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The Bulletin of
SUNG YUAN
Studies

Number 19
1987

Ronald C. Egan, *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu (1007-72)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. vi + 269 pp. Appendix, notes, Chinese titles of books translated, bibliography, glossary-index.

How are we to understand the literary texts of Ouyang Xiu and their place in the literary culture of the Northern Song dynasty? And how does Ronald Egan's *Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu* help us? To focus our inquiry within these broad questions, in this review article I would like to consider the more specific issues of what wen, as the "literary," meant to Ouyang Xiu, and how Ouyang Xiu's writings embody this literariness in practice. I first shall present and discuss several texts by Ouyang Xiu to introduce what I believe to be concepts central to his understanding of the literary. Then I shall turn to Egan's treatment of Ouyang Xiu's prose and shi poetry to see the manner in which these concepts are reflected in Egan's analysis.

THE LITERARY AND THE TRANSMISSION OF THE WAY: THREE TEXTS

In a letter to Wang Shu 王 曙 (963-1034) requesting a preface for a friend's father's collected writings, Ouyang Xiu makes the following argument:

A gentleman learns that "when speech is unadorned, it does not travel far." Words are to convey events yan yi zai shi 言以載事 and "literariness" is to adorn words. When the event is worthy of trust and the words literary, then they can become manifest to later generations. The Shi, Shu, Yi, and Chungiu are all good at conveying events and are especially literary; thus, they have been transmitted especially far. Men like Xun Qing and Meng Ke were also good at composition, but in their Way, there were aspects they attained and there were aspects which they did not.¹ Therefore some of their writings were transmitted, and some were not. Their flourishing or neglect remained bound to the likes

¹ The "Way" of Meng Zi and Xun Zi here could also simply be translated as "doctrines." Nonetheless, there clearly is that which they failed to attain, namely whatever it was that the Sages understood and enacted. When I use the term, "Way," I shall use it to indicate this quality of sagely thought and action.

and dislikes of the times. Next, in Chu there was a minister who was good at giving his songs literary pattern, and thereby they were transmitted. In the flourishing time of the Han, there were Jia Yi, Dong Zhongshu, Sima Xiangru, and Yang Xiong, who were able to give their literary expressions literary pattern, and thereby they were transmitted. Since then, the time of the sages was ever more remote, and the generations were increasingly insignificant or in decline. Reaching the Zhou and Sui, in the intervening years there still occasionally were those who were good at giving their words literary pattern, which were thereby transmitted, but these were all in confusion and disarray and not entirely worthy of trust. Thus less than one in a hundred survived, and if that one luckily was transmitted, its transmission was not entirely clear. It could not have the brilliant self-manifestation and great popularity of the previous several writers. Extreme indeed is the difficulty in making words travel well. The affair must be worthy of trust, and [the text] needs literary pattern. If the literary pattern is the ultimate, [transmission] still is bound to the greatness of that which upon which it relies to see if it travels far or not. The Shu conveys Yao and Shun; the Shi conveys the Shang and Zhou; the Yi conveys the nine sages; the Chungiu conveys the models of Kings Wen and Wu. Xun zi and Meng zi convey the Shi, Shu, Yi, and Chungiu. The Qi of Chu conveys the Feng and Ya. Those writers of the Han, in their literary efforts, convey the most flourishing aspects of the cultural life of their rulers' times. Later students, cast adrift, conveyed nothing; thus their words were not entirely worthy of trust. Thus their transmission accordingly was neither far nor enduring. When we come to the rise of the Tang and the governance of Taizong, the rule of the Kaiyuan reign period, and the merit of Xianzong, their officials vied to convey these in literary pattern. Sometimes their words were cast broadly by song and music; sometimes they were engraved in metal or stone. Thus the great men, the great virtue, expansive words, and lofty arguments—after these media disperse—still rely upon the fact that what they convey is in literary pattern. Thus if what the words convey is both great and literary, then it will be manifest zhang 章 in its transmission. If what the words convey is neither literary nor great, then it will not be manifest in its transmission²

This letter, written when Ouyang Xiu was a young man, offers a subtly nuanced version of the "literary." He begins with an assertion—"Words are to convey events, and literariness is to adorn words"—that seems close to Zhou Dunyi's formulation, "Writing is to convey the Way." Indeed, Zhang Jian, in his analysis of the passage, simply equates "events" with "the Way." The text, however, contradicts this initial impression. Ouyang Xiu does indeed mean "events," or more broadly, human affairs. In the letter he explains the sort of matters that fall under this rubric: the actions of the sages, the good government of later rulers,

² Ouyang Wenzhong *Gong wen ji* 歐陽文忠公文集 張健 67.1b-2b, hereafter referred to as *OY* (Sibu congkan), cited in Zhang Jian 張健 *Ouyang Xiu zhi shiwen ji wenxue piping* (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1973), pp. 32-3.

and the best of the cultural tradition of an age. Ouyang Xiu demands not that these affairs directly pertain to the Way, but simply that they be worthy of trust.

As Ouyang Xiu's argument develops, the "literary" as a category acquires ever greater status as an aspect of the organization of writing. It begins simply as that which adorns words. Then, however, Ouyang Xiu claims that since the classics are extraordinarily "literary," they have survived an extraordinarily long time. In contrast, since Meng Zi and Xun Zi only partially attained the Way, their texts only partially survived. Thus *dao* pertains not only to the events that texts are intended to convey but to the "literary" aspect of the texts as well, for it is precisely the literary qualities that assure transmission and that Meng Zi and Xun Zi failed to attain. When Ouyang Xiu comes to discuss Tang writers, he explicitly states this position: "if what the words convey is both great and literary, then it will be manifest in its transmission." That which the words convey—and not the words themselves—are to partake of the quality of "literary." What then does Ouyang Xiu mean by the "literary?" From the examples he gives, it clearly is a quality of organization beyond mere ornamentation, for Qu Yuan "was good at giving his songs literary pattern." Even more tellingly, Ouyang Xiu praises Han writers who "gave their ornate expressions literary pattern." Here he explicitly juxtaposes the "ornate" with that higher quality he also defines through the term *wen*. At the letter's conclusion, Ouyang Xiu still has not explained what this higher quality of the literary is, yet he has affirmed it to be essential in the successful representation of human experience.

The crucial and distinctive aspect of Ouyang Xiu's position in the letter to Wang Shu is his emphasis on the literary in the representation of *shi* ("events," "affairs," "matters of human experience"). The literary is not simply a fancy vehicle to convey events, comparable to "the painted wheels and shaft" of Zhou Dunyi's cart in his formulation of "literature is to convey the Way."³ Instead, the literary qualities in a text are *needed* to adequately convey events. Events, it turns out, are not quite so simple as we might have initially thought. We shall see that what can be conveyed over the centuries is not the external circumstances of events but their inner significance, their meaning as experienced by men. This meaning is embodied in such terms as "resolve" *zhi* 志, "intention" *yi* 意, and "emotion" *qing* 情. This last term is difficult and particularly important because it is used to describe both the external "circumstances" and the internal response to those circumstances.

Ouyang Xiu explores the nexus of relations introduced in the letter to Wang Shu—events and intention, the circumstantial and the central, and what remains and what is lost when one reads an old text—in an essay, "A Discussion of the Basic and the Peripheral," in his *Shi ben yi* [Basic Meaning of the Shijing]. His analysis helps clarify both the nature of the literary and the role it plays in general textual hermeneutics.

Ouyang Xiu begins by noting numerous discrepancies in the received understanding of the organization of the *Shijing*. Having raised the interpretive problem, he then observes:

³ Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, *Zhou zi tongshu* 周子通書 28, in *Zhou Lianxi ji* 周濂溪集 6.117 (Congshu jicheng jian bian), translated in Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 476.

