died from thirst on the road. He dropped his walking stick and his corpse was soaked in this fat and flesh. The Forest of Deng grew [from his corpse]; the Forest of Deng reached for several thousand miles." Xiao Dengfu, *Liezi guzhu jinyi*, p. 451

古意<sup>424</sup>

## “Ancient Essence”

太華峰頭玉井蓮 開花十丈藕如船

The lotuses in the jade well at the peak of the great Mount Hua –  
When they blossom their flowers are tens of feet<sup>425</sup> tall and their arrowroots are like boats.

冷比雪霜甘比蜜 一片入口沈痼痊

They are cold like snow and frost and are sweet like honey;

With a slice in the mouth severe sickness can be cured.

我欲求之不憚遠 青壁無路難資緣

I want to look for them and am not afraid of the long distance,

But there is no road by the green [mountain] cliffs and it is hard to climb up.

安得長梯上摘實 下種七澤根株連<sup>426</sup>

How can I acquire a long ladder to climb up, pick the fruits,

Plant them in the Seven Lakes<sup>427</sup> beneath, and let them grow into root after root?

The imagery of this poem is based on legends of magic lotuses on Mount Hua, one of the five holy mountains. In the Daoist text *Record of Mount Hua* 華山記, it is said that the reason why the Mountain is named “Hua” or “flower” is because on the mountain top there are lotuses that can allow one to achieve immortality.<sup>428</sup> The lotus is used here as a symbol for court officials’ integrity, which Han Yü thinks is hopelessly lacking. The wish to bring down the lotus to the Seven Lakes thus refers to the poet’s desire to restore

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<sup>424</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 338. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 398

<sup>425</sup> Lit: ten *zhang* 十丈, which is about thirty metres as a *zhang* is roughly equivalent to three metres.

<sup>426</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 174~175

<sup>427</sup> Another way to refer to Lake Dongting in Hunan.

<sup>428</sup> 山頂有池 生千葉蓮花 服之羽化 因曰華山 “At the top of Mount [Hua] there is a pool, in which lotuses with a thousand leaves grow. Eating them causes one to become an immortal. Because of this [the mountain] is called Mount Hua (Flower).”

Lu Hong 盧鴻, *Huashan ji* 華山記, Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927, p. 3

the integrity of the government. Although the poem carries a typical Confucian theme, it is interesting that such a theme is conveyed through a strongly Daoist imagery. Unlike Han's other poems that severely criticize Daoism, this poem does not dismiss the Daoist legends as superstitions at all. Instead it employs them as a metaphor for something positive and truly desired by the poet. Once again this is a clear sign of Han Yü's interest in Daoist legends and literature, which is somewhat at odds with his identity as a Confucian *fugu* activist.

With such extensive use of Daoist references, it is obvious that Han Yü has both a strong interest for and a deep understanding of Daoist literature. In fact, despite Han Yü's self-proclamation of being a fervent Confucian, and regardless of his overt hostility towards the Daoist religion; in his poems he actually alludes to Daoist sources at about the same frequency as to Confucian sources. It seems that the poet does not discriminate between Daoist and Confucian sources as long as they help make his poems more colorful and interesting. This is very different from the truly Confucian-minded poets such as Du Fu, who includes very little Daoist references in his works. As mentioned before, while *fugu* does not require one to be anti-Daoist, it does require a total commitment to Confucianism, and since he has shown such a high interest to the ideological rival of Confucius, it is hard for one to detect such commitment in Han Yü's

poetry.

One may argue the Han is using the above Daoist allusions for non-Daoist or Confucian purposes, which makes the spirit of his poems consistent with that of *fugu*. However, even if we ignore the Daoist references, there are still other more drastically “un-Confucian” qualities in Han Yü’s poetry, as some of his poems convey messages that contradict the Confucian moral norms. One example of this is the poem “Mountain Fire of Luhun.” In the later half of the poem, after the fire gods have ravaged the land, the focus shifts to the water gods who have suffered from the destructive heat. In order to plead their case with the Lord of Heaven, the water gods send a black dragon to heaven as their messenger, but receive an unkindly response from the ultimate deity:

(line forty to line fifty-nine)

命黑螭偵焚其元 天關悠悠不可援

[The water gods] ordered the black dragon to spy for them but its head was burned;

The pass of heaven is far away and could not be climbed.