Concerning the *Shijing*, there is that wherein we are fortunate and that wherein we are unfortunate. Unfortunately, we come many generations after the sage and have no way to resolve our doubts. Fortunately, the basic meaning of the *Shijing* remains. As for the making of the poems, [the writers] encountered events and were moved by phenomena *chushi ganwu* 触事感物; they gave it literary pattern with words: they praised the good and excoriated the bad. By this, their mouths found words to express their regard and resentment, and their hearts found a way to channel their sorrow, joy, delight, and anger. This is the intention of the poets.⁴

Ouyang Xiu next describes three further aspects of the creation of the *Shijing* as it was transmitted to later generations. First was the office of the music master, who sorted and classified the poems as they were given to him by the officials sent out to collect folk songs. Next was the moral resolve that guided Confucius as he culled through the poems of the music repertoire to choose poems that adequately embodied encouragement of the good and warning to the bad. The final force shaping the *Shi* was the professional efforts of the classical scholars. These four elements—the intentions of the poets, the official duty of the music masters, the resolve of Confucius, and the work of the scholars—comprise what there is to know about the *Shijing*. The intentions of the poets and the resolve of Confucius are central, while the classifications of the music masters and the exegesis of the scholars are peripheral. One ideally should know all four, but problems remain. Organizational questions arise, and Han and Tang exegesis offers uncertain or unsatisfactory explanations. Yet, Ouyang Xiu insists, "as for the good or bad events conveyed by the poems and the critical or laudatory character of their language—the so-called intentions of the poets—luckily these all still exist."⁵

If the details of the events that inspired the poems are uncertain, how can Ouyang Xiu claim that nonetheless the basic intent will come out radiantly clear? This is a question that is central not just to the *Shijing*, but to all the canonical texts of the Confucian tradition. Recalling Ouyang Xiu's letter to Wang Shu, we can say that this reading is possible because what the poems "convey is both great and literary." Now, however, we can be somewhat more specific about the normatively "literary" qualities Ouyang Xiu finds in the *Shijing*. When Ouyang Xiu actually offers interpretations of the poems in his commentary, he gives great weight to the "constant patterns of ancient times and today" *gu jin chang li* 古今常理, and in particular to the constancy of the human affective nature.⁶ James T. C. Liu, in his discussion of Ouyang Xiu's classical studies, describes this key role of emotion in Ouyang Xiu's understanding of the Classics:

Ouyang Xiu considered the texts of the classics to be simple and direct

⁴ Ouyang Xiu, *Shi ben yi* 詩本義 14.4a (Dumen yinshuju 都門印書局, n.d.)

⁵ Ouyang Xiu, *Shi ben yi* 14.5a.

⁶ In his discussion of the poem "Guan ju" (Mao no. 1), for example, Ouyang Xiu rejects the Mao-Zheng interpretation and protests, "How could this come close to (the real nature of) human emotions?" (*Shi ben yi* 1.1a.) Ouyang Xiu uses the phrase "the constant patterns of ancient times and today" in his discussion of "Wen Wang" (Mao no. 235, *Shi ben yi* 10.1b). Other examples are legion.

and that the application of the meaning of the classics was both apt and easily done. An important factor in this was that the "words of the sages were never far from human feelings" and that "the rule of Yao, Shun, and the three kings certainly was based on human feelings." . . . Ouyang believed that the meaning of the classics definitely accorded with human feelings and that they molded emotion into a form that accorded with reason. "Now a gentleman widely chooses from among men: though they be comical or vulgar, still he will not neglect them entirely. How much more so is this true of poetry! Of old, there was nothing of which the three hundred poems of the *Shijing* did not speak. Only they were unrestrained but not dissolute, joyous but not licentious and in the end returned to correctness."⁷

Because the Way of the Former Kings was grounded in human emotions, their texts embodied these normative but broad emotional responses. Thus the modern reader, to understand these texts adequately, must acknowledge this affective component. Indeed, Ouyang Xiu specifically defends the myriadness of the contents of the *Shijing* against contemporary criticism:

In general they say that there are three reasons why the *Shi* is not worth understanding. It's writing is by line and stanza [i.e., in small pieces without a sense of larger structure], its language is licentious and profuse, and it records small and heterogeneous matters. Were this true, then Confucius would be merely a drifting scholar. . . . The *Yi*, *Shu*, *Li*, *Yue*, and *Chungiu* are that in which the Way is maintained. The *Shi* is related to these five and illumines the enactment *yong* 用 of the Sages' [Way].⁸

This enactment of the Sages' Way is found in the particular realizations embodied in the poems themselves, poems that are the poets' response as "they encountered events and were moved by phenomena" and that Confucius found worthy of selection and transmission. Ouyang Xiu argues that while undeniably treating of such topics as love, courtship, and other seemingly frivolous matters in less than entirely decorous language—as the critics charged—the poems precisely because of this embody the Way in its actual functioning in the world.

Since the poet's response to the world embodies the actual application of the Way, emphasis on the affective quality of that response allows Ouyang Xiu to recognize the importance of the "literary" in writing that aspires to emulate the greatest texts of the Confucian canon. I find that for Ouyang Xiu, the "literary" is those qualities in writing which preserve the unity of the moral and affective response to events achieved in the Confucian classics and—to a lesser degree—in the best works of later centuries. It is precisely the emphasis on these aspects of response that makes the reading of the Classics still possible. While we may no longer understand many of the historical circumstances surrounding the texts, we can understand the quality of emotional response and the normative moral character of that response, because the Way of the sages was founded on the nature of human

⁷ Liu Zijian 劉子健, *Ouyang Xiu de zhixue yu congzheng* 歐陽修的治學與從政 (Hong Kong: Xinya, 1963), pp. 24-25.

⁸ Ouyang Xiu, *QY* 60.8b.

emotions and because we still share that same affective nature as the men of old. If a text is not literary, this canonical unity of representation disintegrates. Either the emotional response is unworthy of transmission, or the moral response has strayed too far from the realities of human nature: in either case, the text will not endure long. Ouyang Xiu in his attempt to reclaim the obscured significance of the Confucian canon thus arrives at the same time at an explanation for the possibility of a restored reading of the basic meaning of those texts, at an understanding of the Way that those texts embody, and at a complex justification of the literary qualities of texts that has canonical sanction.

How then does this idea of the literary that we can adduce from Ouyang Xiu's readings of the Classics inform his own writings? More specifically, how does the canonical and hermeneutic role that Ouyang Xiu assigns to human emotions shape his actual practice of composition? To answer these questions we now turn to Egan's *Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu* as our guide through Ou-yang Xiu's literary corpus. We shall look in particular at Ou-yang Xiu's prose and *shi* poetry; *ci*, "songs" was still a marginal genre in Ouyang Xiu's day, and his contribution to its evolution was sufficiently minor that we can ignore it for the moment.

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF OUYANG XIU'S LITERARY PROSE

Egan begins his discussion of Ouyang Xiu's prose by pointing to Ouyang Xiu's role in the *Qingli* political reform movement and in the related advocacy of *guwen*, "old-style prose." In brief, Ouyang Xiu joined with Fan Zhongyan and others to advocate a more rigorously Confucian governance. Part of their goal was to reform the examination system through which men were selected to qualify for official position. The reformers objected to the tests' emphasis on the mastery of parallel prose and poetic technique: little attention was paid to ability to analyse issues of current concern and cogently present that analysis in well-organized policy discussions. The reformers sought to replace parallel prose in the examinations with *guwen*, an unstructured expository style modeled on the writings of antiquity. Among the advocates of *guwen*, however, some made the style into a negative image of parallel prose, a style that self-consciously violated all the aesthetic norms of the dominant form. Their archaism, awkwardness, and obscurities announced that their writings were ANCIENT and superior. Egan's account of Ouyang Xiu's position in this controversy (pp. 13-28) is very good. While Ouyang Xiu affirmed the moral responsibility of writing, he could not accept the radical stance of his friend Shi Jie 石介 (1005-1045). Egan perceptively explains that Ouyang Xiu's central objection was to any obsession with style as such (p. 21). Instead, one should work to allow that which is inside to find its natural form. One should be flexible:

Now as for the style of one's writing, on the first draft let the words run freely. But later they must be held in check so that the writing is concise, forceful, and correct. Still, now and then allow a free and unrestrained passage to relax the tone. Do not cling to any single style and then your writing will be masterly (p. 21).

Ouyang Xiu did not just advocate a responsive *guwen* technique: he is important

precisely because he created the required style. Egan writes, "It is hard to imagine him acquiring such a stature as a literary genius and having such influence upon younger scholars if he had not demonstrated, by producing a rich and varied corpus of prose, what a flexible and expressive style *ku-wen* might be" (pp. 26-7). To organize his approach to Ouyang Xiu's prose and to elucidate these qualities, Egan divides the corpus into three main categories—"informal prose, grave inscriptions, and formal memorial and essays" (p. 30). The most splendid achievements of Egan's study are in this discussion of prose; we have no other systematic attempt in English to develop an aesthetics of prose such as Egan presents here. This is a difficult task, because it is almost impossible to preserve the tonalities of Chinese classical prose in an English translation, and even more difficult to make the Chinese rhetorical categories compelling for a modern reader.

Egan's account of Ouyang Xiu's informal prose presents the basic characteristics of Ouyang Xiu's style. As Egan observes, "Ou-yang Hsiu enriches his pieces with implications and associations. Or he modifies his main point by obliquely introducing an antithetical one. . . . Or he talks around and around his subject, building up layer after layer of meaning" (p. 43). The power of Ouyang Xiu's prose comes not from the allusive and descriptive density of which parallel prose is capable, but from the careful structuring of relatively simple units and the martialing of particular details. Egan cites Ouyang Xiu's account of his three antique zithers as an example of this gradual building of meaning.

When Ou-yang Hsiu first mentions that the three instruments have different kinds of inlaid studs on their faces (one has gold studs, one has jade, and one has stone), we suppose that this is just a convenient way to distinguish them. But then Ou-yang Hsiu continues: [here Egan translates Ouyang Xiu's description of why the stone studs are best for an old man like him.] The studs are not just another physical detail. Ou-yang Hsiu invests them with significance, playing upon the associations gold and jade have of worldly ambition and success, and the associations stone has of rusticity and naturalness" (p. 36).

Egan's insight into Ouyang Xiu's ability to imbue description with deeper implications and intentions *yi* 意 occasionally fails him. In the middle section of a farewell, preface Ouyang Xiu gives a long description of playing the zither (pp. 34-5). Egan dismisses this as merely "a purple patch" (p. 35) and misses the point. I shall explore the passage because Ouyang Xiu's account of the zither here echoes the theme of emotion, representation, and the literary that are the central concerns of the present article. Ouyang Xiu begins the preface by explaining that earlier in life he had been afflicted with an unshakable melancholy which eventually was cured by his learning to play the zither. What had learning to play the zither done to help him? The middle section explains this and also, by implication, explains why sorrow initially had turned to a lingering depression:

Zither playing is a minor art. However, when it is at its best and the musician, using everything from the sonorous *kung* mode to the delicate *yü* mode, begins with a sudden flurry and then keeps changing the mood abruptly, making the allegro passages anxiously hurried and the adagio

passages soothingly tranquil, then the music resembles a cliff crumbling into a ravine and boulders splitting apart, a spring gushing forth from lofty mountains, a rainstorm striking in the dead of night, the forlorn sighs of embittered men and lonely women, the affectionate love-calls of a pair of birds. Its depth of sorrow and thought make it the remnant sound of Shun, King Wen and Confucius. Its vexed grief is that which the orphan Po-ch'i and the loyal minister Ch'ü Yüan sighed. The love, anger, remorse, and delight it expresses move one profoundly. Yet it is classically correct and restrained, not to be distinguished from the speeches of Yao and Shun, the elegant writings of Confucius, the *Book of Changes*, with its worries and concerns, and the *Book of Songs* with its complaints and censures. Those who can listen to it with their ears, reproduce it with their hands, and master its harmonies will be able to vent their sorrow. They may thus attain to expression as moving as any known to man (p. 34, with modifications).

A bit of lore about zithers—which Egan certainly knows well—lies behind this passage and explains why zither music is more than just zither music. A famous story, which appears in both the *Lie zi* and the *Lü shi chungku*, describes how Zhong Ziqi listened to Bo Ya play his zither: when Bo Ya's intent *zhi* 志 was on high mountains, Zhong Ziqi recognized this in his playing, and when Bo Ya's intent was on flowing water, Zhong Ziqi could tell this as well. The *Lie zi* account then describes how Bo Ya, after traveling through the Mount Tai area, sat dejected and played his zither: his playing at first depicted a violent rainstorm he had encountered on his journey and then a shattered mountain he had also seen. Zhong Ziqi understood both, and Bo Ya, pleased, put aside his zither.⁹ I think that while Ouyang Xiu certainly is offering a bit of descriptive fireworks, he also means what he says. The initial description, which echoes the details of the *Lie zi* account, presents the external forms of internal states. In the next section Ouyang Xiu makes this correlation explicit, but also gives the argument an important turn. The zither not only allows one to express "love, anger, remorse, and delight," it also regulates those emotions as it embodies them. This is precisely the efficacy that Ouyang Xiu attributes to the poems of the *Shijing*. Thus while the high praise that he lavishes on the zither by comparing it to major canonical works is grand rhetoric, it is also true in an important way. Ouyang Xiu stresses the need to find an interpretive medium in which to simultaneously express and regulate one's inner state. By inference we can conclude that this medium is what Ouyang Xiu initially lacked when he was oppressed by melancholy and what he discovered in playing the zither. He now suggests that Yang Zhi, who will have reason enough to be depressed, give his remedy a try. Ouyang Xiu's description of playing the zither here should not be viewed as a ponderous argument for the instrument's antique seriousness: that would destroy the quality of voice in the piece. Yet neither is it the "purple patch" that Egan, who usually is more discerning, labels it. It is somewhere in between, and thus is a good example of Ouyang Xiu's informal style: light, aesthetically interesting, yet thoughtful.

⁹ See "Tang wen" 湯問 in *Lie zi* 列子 5.15-6 (Beijing: Wenxue guji, 1956) and "Ben wei" 本味 in *Lü shi chungku* 呂氏春秋 14.313-14 (Taipei: Zhongguo zixue mingzhu jicheng).

Egan notes that Ouyang Xiu often uses indirect expression to make his points and also that much of the aesthetic interest in Ouyang Xiu's informal prose is precisely in how he proceeds by such indirection to achieve his particular ends (p. 38). The variegated techniques through which Ouyang Xiu creates the structures of signification of his occasional prose imply an equally multifaceted concept of meaning itself. As Egan writes to describe a farewell preface to one Tian Hua, "like the best of Ou-yang Hsiu's informal writings, this farewell cannot be reduced to a single point or moral" (p. 48). This sense of multiplicity pervades Ouyang Xiu's literary prose in general. Egan explains, for example, that Ouyang Xiu in his funerary compositions tended to include both the good and bad actions of the deceased. The immediate issue there is of course "to ensure that future ages will know and believe the truth," which echoes Ouyang Xiu's concern in his letter to Wang Shu that the "matter be worthy of trust." But to be trustworthy then is to represent the actual complexity of human experience (p. 63). Egan frequently mentions Ouyang Xiu's inclusion of mundane matters (e.g. p. 61) and autobiographical information in his funerary inscriptions. This is yet another aspect of Ouyang Xiu's commitment to the recording of actual experience and his broad sense of what is significant in experience. It also reflects the success with which Ouyang Xiu developed a prose style capable of encompassing this breadth of meaning (p. 61).

This multifacetedness manifests itself in a slightly different way in Ouyang Xiu's essays. Egan, contrasting Ouyang Xiu to Han Yu, emphasizes that in Ouyang Xiu's essays, "it is difficult to anticipate what the next point will be" (p. 73), while "Han Yu typically spends considerably more time making a single point than Ou-yang Hsiu does, frequently making it, in effect, several times over . . ." (pp. 73-4). That is, Ouyang Xiu's arguments constantly evolve, qualifying and transforming themselves. As Su Xun, Su Shi's father, writes to Ouyang Xiu, "Your own writing, sir, is supple and ample, twisting this way and that a hundred times" (p. 76).