夢通上帝血面論 側身欲進叱於闕

[The dragon] reached the High Lord<sup>429</sup> in his dream and pleaded, with its face bloody;

It leaned its body, wanting to move forward, but it was sent away by the gatekeeper.

帝賜九河湔涕痕 又詔巫陽反其魂

The Lord bestowed the Nine Rivers to wash away the traces of its tears,

And also summoned Wuyang<sup>430</sup> to invoke its soul.

徐命之前問何冤 火行於冬古所存

Slowly, [the Lord] ordered [the dragon] to go forward and asked how it had been

wronged;

<sup>429</sup> Synonymous with *Tiandi* 天帝 or the Lord of Heaven.

<sup>430</sup> Name of a legendary shaman in the ancient kingdom of *Chu* 楚.

[He replied to the dragon saying:]

"Fire thrives in winter, it is [an order] preserved from antiquity.

我如禁之絕其殮 女丁婦壬傳世婚

If I forbid this, then I would cut off [the fire gods'] meals;

Lady Ding [the daughter of a fire god] was the wife of Ren [the son of a water god];<sup>431</sup>

It was a marriage that lasted for generations.

一朝結讎奈後昆 時行當反慎藏蹲

If you become enemies one day, what would happen to your descendents?

As time goes, [the season of water] will return, so duck and crouch carefully [for now].

視桃著花可小驚 月及申酉利復怨

When the peach trees blossom, you may raise [your head] a little bit;

By the seventh and eighth month, it will be advantageous for you to have your  
vengeance.

助汝五龍從九鯤 溺厥邑囚之崑崙

[By that time, I shall send] the Five Dragons and Nine Whales to help you

Flood their land and imprison them in [Mount] Kunlun."

皇甫作詩止睡昏 辭誇出真遂上焚

Huangfu composed this poem to prevent him from sleeping;

His words were hyperbolic and deviated from the truth, so he burned [the poem].

要余和增怪又煩 雖欲悔舌不可捫<sup>432</sup>

It is weird and annoying that he wanted me to respond to his poem and add more lines;

Although I am about to regret this, my tongue cannot be stopped.

The symbolism of this poem is typical of the Confucian political allegories. The rampaging fire gods represent the wicked but powerful members in the court; the water gods represent the righteous officials overpowered by the wicked, and the Lord of Heaven represents the emperor and the ultimate adjudicator. However, the behavior of the Lord of Heaven is highly inconsistent with his role. As the upholder of justice, he is

<sup>431</sup> This refers to a legendary marriage between Dingqian 丁芊, the daughter of the fire god Zhurong 祝融, and Renfu 壬夫, the son of the water god Xuanming 玄冥.

<sup>432</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 685

supposed to punish the evil fire gods resolutely and swiftly, but on the contrary, he only promises the water gods a chance for retaliation in the future. This delay of justice makes the supreme deity look surprisingly impotent. He has not taken any real action to remedy the situation, merely comforted the victims with a lecture on the cosmic order and some encouraging promises. It seems that the Lord of Heaven is trying to dodge responsibility and avoid trouble, which makes him look more like a petty bureaucrat than a ruler of gods.

Moreover, according to the Lord of Heaven, the fiery destruction that torments the water gods is in fact a natural phenomenon destined to happen during winter. The proper thing to do is not to pacify the fire gods but to repay them with an equal amount of destruction during summer. Such a chaotic balance maintained by the constant battles between the elements is contradictory to the Confucian world view, which envisions harmony in the ideal and natural state of the world. It seems that Han Yü is using the Lord of Heaven to refute some Confucian assumptions about the world. The Confucian doctrines state that a ruler should be just and resolute, but in real life, rulers have neither the power nor the will to punish evil. They are not even supposed to punish evil, for the world is not driven by an inherent tendency towards moral harmony but by the mutual aggression of evil forces instead.

On the other hand, judging from the ending, it is also possible that Han Yü is making a joke, for the last few lines contain several things that undermine the seriousness of the poem. For example, it is said that Huangfu Shi composed the original "Mountain Fire of Luhun" merely to prevent himself from falling asleep, and that he "weirdly and annoyingly" asked for a similar poem from Han Yü. However, even if this poem is a joke between friends, such a joke is at the expense of Confucian norms and is highly inappropriate for someone associated with *fugu*, because it mocks the Confucian model of a resolute and capable ruler, and the Confucian assumption of the harmonious nature of the world.