ON THE STATUS OF INFORMAL PROSE GENRES

Egan notes that Su Xun's description applies to Ouyang Xiu's prose writings in general. Indeed, there is nothing I perceive in Egan's presentation of Ouyang Xiu's discussions of his own writings or in my own reading of Ouyang Xiu that compels us to radically distinguish between Ouyang Xiu's informal writings and his more formal compositions. Egan's argument for such a distinction (pp. 48-9) is that (1) the informal writings did not have the prestige of formal genres, (2) Ouyang Xiu's initial reputation was based on his essays, and (3) that "the rich corpus of informal writings Ou-yang Hsiu left really has very little to do with Ou-yang Hsiu's role as leader of the Northern Sung *ku-wen* movement" (p. 48). The first point is true almost by definition. The second point, that Ouyang Xiu's reputation was established through his essays is true, but the conclusions we can draw from that are uncertain. Su Shi's reputation, for example, was established first by his participation in the *jìn shì* examination of 1057 and then by the group of essays he submitted for the decree examination of 1061. Yet to deny the role of

Su Shi's informal writings in his later importance as a cultural leader is surely wrong. Egan in fact concedes that "many of Ou-yang Hsiu's friends and acquaintances requested him to write dedicatory inscriptions for their pavilions or prefaces to their poetry, hence his writings in these genres was not unappreciated" (p. 48). As a discussion by Qisong (1011-1072) (translated below) reveals, younger literati were very much influenced by the aesthetic qualities of Ouyang Xiu's style and—Qisong warns—likely to miss the larger concerns informing that style. If the texts Qisong had in mind were the formal essays, I suspect that the warning would have been superfluous. Conversely, it is precisely the allure of Ouyang Xiu's informal pieces that encourage students to imitate the form and neglect the content.

The most important issue, however, is Egan's third point, that "if we try to account for Ou-yang Hsiu's vast corpus of informal prose by referring back to *ku-wen* principles and pronouncements, we find it cannot be done" (p. 49). Here, Egan seems to choose to forget about his own earlier analysis of Ouyang Xiu's role in the development of *guwen* and instead to consider *guwen* as a monolithic, univocal ideology. Egan shows that Ouyang Xiu eschews the extremes of the empty aesthetic formalisms of parallel prose and the anti-aesthetic idiosyncracies of radical *guwen* proponents. Indeed, Egan concludes that Ouyang Xiu's influence as a writer of *guwen* was because he "demonstrated, by producing a rich and varied corpus of prose, what a flexible and expressive style *ku-wen* might be" (pp. 26-7). Egan also reminds us that Ouyang Xiu's advocacy of *guwen* was not primarily an issue of literary style as such (p. 49). As mentioned above, Ouyang Xiu saw Shi Jie's strident concern for the purity of an unadorned style as a trivialization: neglecting content for form, Shi Jie threatened to reduce *guwen* to merely the negative image of the parallel prose he opposed. "At present, you draw a vertical as a diagonal and a square as a circle, claiming 'I am practicing the Way of Yao, Shun, the Duke of Chou, and Confucius.' This is utterly unacceptable" (p. 19). Ouyang Xiu, then, looks for *guwen*—"the quality of *wen* in antiquity"—elsewhere than in style as such. Qisong, attempting to claim the moral high ground of *guwen* rhetoric, makes this point—in a backward sort of way—very clearly. In the "Explanation of Writing" *Wen shuo* 文說, Qisong writes:

When Zhang Biao¹⁰ first arrived from the capital, he said that the literati in the capital esteemed Ouyang Yongshu's writings. They all, as one, admired him and wrote as he did. The seated guests heard this with delight, and one guest, a student, suddenly said, "If writing flourishes, then the realm is well-ruled." I said to the guests, "Mr. Ouyang's writings are merely patterned words; the proper rule of the realm is in the flourishing of man's patternings *ren wen* 人文. Human patterns use patterned words to become manifest, and patterned words rely on human patterns for their basis. Humaneness, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and trustworthiness are the human patterns. Stanzas, sentences and written words are the patterned words. . . . The writings of Mr. Ouyang on the whole are on the basis of humaneness, trustworthiness, ritual, and righteousness. It is fine if you esteem

¹⁰ Zhang Wangzhi 章望之, *zi* Biao 表民 (fl. 1050).

Yongshu's basis. Why in vain and in a piecemeal manner merely imitate his structure of expression and strategy of organization? . . .¹¹

Qisong's argument is to warn against Ouyang Xiu's influence as a model, yet it corresponds very well with Ouyang Xiu's own discussions. Both assert that *wen* as technique must serve to represent an inner patterning. If we take this quality of representation of the patterns of human experience as the central concern of Ouyang Xiu's literary writings, then there is little need to differentiate between his formal and informal writings in their aesthetic and moral dignity.

EMOTION AND THE FORMAL PROSE GENRES

Egan's presentation of Ouyang Xiu's writings in the formal genres of the funerary inscription and the essay is the most important section of *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu* and a substantial contribution to the study of classical Chinese literature. Egan appropriately stresses that we need to keep in mind that these more formal compositions commanded serious attention and that if we are to understand Ouyang Xiu's literary concerns, we cannot dismiss such writings as simply utilitarian prose devoid of aesthetic interest (p. 29). Egan succeeds admirably in presenting the particular aesthetic qualities of Ouyang Xiu's funerary inscriptions and essays. Given how little discussion of Chinese prose aesthetics exists in English, Egan's account here is of special importance.

Egan's presentation of Ouyang Xiu's works in formal prose genres coalesces the various elements of the literary we have considered above. Egan's account of the funerary inscription in particular constantly returns to Ouyang Xiu's emphasis on the personality of the deceased and to the "warmth and sympathy for the subject" (p. 60) that Ouyang Xiu usually conveys. That is, Egan stresses the manifestation of affective qualities in Ouyang Xiu's grave inscriptions (*muzhiming* 墓志銘). Ouyang Xiu's memorials and essays, however, present a more difficult case: Egan's analysis points us back to the problem of *wen*, the literary, as a pattern and to what it means to give literary pattern to composition.

Egan observes that funerary inscriptions comprise the bulk of Ouyang Xiu's prose in his literary collection (p. 29). The purpose of a grave inscription was to be "a statement of a man's deeds and accomplishments, an account of his life by which posterity would know and judge him (pp. 49-50)." Ouyang Xiu on occasion wrote them to oblige friends, but the question of indirect monetary reward also remains tantalizingly unclear (p. 50). To suggest Ouyang Xiu's broader concern for the trustworthiness of the portrayals he offers to the future, Egan cites a letter in which Ouyang Xiu defends including certain details of Fan Zhongyan's life in his grave inscription:

But with regards to Mr. Lü, I have also recorded the facts, to assure that future ages know and believe the truth. My tablet is not like the lawsuits and countersuits of mutual enemies, each one misrepresenting the facts, with the result that neither side is credited by future generations, each perceived as half-truths. The fact is, my tablet is

¹¹ Qisong 契嵩, *Tanjin wenji* 譚津文集 7.14b-15b.

disinterested and evenhanded. . . .¹²

Ouyang Xiu asserts that his goal is for future generations to "know and believe" — once again we find the question of the trustworthiness and self-manifesting character of what he embodies in the text. We must note, however, that the phrase that Egan quite perceptively translates as "disinterested" is *wu qing zhi yu*, "speech without emotion." Egan observes that with this phrase Ouyang Xiu makes great claims for his writing, claims he cannot always justify. Indeed, the most striking features of Ouyang Xiu's grave inscription suggest that he usually sought almost the opposite solution to the problem of trustworthy presentation. That is, he sought fully to present *qing* as a vehicle through which to delineate the character of the deceased for future generations.

Egan constantly stresses Ouyang Xiu's attention to details that forcefully evoke the personality of the subject of the grave inscription. He cites, for example, the conclusion to Ouyang Xiu's grave inscription for Hu Yuan, the influential Confucian educator, for the "warmth and sympathy" with which Ouyang Xiu could write of people who were not even close friends. Egan observes, "The final two sentences [of the section Egan translates] are the most memorable in the entire inscription, and they are so because they are so full of sentiment" (p. 60). Yet what are these two sentences? "From their speech and conduct one knew without inquiring that they were this teacher's students. From the respectful tone with which they mentioned their 'teacher' among themselves, one knew without inquiring that they referred to Mr. Hu." Ouyang Xiu presents himself as a reticent yet understanding witness. Verbs of cognition abound, and we see these vignettes through Ouyang Xiu's explicit, informing subjectivity. Yet he does not give us emotion as such; instead, he gives us a matter—the speech of the students—and a response, Ouyang Xiu's marvelously restrained act of knowing. As Egan notes, the technique is very effective. It is important that Egan does recognize this use of small personal details encountered at first hand as a technique. After discussing Hu Yuan's inscription, Egan details a "related technique" in the grave inscription that Ouyang Xiu wrote for Mei Yaochen's wife. In that piece, Ouyang Xiu makes "all but the last few lines of the inscription Mei Yao-ch'en's own words . . ." (p. 60). Egan then concludes that "the tone of intimacy Ou-yang hsiu achieves can be traced to the ease with which his style allows him to broach mundane matters" (p. 61).

From Egan's account of the grave inscription we can see that Ouyang Xi used a plethora of techniques to embody in the text the *qing*—as both external circumstances and internal responses—through which the deceased responded to the world and the world to the deceased and through which future generations can "know and believe." The marshalling of small details is one technique Ouyang Xiu frequently uses. Another is introducing himself as an explicit presence in the piece. Egan cites graves inscriptions for Huang Zhu and Zhang Yaofu (pp. 59-60) as example of this approach. In these texts we again find careful selection of small details to delineate the men. But when Ouyang Xiu directly appears in the text, we also have a witness to guarantee the truth of the assertions, a witness who not only sees, but, in the very naming, evaluates what he sees. Moreover, the witness whom we encounter in the text is none other than the author of the text. What is

¹² *ox* 150.7a, cited in Egan, p. 52.

the effect of this mode of offering explicit testimony to the minute particulars of the person's life? It creates a progressive manifestation of the patterns of encounter and response. This person at this time and these circumstances reacted in this way, and Ouyang Xiu, as a specific informing presence, saw it then and writes of it now. The text not only records actions and responses; it itself is a final summary response. Yet this very circumstantial particularity—a text by a specific person detailing matters pertaining to another specific person—quietly echoes the hermeneutic model Ouyang Xiu presents for reading the *Shijing*. Future ages can know the resolve *zhi* 志 of the transmitter, Ouyang Xiu, and the particular intent *yi* 意 in the actions of the subject of the grave inscription. These two are the "basic meaning" that the text is to convey. Thus the sense of intimacy and personal commitment that Ouyang Xiu creates may seem mere subjective coloring, but it in fact has a more substantial presence and function. Egan, I think, recognizes this aspect of Ouyang Xiu's style when he compares Ouyang Xiu's grave inscription to Han Yu's, which lack the former's crafted traces of an informing personal resolve. Particular intentions still shape Han Yu's works in the genre, but the strategy is different: he seems to strive for a renewed public language built from the resources of the cultural tradition. Through that language he sets forth an evaluation of his subject substantiated by the tradition. Ouyang Xiu has a more private, inward sense of the locus of meaning (pp. 61-63).

In Ouyang Xiu's grave inscription the affective component of literariness readily appears on the surface of the text, even if the actual implications are somewhat more complicated. In Ouyang Xiu's essays and memorials, however, the role of affect in the text is subtler. In the funerary inscriptions, Ouyang Xiu often embodies the *qing* in his selection and organization of "matters" *shi* 事, rather than in explicit statement. In his essays as well, meaning is often implicit in the carefully organized relationship between statements rather than explicitly asserted. For example, Egan in discussing Ouyang Xiu's "On the Release of Criminals" writes:

The reader feels that he is in the presence here of a rigorous mind. The essay is not easy reading. It does not lend itself to skimming because it is difficult to anticipate what the next point will be. But at the same time, there is nothing unclear or awkward in the entire piece. Ou-yang Hsiu moves swiftly and surely from one thought to the next. "The brushstrokes are few, but the meaning is ample." The sentence is Ou-yang Hsiu's, contained in an inscription he wrote on a painting he much admired. The literary historian Ch'ien Chi-po (b. 1887) uses it to characterize Ou-yang Hsiu's expository prose generally, which is often spare of words and dense with meaning as is this particular essay (p. 73).

Ouyang Xiu's style is economical, moves with substantial force, yet the actual unfolding of the argument is difficult to predict before the fact.

Egan once again compares Ouyang Xiu with Han Yu to emphasize these particular qualities:

Han Yu typically spends considerably more time on a single point than Ou-yang Hsiu does, frequently making it, in effect, several times over,

and his rhetoric is weightier. There is, in fact, a large amount of rhetorical repetition in Han Yu's prose. Sentences expressing similar thoughts in similar prosodic rhythms are placed one beside another, forming at times extended series of parallel statements that reinforce each other. The forceful and authoritative tone of Han Yu's prose owes much to this practice of reiteration (pp. 73-74).

Han Yu creates explicit rhetorical structures through which to build his arguments. Here again the patterns rely on the traditional tools of Chinese rhetoric to create a shared, public language in which his arguments are true through the very terms of that shared language.¹³

The patterning of Ouyang Xiu's essays is very different. In "On the Release of the Criminals," for example, Ouyang Xiu argues that Tang Taizong's release of three hundred condemned criminal with the injunction that they return by the following autumn does not accord with the constant principles of human nature and consequently does not represent good policy. The organization of the essay, then, is to demonstrate how Tang Taizong's act violates human nature and therefore produces undesirable results. Ouyang Xiu's understanding of *ren qing* 人情, "human emotions," is the final ground for the coherence of the essay: it determines what constitutes adequate and self-evident proof, and it determines the order in which the argument is made. This is, I think, the best way to understand why "it is difficult to anticipate what the next point will be [yet] at the same time there is nothing unclear or awkward in the entire piece" (p. 73), and also why, in Su Xun's words, "Ou-yang Xiu's writing is supple and ample, twisting this way and that a hundred times, yet its reasoning is clear *tiaoda shuchang* 倜傥疏暢, free from any gaps or breaks" (p. 76). To see the significance of this mode of argument, we must recognize that the existence of other choices, other true and constant structures to which Ouyang Xiu could have appealed to substantiate his particular claims. There are two major possibilities: *tian di* 天地, "heaven and earth"—the world structured through the binary oppositions of Tang parallel prose and regulated verse—and *li* 理, "inherent pattern."¹⁴ Han Yu still lives in the Tang cosmic order, though it has begun to unravel. And for Ouyang Xiu that world is gone, but *li* does not yet have the integrative power that Su Shi, and then the *dao xue* scholars find in it. Thus Ouyang Xiu stands as an intermediate figure.

What then does it mean to say that the rules for coherence in Ouyang Xiu's literary writings are grounded in his understanding of the constant patterns of human emotion? The idea draws together the many strands of our investigation. For example, we have discussed the relation of Ouyang Xiu's informal prose to his formal compositions in the light of the ideas of the literary that Ouyang Xiu develops in his comments on the Classics. The present idea of the affective ground for literary practice gives a generalized account of the way in which those theoretical and historical discussions of the Classics are realized in Ouyang Xiu's

¹³ In *Yuan dao*, for example, Han Yu makes the clear distinction between the "private words" of Lao Zi and the consensual truth of his own argument.

¹⁴ See the discussion of parallel prose in E. R. Hughes, "Epistemological Methods in Chinese Philosophy," Charles A. Moore, ed. *The Chinese Mind* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967), pp. 77-103. Stephen Owen in *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: One of the World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 12-27, explores the ontological and epistemological implications of the parallelism of the regulated verse.

own compositions. Moreover, the earlier analysis of literariness presented in Ouyang Xiu's discussions of the *Shijing* emphasized the qualities in the Classics that preserved the unity of affective and moral response. We can now return to this issue as a way of closing our consideration of Ouyang Xiu's prose. The central question in both the affective and the moral is that of response. Ouyang Xiu is consistent with the major tradition of classical Chinese thought in treating *qing* as a response to particular circumstances.¹⁵ In contrast, the *categories* of emotion—joy, anger, sorrow, delight, etc.—simply delimit the possibilities for experiencing emotion, just as the five colors delimit the possibilities of sight. Since *qing* in its particularity is a response, it inherently possesses ethical significance. When Ouyang Xiu in "On Releasing the Prisoners" affirms that "the governance of Yao, Shun and the Three Kings was based on human emotions," he in effect argues that an adequate (sagely) understanding of human emotional response—including an awareness of man's wayward tendencies that can be misdirected through wrong action—is the ground for moral and political judgment. Tang Taizong's actions were inappropriate because he failed to understand adequately how they would incorrectly shape men's actual realization of their innate dispositions. In contrast, the "sages did not perform extraordinary deeds in order to appear exalted, nor did they violate human nature (*ren qing*) to win fame" (p. 73). For Ouyang Xiu, writing had the same responsibilities of vision, understanding, and discipline. Equally importantly, he demonstrated that writing could be adequate to that responsibility.