Stephen Owen calls poems such as "Mountain Fire" the "mythopoetic" poems of Han Yü. He uses the word mythopoetic because in these poems "gods and supernatural beings are used to make abstract problems of order and disorder comprehensible."<sup>433</sup>

Owen also further comments that:

The myth that Han Yü creates in most of these poems to oppose a world of disorder is the "rectification of nature." In the organic universe, not only do nature and the human world reflect the cosmic cycles, nature and the universe may be organized and understood ethically, according to the ideal Confucian social model... Error and imbalance in the natural world can be rectified by the proper moral action or expostulation... As a Confucian intellectual, the ethical and political pattern of the rectification of nature provided Han Yü with an intelligible way to perceive and participate in the world of nature and the cosmic order.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> Stephen Owen, *The poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, p. 211

<sup>434</sup> Stephen Owen, *The poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, p. 211



However, Owen never specifies how the curiously impotent Lord of Heaven in "Mountain Fire" fits this "ideal Confucian social model," nor does he explain how his reluctance to act can be considered a "proper moral action" that actively rectifies the imbalance of the world. Although Owen recognizes that the cosmic order in this poem is an order of disorder, and that balance is "achieved through two opposing and complementary elements, two extremes,"<sup>435</sup> he never points out the fact that this endless cycle of violence is highly contradictory to the Confucian view of the world. Even though Owen's theory of mythopoetic poetry provides an insightful analysis on Han Yü's verse, it fails to call attention to Han's shockingly un-Confucian views and values. It is a reluctant point for many scholars to make, since deviation from Confucianism implies deviation from *fugu*, and due to Han Yü's unquestionable status as a *fugu* essayist, many have refrained from doubting his commitment to *fugu* in poetry.

Furthermore, "Mountain Fire" is not an isolated case; Han Yü has written other poems that carry or imply a disturbingly un-Confucian message. For example, the following poem by Han questions Confucian values even more drastically than "Mountain Fire:"

孟東野失子並序

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<sup>435</sup> Stephen Owen, *The poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü*, p. 220

"Meng Jiao Lost His Son, with a Preface"

東野連產三子 不數日輒失之 幾老 念無後以悲 其友人昌黎韓愈 懼其傷也 惟天假其命以喻之

Meng Jiao fathered three sons successively, but within a few days he lost all of them. He was becoming old and saddened by the thought that he would be without posterity. His friend Han Yü of Changli feared that [this sorrow] would harm him and borrowed the mandate of heaven to instruct him.

失子將何尤 吾將上尤天

Whom should I blame for losing a son?

I shall go upward and blame heaven.

女實主下人 與奪一何偏

You certainly govern the people down below,  
But you are so unfair in what you give and take.

彼於女何有 乃令蕃且延

What has that man done for you  
That you cause him to flourish and multiply?

此獨何罪辜 生死旬日間

Just what crime has this man committed  
That you only allow ten days between the life and death [of his sons].

上呼無時聞 滴地淚到泉

[Meng's] crying towards heaven could be heard all the time;  
His tears dropped to the ground and reached the [Yellow] Spring.

地祇爲之悲 瑟縮久不安

The Earth God was saddened by this;  
Crouching and cowering, he was uneasy for a long time.

乃呼大靈龜 騎雲款天門

He then summoned the Great Spiritual Tortoise  
To ride the clouds and knock on heaven's gate.

問天主下人 薄厚胡不均

It asked heaven: "When you govern the people down below,  
Why are you so biased in your favors?"

天曰天地人 由來不相關

Heaven said: "As for heaven, earth, and men,  
They never had anything to do with each other.

吾懸日與月 吾繫星與辰

I hang up the sun and the moon;

I tie together the stars and constellations.

日月相噬齧 星辰踣而顛

[Yet] the sun and the moon bite and gnaw on each other,<sup>436</sup>

And the stars and constellations trip and fall down.<sup>437</sup>

吾不女之罪 知非女由因

I do not blame you for all this;

I know it is not because of you.

且物各有分 孰能使之然

Also, everything has its own duty;

Who could force them to be like this [or otherwise]?

有子與無子 禍福未可原

Having a son and not having a son,

It is uncertain whether they are fortunes or disasters.

魚子滿母腹 一一欲誰憐

As the fish eggs fill up their mother's stomach,

How could [the mother] look after them one by one?