POETRY

The exploration of the hermeneutic and ethical role of *qing* in defining literariness in Ouyang Xiu's literary prose is, I confess, something of a preamble. My own major interest is in poetry, and Egan's discussion of Ouyang Xiu's poetry is the weakest section of his study. Egan's project seems to be to place Ouyang Xiu's poetry in the general context of his *guwen* prose aesthetics. At the same time, Egan seeks to affirm that Ouyang Xiu's *guwen* was more than just a literary phenomenon, that it was part of a political, moral, and intellectual reform. Ouyang Xiu was not just a literary figure. These are laudable and important goals. Egan's success in realizing these aims in discussing Ouyang Xiu's prose is a major contribution to the Western study of classical Chinese literature. But because he has not pushed his analysis to the level of abstraction of Ouyang Xiu's own discussions, he does not utilize the conceptual tools that are available in the Chinese tradition to reveal the commonalities between Ouyang Xiu's poetry and his literary prose. Hence Egan concludes:

We found earlier that Ou-yang Hsiu's prose exhibits largely the same stylistic traits no matter what genre we consider, a fact made more apparent by reading his prose against Han Yu's. We cannot say the same about Ou-yang Hsiu's poetry. It is stylistically varied. Like many

¹⁵ See the discussion of emotion in the "Record of Music" in the *Li ji* for an early statement of this position. An example of Ouyang Xiu's use of this understanding of emotion as response is in his "Rhapsody on the Sounds of Autumn," lines 66-71 (p. 128). The original Chinese text, however, makes the relationship of response clearer than does Egan's translation.

Chinese literati, Ou-yang Hsiu did not limit himself to a single mode of expression in *shih* poetry. The most we can do to tie together his diverse styles is to say that they are all genuine alternatives to the allusive and intricate Hsi-k'un style (p. 121).

Egan quite correctly stresses the stylistic range of Ouyang Xiu's poetry; such versatility was unusual in the writers of the early Song. However, the center around which Egan seeks to array the various styles of Ouyang Xiu's poetic repertoire will not hold. I have come to suspect very strongly that the *Xikun* style, that great arch-rival to *guwen* poetics, is in fact an odd artifact of Chinese literary historiography. Three sources roughly from the period in question argue for the existence of a *Xikun* style. First is the anthology from which the name comes, the *Xikun chouchang ji*, a collection of poems composed by the important scholars and officials, Yang Yi (974-1020), Liu Yun (971-1031), Qian Weiyan (973-1030) and their friends, and compiled by Yang Yi during the Jingde reign period (1004-1007). The collection usually is considered to be in the manner of Li Shangyin's lush, learned, and cryptic regulated verse. In general this is certainly true, but Jonathan Chaves, whose *Mei Yao-ch'en and the Development of Early Sung Poetry* is the best study of the period in English, notes that the anthology is in fact somewhat more heterogeneous than its reputation would suggest.¹⁶ The second source for our knowledge of the baleful influence of the *Xikun* anthology is Shi Jie's polemic, *On Aberrations*. Egan discusses the intentions behind Shi Jie's attack in the context of *guwen* opposition to parallel prose: the two main contributors to the *Xikun chouchang ji*, Yang Yi and Liu Yun, were also the paramount parallel-prose stylists of the time (p. 14). Both, however, were presumably dead by the time Shi Jie wrote his polemic.¹⁷ Hence the question of how well Shi Jie's vituperation reflected contemporary poetic practice remains open to doubt.

The final source for our understanding of *Xikun* style as a major force in Song poetics are two remarks that Egan cites from Ouyang Xiu's *shi hua*. In each case, the comment is in passing. The first is a peroration to a story about one Chen Congyi (j.s. 989, d. 1031) who obtained a poor copy of Du Fu's poetry and had his guests fill in the one character missing from a Du Fu line. In between introducing Chen and telling the story, Ouyang Xiu speculates for a moment on why copies of Du Fu's poetry had become hard to find in Chen's generation. He tentatively blames it on the flourishing of the *Xikun* vogue at the time.¹⁸ The second reference is even more rhetorically circumscribed. Ouyang Xiu in a passage defends Yang Yi's skill at couplet-crafting. He writes, "When the *Xikun* anthology came out, men at the time *shi ren* 詩人 (c. 1007) vied in imitating it, and the style of poetry was transformed."¹⁹ He then continues to note the particular ways in which Yang Yi's verse was superior to the Late Tang style popular in his own youth (1020s).

¹⁶ Jonathan Chaves, *Mei Yao-ch'en and the Development of Early Sung Poetry* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1971), p. 66.

¹⁷ In the second of the three parts of "On Aberrations," Shi Jie states that Yang Yi had dazzled the eyes of the literati for forty years. This suggests that that section of the essay was composed either in the late 1030s or during the Qingli reform administration (1043-45).

¹⁸ *QY* 128.3b.

¹⁹ *QY* 128.8b.

Jonathan Chaves concludes about these two sections of the *shi hua*, "After reading these passages, it is difficult to understand the frequently expressed view that Ou-yang and Mei were implacable enemies of Hsi-k'un poetry."²⁰ Other evidence may exist. It may prove that such important official as Lü Yijian and Qian Weiyan, while not known now for their poetry, may have left a substantial body of poems dating from the late 1020s to early 1030s in the *Xikun* style.²¹ Without such evidence, however, we should take the *Xikun* style to be as Ouyang Xiu described it, a brief vogue inspired at the time of the publication of the original anthology.

Opposition to the *Xikun* style provides Egan with a convenient way to connect Ouyang Xiu's poetry with his broader literary and cultural concerns. If this is not a tenable approach, does Egan's account of Ouyang Xiu's small poetic oeuvre nonetheless suggest another possibility? In fact three parts of Egan's presentation form an interconnected set of relations that reveal the correspondence of Ouyang Xiu's poetry to his literary prose. The three parts are Egan's reference to the aesthetic quality of *ping dan*, "even and bland," his analysis of the serenity of some of Ouyang Xiu's poems, and his concluding remarks on Ouyang Xiu's use of multiple perspectives.

Egan's discussion of *ping dan* is very brief and placed within the context of a reaction to *Xikun* ornateness (pp. 82-83). Therefore I shall supplement his analysis with Chaves' quite thorough presentation of the concept as it relates to Mei Yaochen's poetry. Chaves demonstrates that there is no easy way to define exactly what the terms "even and bland" actually mean. Moreover, Ouyang Xiu's evaluation of the terms as an aesthetic quality is ambiguous: as Chaves notes, Ouyang Xiu states that Mei Yaochen started with an "even and bland" style but that he went beyond it as he matured. Ouyang Xiu writes:

At first he [Mei] liked to write poetry which was fresh and beautiful, relaxed and free, *even and bland*. After a long time, it became deeply imbued with a profound, detached quality. Sometimes he carefully worked his poems over to obtain strange and skillful effects. But the spirit was complete and the strength ample, so his poetry became more and more forceful as he grew older.²²

Chaves also notes that, despite Ouyang Xiu's account, Mei Yaochen's uses the term frequently in his later writings but rarely in his early work. Perhaps the best definition of *ping dan*—even though the term is not actually mentioned—comes from Ouyang Xiu's *shi hua*:

Sheng-yü [i.e. Mei Yaochen] once said to me, "Though the poet may emphasize meaning, it is also difficult to choose the proper diction. If he manages to use words with fresh skill and to achieve some effect that no one has ever achieved, then he may consider that he has done

²⁰ Jonathan Chaves, *Mei Yao-ch'en*, p. 76. Chaves' analysis of Ouyang Xiu's attitude towards Yang Yi (pp. 74-77) is well worth reading.