細腰不自乳 舉族常孤鰥

The slender-waisted wasps do not nurse their own [young];

The whole race is forever lone and orphaned.

鴟梟啄母腦 母死子始翻

Owls peck on their mother's brain;

When the mother dies the offspring then start flapping their wings.

蝮蛇生子時 坼裂腸與肝

When the pit-vipers give birth to their children,

They split and tear [their mother's] intestines and liver.<sup>438</sup>

好子雖云好 未還恩與勤

Although [having] a good son is said to be good,

He would never be able to repay your love and care.

惡子不可說 鴟梟蝮蛇然

A bad son [is so terrible that he] cannot even be talked about,

For he is just like the owls and pit-vipers.

<sup>436</sup> A reference to solar and lunar eclipses, which were inauspicious omens in ancient time.

<sup>437</sup> A reference to the shooting stars and comets, which were also considered as inauspicious astronomical anomalies.

<sup>438</sup> This is the Pallas pit-viper, which gives birth to its young live instead of laying eggs. The process looks messy and bloody but does not really kill the mother.

有子且勿喜 無子固勿歎

If you have a son, do not be happy yet,  
And if you do not have a son, you certainly should not sigh.

上聖不待教 賢聞語而遷

The high and sagely do not need to be taught;  
The worthy hear the words and change [their ways].

下愚聞語惑 雖教無由悛

The lowly and the foolish hear the words and feel confused;  
Even if you teach them, there is no way for them to change [their thinking].”

大靈頓頭受 即日以命還

The Great Spiritual [Tortoise] bowed its head and received [the teaching];  
Within the day he returned with [Heaven's] instructions.

地祇謂大靈 女往告其人

The Earth God told the Great Spiritual [Tortoise]:

“You, go and inform that person.”

東野夜得夢 有夫玄衣巾

Meng Jiao [then] had a dream at night;  
There was a man in black robes and cap.

闐然入其戶 三稱天之言

He suddenly burst through his door,  
And repeated the words of Heaven three times.

再拜謝玄夫 收悲以歡忻<sup>439</sup>

[Meng Jiao] bowed twice and thanked the man in black;  
He restrained his sorrow and became joyful.

In this bizarre attempt to comfort his friend, Han Yü has demolished one of the most fundamental family values in a Confucian society – the importance of having a son. Though the desire to have offspring to carry on one's legacy is universal across all cultures, it is especially important in Confucianism, for the relationship between a father and his sons is thought to be parallel with that of a ruler and his subjects and ultimately

<sup>439</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 675

with that of heaven and men. A man with no sons thus has hardly any meaning in his existence, for he is similar to a lone ruler who has no people to rule and an uninhabited world with no one living in it. In other words, the loving relationship between a father and a son forms the most basic fabric of the Confucian world view and morals, and it is most tragic if a man is to die without an heir.

Yet in this poem, Han Yü refutes this belief and suggests that having children in fact does more harm than good. According to the poet, most children are not only ungrateful for their parents love, but also naturally inclined to harm their parents. To prove this point, Han has cited gruesome folklore about animals and insects that kill their parents – which makes the poem all the more bizarre and inappropriate to a dignified Confucian orthodoxy. Finally, in line forty-three, Han Yü makes a further mockery of Confucian traditions by saying that his absurd theory is in fact intrinsically understood by the *shangsheng* 上聖 or the “high and sagely.” The use of this term is extremely ironic, for it is usually reserved for the Confucian sages whose views on kinship and parenthood are the precise opposite of what is expressed in this poem.

As in “Mountain Fire,” in this poem the nature of the world is said to be sinister and violent rather than harmonious; and also as in the previous poem, heaven in this poem cares nothing about those living down below. Just as the Lord of Heaven refuses

to uphold justice for the water gods, heaven in this poem refuses to bless Meng Jiao with a healthy son. Moreover, he considers his indifference to be the correct attitude, and blames humans for imagining a connection between heaven and men. Again this is completely contradictory to Confucian cosmology, which emphasizes that such a connection does exist, and is based on and manifested through family ties and morality – meaning that if harmony cannot be achieved on the most basic level of a father and son, then the well-being of the state and the whole world could be in jeopardy. Nevertheless, this belief is explicitly dismissed in lines seventeen and eighteen, where Heaven states that there has never been any relation between heaven, earth, and men. Not surprisingly, although gods and supernatural beings do appear in this poem, it is not mentioned in Owen's discussion of Han's mythopoetic poems. This is probably because the radical ideas introduced in this poem are too disparate from the Confucian ethics and values, which Owen thinks are the centre of the mythopoetic poetry. If Han Yü's poems contain such un-Confucian ideas, it would be questionable to classify him as a *fugu* poet, for similar to Owen's mythopoetic poetry, *fugu* poetry is fundamentally based on the longing for a long-lost Confucian moral integrity.

## Conclusion

To conclude my thesis, I would like to quote the Qing historian, poet, and critic Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727~1814), who, as Hartman says, provided one of the “keenest observations ever made on the poetry of Han Yü.”<sup>440</sup>

韓昌黎生平所心摹力追者 惟李杜二公 顧李杜之前 未有李杜 故二公才氣橫恣 各開生面 遂獨有千古

Han Yü strove his whole life to emulate and to trace the works of Li Bai and Du Fu. But prior to Li Bai and Du Fu there was no one of their stature, so their brilliance was domineering and knew no restraint; each opened new vistas in his poetry and has remained unique for a thousand years.

至昌黎時 李杜已在前 縱極力變化 終不能再闢一徑 惟少陵奇險處 尙有可推擴 故一眼覷定 欲從此辟山開道 自成一家 此昌黎注意所在也

But for Han Yü's generation Li Bai and Du Fu already existed, so although he worked hard at innovation and change, in the end he could not open yet another path. Only among Du Fu's unconventional and unprecedented passages was there still some possibility for further development. So Han Yü fixed on these with a steady gaze, intending from them to open up new territory and form his own style. And it was here he focused his attention.

然奇險處亦自有得失 蓋少陵才思所到 偶然得之 而昌黎則專以此求勝 故時見斧鑿痕跡 有心與無心異也<sup>441</sup>

But such passages have both good and bad aspects. Han Yü worked single-mindedly to perfect what Du Fu had achieved through an occasional brilliant insight, and therefore one sometimes sees the scars of ax and chisel in Han Yü's poetry. It is the difference between

<sup>440</sup> Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the Tang Search for Unity*, p. 268

<sup>441</sup> Zhao Yi 趙翼, *Oubei shihua* 甌北詩話, Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1963, p. 96

being intentional and unintentional. (Hartman's translation)<sup>442</sup>

Indeed, Li Bai and Du Fu are the two poets who are repeatedly mentioned with admiration in Han Yü's poems:

感春四首其二

"Number Two of the Four Poems Inspired by Spring"

(line eleven to line twelve)

近憐李杜無檢束 爛漫長醉多文辭<sup>443</sup>

Recently I came to admire Li [Bai] and Du [Fu's] lack of restraint  
And how they got wildly drunk for a long time and wrote many poems.

醉留東野<sup>444</sup>

"Urging Meng Jiao to Stay After Drunk"

(line one to line four)

昔年因讀李白杜甫詩 長恨二人不相從

In the past because I read the poems of Li Bai and Du Fu,  
I constantly regretted that those two could not meet each other.

吾與東野生並世 如何復躡二子蹤<sup>445</sup>

[Now that] Meng Jiao and I live in this world together,  
How are we going to follow the two masters' path?

調張籍<sup>446</sup>

"Mocking Zhang Ji"

(line one to line two)

李杜文章在 光燄萬丈長<sup>447</sup>

From where the writings of Li [Bai] and Du [Fu] are,  
Light and flame stretch to a million feet long.

<sup>442</sup> Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the Tang Search for Unity*, p. 267

<sup>443</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 369

<sup>444</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 88

<sup>445</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 58

<sup>446</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 47

<sup>447</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 989



石鼓歌<sup>448</sup>

“Song of the Stone Drum”

(line one to line four)

張生手持石鼓文 勸我試作石鼓歌

Master Zhang<sup>449</sup> holds in his hands the text [printed] from the stone drum,

And urges me to compose a song for the stone drum.

少陵無人謫仙死 才薄將奈石鼓何<sup>450</sup>[But] there is no one on Mound Shao<sup>451</sup> anymore and the Banished Immortal<sup>452</sup> has died;

[With my] limited talent, what am I going to do with the stone drum?