²¹ As described in Ouyang Xiu's *Gui tian lu*, Yang Yi is the center of a literary circle in the capital. (See OY 126.3a-4a, 18a-19b.) He was a man much admired for both his learning and his talent. While he presumably had many proteges, the style that they emulated was "manly," the term Ouyang Xiu uses for his poetry (OY 128.9a) and the *Song shi* uses for his writing in general. Still, it is possible that some of the younger members of Yang Yi's circle wrote poems in the *Xikun* style after his death. *Song shi* 305.10083 (Beijing: Zhonghua).

²² Chaves, *Mei Yao-ch'en*, p. 115.

well. He must be able to depict a scene that is difficult to describe, in such a way that it seems to right before the eyes of the reader, and to express inexhaustible meaning [*yi* , "intent"] which exists beyond the words themselves—only then can he be regarded as great."²³

Chaves suggest that the formulation in part is a response to a writer of poetry in the Late Tang style who argued that meaning (intent) is paramount and that diction is of only secondary importance (Chaves, p. 111). More generally, it seems that Mei Yaochen's and Ouyang Xiu's use of *ping dan* was to seize the aesthetic high ground from the practitioners of the more standard imitation of late Tang poetic styles. They sought to make the objective description of natural scenery more compelling and substantial; they wanted tauter diction, greater thought behind the composition, and greater substance to the experience embodied in the poems. Mei Yaochen, defending his concern for poetry from the well-intended advice of a friend, writes:

How can my concern for poetry be in vain?
Then matters stir up my wind, I compose small pieces.²⁴
Though the expression is lowly, I have labored at it:
Not reaching the *Ya* Odes, still I can't bear to give it up.²⁵

After these two couplets, Mei next contrasts Tang poets' long labors at the "images of things" *wu xiang* 物象 as compared to his own concern for intention *yi* 意. Elsewhere he writes, "I chant about that which suits my emotions and nature/Seeking to get closer to the even and bland."²⁶ The correspondence between Ouyang Xiu's discussion of the *Shijing* and Mei Yaochen's description of his own poetry is close and probably not accidental, given the self-consciousness revealed in Mei Yaochen's poetic self-examination. In particular, we note, first, the emphasis on poetry as a response to events and a manifestation of intent rather than description as an end in itself. Secondly, we find the sense of poetry based on individual emotion, and finally, there is the effort to shape the response, to bring the poem and the emotions it embodies to an "even and bland" state. Ouyang Xiu himself implies an esteem for a subdued surface revealing deeper intentions when he praises Mei Yaochen's poem on a faded painting of a procession of ox-carts:

This ancient painting depicts the intent not the appearance.
Mei's poem, chanting of this object, is without hidden circumstances
(*qing*).
Few know to forget the appearance and attain the intent,

²³ OY 128.5a, translated in Chaves, *Mei Yao-ch'en*, p. 110. I have added the bracketed text for clarification.

²⁴ "wind," *feng*, is a difficult word to translate. It is a technical term in poetics; it also indirectly points to *Shijing* and "ancient airs" styles of poetry. And finally, one can also take it as the activation of ones *qi* 氣, which loosely can be translated as "inspiration."

²⁵ The lines most directly apply to the poetry of social criticism that Mei writes in the manner of Bo Juyi. Yet I believe Chaves is right in using this poem to add to our understanding of what *ping dan* may have meant to Mei. It may be significant, for example, that Mei gives the *Ya* sections of the *Shijing* as his model rather than the *Guo feng*. The *Ya* sections are more stately, while the *Guo feng*, "Airs of the States," are taken to be more directly poems of social commentary. Mei Yaochen, *Wanling ji* 25.4b-5a (SBCK).

²⁶ Mei Yaochen, *Wanling ji* 28.11b-12a.

Hence it is best to read the poem as though looking at the painting.²⁷ The impact of Ouyang Xiu's and Mei Yaochen's stress on the manifestation of inwardness, and "inexhaustible intent," in addition to the outward images of things *wu xiang* 物象 is suggested by Su Shi's evaluation of the "withered and bland": What is prized in the 'withered and bland' is that the external is withered but the internal is rich. It seems bland but is actually beautiful."²⁸ While Su Shi here presents an extreme category, he nonetheless underscores a style of poetry where the surface text of highly restrained diction points strongly to the intentions that shaped that surface.

Ping dan is not only a property of the diction of a poem, it also can describe that response which the poem embodies. Thus, in part, the aesthetic value of *ping dan* is one aspect of that avoidance of sorrow Egan notes as a major characteristic of many of Ouyang Xiu's most famous poems. As Egan explains, Ouyang Xiu and his friends frequently admonished one another to avoid weak sentiments and self-pity in their compositions. When Ouyang Xiu has just arrived in Yiling at the beginning of his first exile, he writes:

Through the ages many men of renown have spoken out fearlessly in the Court on policy matters, risking their lives without any hesitation, and thereby appeared to be men of principle. But if subsequently exiled, they invariably write whiny and bitter poems, unable to bear their hardship, whereupon they impress one as nothing more than ordinary fellows. Even Han Yü was guilty of this failing (p. 94).

Ouyang Xiu offers a countermodel in his preface to Mei Yaochen's poetry:

Many of those gentlemen who have collected together that which they possess [within] but cannot apply it to [the affairs of] their generation delight in letting themselves loose midst mountain peaks and river banks. Seeing the [many] forms of insects, fish, grasses and trees, wind and clouds, and birds and beasts, they invariably examine their extraordinary aspects. Within, they have an accumulation of sorrow and vexation. Giving rise to grieved complaint, they speak of that over which widows and officials sent far from home sigh. Thus in depicting that in human emotions which is difficult to put into words, the more straitened, the more skillful they become.²⁹

That is, Ouyang Xiu advocates that sorrow and frustration find their voice in poetry through images from the world of broader experience.

Yet to lodge one's sorrows in these constant patterns of human experience transforms those sorrows. We can see this process of transformation away from sorrow at an explicit level in such poems as "Again Reading [Shi Jie's] *Qilaiji*," in which Ouyang Xiu ponders the difficulties Shi Jie encountered in life and then asks whether the future will treat his friend more justly. But the most famous example of Ouyang Xiu's use of writing to shape his response to difficult circumstances is the persona of the "drunken old man" *zuwang* 醉翁 that he adopts

²⁷ Egan translates these lines on p. 197. I have modified his version to clarify the use of language.

²⁸ Chaves, *Mei Yao-ch'en*, p. 125.

²⁹ *OY* 42.10b-11a.

during his exile in Chuzhou. Egan, discussing this persona, cites several poems from various periods in Ouyang Xiu's life to exemplify the persona and concludes, "In the poetry of Ou-yang Hsiu wrote using this Old Drunkard persona, he repeatedly asserts that he is lazy and constantly drunk. He claims for himself a life of self-indulgence, tells us he neglects his duties and is interested in nothing but mountain scenery, wine, and verse" (p. 87). Yet Egan notes that it is a persona, an imposition of chosen responses that still preserves the self-conscious character of the artifice. I find "At Fengle Pavilion, Drinking a Little" almost an epitome of this persona:

At Fengle Pavilion, Drinking a Little

Creation is without emotion; it does not single out:

Spring colors also come to the deep mountains.

The mountain peaches and glen apricots give little thought:

Naturally following the season, the open to the spring wind.

Looking at the flowers, the sauntering girls have no sense of their homeliness.

With antique cosmetics and rustic manner, they vie with the flowers in redness.

Merriness in human life comes through exerting oneself:

When there is wine, do not turn your back on the glass beaker.