Such admiration for Li and Du implies a desire to compete with or even surpass them in poetry. This is especially obvious in the “Song of the Stone Drum.” Although the poem begins in a humble tone, it is actually a long and adeptly crafted epic that shows every intention to compete with the two masters in poetic skills. The ambition to outdo his predecessors motivated Han Yü to create a strong and distinctive style of his own, and in order to achieve this he needed to do something drastically different in his poems. A diligent restoration of the ancient ways would not cause enough impact to raise him to the level of Li Bai and Du Fu; it is in the pursuit of eccentricity and unconventionality that he

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<sup>448</sup> *Quantangshi*, juan 340. Chen Kang, *Quantangshi suoyin Han Yü juan*, p. 80

<sup>449</sup> This is Zhang Ji.

<sup>450</sup> Qian Zhonglian, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi*, p. 794

<sup>451</sup> Mound Shao is the royal tomb of Empress Xu 許皇后, the consort of Emperor Xuandi of Western Han 漢宣帝 (reign 73~49 BCE.). Because Du Fu's hometown was near that mound, he used “Mound Shao” (*Shaoling*) as his style name or *hao*.

<sup>452</sup> This is Li Bai's style name.

sees the possibility to establish himself as a unique poetic master.

It is interesting that although Han Yü claimed to be an ardent seeker of remote antiquity, his admiration and ambition were fixed on two poets only two generations before him. It is also interesting that Zhao Yi, who gave one of the most comprehensive comments on Han's verse, did not relate his poems to *fugu* at all. Yet this conclusion should hardly be surprising, for although Han Yü is a true master of the ancient style prose, his poetry is something completely new and resembles anything but antiquity.

Therefore, it is obvious that the term *fugu* does not adequately characterize Han Yü's poetry at all, and sometimes one needs to see outside the context of *fugu* to give a more comprehensive analysis of Han Yü's verse. For example, contemporary scholar Jerry Schmidt is one of the few who recognize Han Yü's departure from traditional poetic conventions. In his article "Disorder and the Irrational in the Poetry of Han Yü," he comments that by organizing their books around a concept of *fugu* and Confucian moral concerns, authors such as Owen and Hartman are unable to break completely free from the Song Neo-Confucian approach to Han Yü's work,<sup>453</sup> which essentially sees Han Yü as an ardent Confucian in every aspect. In his discussion of poems such as "Meng Jiao Lost His Son" Schmidt further comments that "the view of the universe expressed in the

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<sup>453</sup> Jerry D. Schmidt, "Disorder and the Irrational in the Poetry of Han Yü", *Tang Studies* 7, 1989, p. 138

poems by Han Yü is considerably more pessimistic than anything found in earlier Chinese poetry and bears no resemblance to traditional Confucianism, which viewed the world as a morally ordered structure."<sup>454</sup> In the same article he also compares Han Yü's poetry to the works of the twentieth-century existentialist author Franz Kafka (1883~1924). This comparison may seem odd at first, but it accurately addresses the bizarre, unconventional, and irrational elements in the two writers' works and is much more insightful than an awkward attempt to interpret Han Yü's verse as a form of *fugu*.

The essence of *fugu* lies within its natural ruggedness and moral integrity. Yet in Han Yü's poetry, we sense a highly artificial form of ruggedness and a tendency to undermine orthodox moral norms, which make his poems seem strange and bizarre but not archaic. The peculiar imagery, extreme prosaism, and overwhelming array of obscure characters are all characteristics that push the limit of conventional aesthetics. Furthermore, as these qualities obviously require great craftsmanship, they also seem intentionally synthetic and fail to convey the natural beauty of the earlier and more primitive poems. They differ greatly from the simplicity and spontaneity of early poetry and differ significantly from a *fugu* style. Besides being stylistically unconventional, Daoist elements and moral unorthodoxy in Han's verse challenge the traditional

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<sup>454</sup> Jerry D. Schmidt, "Disorder and the Irrational in the Poetry of Han Yü", *Tang Studies* 7, 1989, p. 160

Confucian values that form the backbone of *fugu*. The frequent use of humor also undermines the seriousness of his works and forms a sharp contrast with *fugu*'s solemn and urgent atmosphere. In other words, of all the signature features of Han Yü's poetry, none is consistent with the principles of *fugu*. They reveal an urge to defy conventions instead of confirming them, to create something new instead of emulating the old, and to startle the readers with boldness and strangeness instead of moving them with a dignified force. Therefore, it would be difficult to come up with a comprehensive analysis of Han Yü's poetry if one is confined by his image as a *fugu* Confucian and fails to confront the radical innovations that are so prevalent in his verse.

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