Host, do not laugh at the flowers and the girls--

Alas, you yourself are but a flower-viewing old man.³⁰

Ouyang Xiu is *in* the rustic scene, but the very act of assuring himself in the final couplet that he is *part* of that scene creates an unbreachable distance. Creation, the flowers and the girls all act spontaneously in accord with the transformation of the season. Yet Ouyang Xiu asserts a very different proposition: "Merriness in human life comes through exerting oneself." Why? Indeed, why need he even suggest rejecting the wine, and why would he laugh at the girls and the flowers? Why, again, need he assert what should be a truism, that Creation, being without emotion, makes no exceptions? The fact of exile, isolation, and rude surroundings not befitting a man like Ouyang Xiu lurk behind the gestures of the poem. The poem, however, does not ring false, and this is a crucial point. Ouyang Xiu persuades himself and the reader of the justness of the final line. The self-consciousness does not disappear, but he still can find sympathy for both the unconcerned rustic girls and for himself.

"At Fengle Pavilion, Drinking a Little" is an odd and attractive mixture of irony, genial warmth and steady resolve all presented with a lightness of touch. It demonstrates the power of the persona of the drunken old man as a mode of response. The persona defines an attitude, a disposition to make certain types of judgments that recast the dilemmas of Ouyang Xiu's status in exile. The role of the drunken old man allows him to assert his membership in a community and yet, in his inebriety, to explain why he remains separate; it allows him to assert that he, like the girls and the flowers, can act spontaneously and yet, being only tipsy, he still is sufficiently aware to watch with amusement his own intoxicated actions. In order to preserve the possibility of these responses embodied in the persona of

³⁰ *OY* 3.10a.

the drunken old man, however, Ouyang Xiu pays a heavy price that the poem also reveals. In the persona, he must attempt to stand outside of himself and comment, as he does in the last line. He must also find a way to deflect the isolation from community that self-consciousness imposes, or else he will simply reenact within his own thoughts the exile which was imposed upon him and which he seeks to transform through the persona.

The general problem of escaping from the constraints on knowledge imposed by subjectivity is not just a modern Western preoccupation. Egan translates perhaps the most famous Chinese formulation of this, Su Shi's quatrain, "Inscribed at Western Forest Monastery:"

Head-on, it's a solid wall, from the end sharp peaks.
Near or far, high or low, changing with every glance.
I cannot discern the true face of Lu Mountain
Because I am in its midst.³¹

In discussing Ouyang Xiu's quatrain, "Distant Mountains," Egan presents the same image in a manner that directly points to the dual problem of detachment and knowledge:

The mountains have no near or far
As I watch them, on the move all day.
The peaks and cliffs look different from every angle,
And the traveler does not know their names.

[Ouyang Xiu probably wrote this quatrain while on his way to his Yi-ling exile in 1036. By referring to himself as "the traveler" in the last line, he implies an omniscient view of his own progress through the landscape. By telling us, moreover, that he does not know the name of the mountains he emphasizes how out of place he feels in that landscape. The mountains do have names and the residents of that locale would know them. But to a stranger, the landscape is distressingly unfamiliar (p. 119).]

I suspect that one reason for the popularity of the "Account of the Drunken Old Man's Pavilion" is that at its conclusion Ouyang Xiu manages to bring together the pieces of the persona to resolve the problems of adequate response, self-consciousness, and detachment in a Mencian gesture of "sharing joy":

And although the guests know the joy of accompanying the Governor, they do not know the Governor's joy in their joy. While drunk he shares their joy, and when he sobers up he records it in writing *shu yi wen*; this is the Governor. Who is the Governor? Ouyang Xiu of Lu-ling (p. 217).

The persona of the "Drunken Old Man" has cultural and literary significance that extends far beyond the scope of the present essay. But the related themes of self-consciousness and detachment are directly relevant to our examination of the role of *qing* in literary composition. The problem is this: if the purpose of literature is to both manifest and structure particular responses based on the constant patterns of human emotion, this ability to shape these reactions into literary texts presumes either that the author knows the inner logic of his own responses and can compensate accordingly, or that he can trust to the spontaneity of those responses. Ouyang Xiu in fact makes both arguments for the basis of his writing in *qing*, and he often makes them both at the same time. Note how the nice

³¹ Su Shi, *Su Shi shi ji* 蘇軾詩集 23.1219 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982), translated on page 121.

distinction in the "Account of the Drunken Old Man's Pavilion" between Ouyang Xiu, drunk, sharing the joy, and sober, recording that fact, mirror these two possibilities. The "drunkenness" of the persona is precisely to preserve the claims to spontaneity and community while at the same time subjecting those claims to ironic but sympathetic scrutiny. Egan also gives several examples of poems in which Ouyang Xiu presents his "spontaneous" gestures as seen by other observers (pp. 85 and 87).

The particular claims of *shi* poetry as a genre intensify the general issues arising out of basing composition on *qing*. *Shi* poetry is explicitly the record of one's own response to particular circumstances. It thus embodies the actual practice *yang* 陽 of the writer's inner strength and is the measure of the man. Recall Ouyang Xiu's exhortation to Yin Shu to not write "whiney" verse, for that would suggest that in the end he was a petty man. Instead, their poetry must spontaneously demonstrate an equanimity based on substantial inner resources. Every poem thus creates these issues of character and spontaneous self-mastery anew, for every new circumstance demands new proof of the writer's ability to respond. Poetry, with its emphasis on the personal and the occasional, also heightens the aesthetic problem in a theory of composition based on *qing* of how to stand outside of one's own particular responses—to be *wu qing*—in order to turn those responses into the material from which to fashion the text. Hence the various facets of Ouyang Xiu's *shi* poetry that Egan discusses—the thoughtful calm of *ping dan*, the self-conscious hyperbole of his long narrative poems, and the persona of the drunken old man—address issues which are implicit in Ouyang Xiu's literary compositions in general but which have special intensity in the writing of *shi*. Investigating the broader issues of Ouyang Xiu's conception of the literary as they are realized in his prose thus creates a larger context for understanding the particular characteristics of his poems.

There is, however, another way in which Ouyang Xiu's poetry helps illuminate his literary prose. Egan writes, "We have seen above that poetry was considerably less important to Ouyang Xiu than prose. This follows naturally from *ku wen* convictions concerning the didactic ends writing should serve" (p. 107). This is, I think, a deep misconception, but one that is worthy of thought. Since Egan is right in his description of many particular aspects of Ouyang Xiu's literary oeuvre, why is this position misleading: that the didactic concerns of *guwen* make poetry a necessarily secondary matter? There are two reasons. The first and simpler explanation is that, as Egan himself has demonstrated in his treatment of Ouyang Xiu's prose, *guwen* is not a monolithic, univocal ideology. Ouyang Xiu's *guwen* is not identical to Shi Jie's or Liu Kai's *guwen*, and their sense of what literature should teach or embody differed correspondingly. The second explanation is perhaps idiosyncratic, but I believe not. I think that we who study the Chinese poetic tradition have a deep conviction about the ethical dimension of poetry, but the sense of the ethical one finds in the poetic tradition is very different from the sort of discussions one reads in the *dao xue* writers. "Poetry is where the resolve goes";³² it is inherently a response to the writer's encounter with the world. The response may be far removed from explicitly moral issues, but choices

³² "Shi da xu" 詩大序 *Wen xuan* 文選 45.21a (Taipei: Yiwen, 1974).

are made, the movement of mind revealed. The justification for those choices and the formal structures informing that movement of mind change over time. Yet as the poetic tradition develops, ethical action and self-definition in poetry acquire a potential for highly nuanced statement. The question, then, is not whether a serious writer like Ouyang Xiu should engage in anything so frivolous as poetry, but whether his commitments as a *guwen* writer are in fundamental conflict with the particular modes of ethical response of the poetic tradition. Such a conflict most certainly is a possibility, and Egan seems to argue that for Ouyang Xiu this conflict was real. In this article I have sought to present a different perspective and to justify a basic sense acquired in my reading Ouyang Xiu's writings that his prose and poetry reflect a single, coherent sense of the literary, that the same sensibility produced both. I hope that I have suggested even if not fully proven that Ouyang Xiu indeed develops an understanding of the literary that unifies the ethical commitments of his poetry and his *guwen* prose.

CONCLUSION

We can again ask what it means to say that Ouyang Xiu's literary composition is grounded in the constant patterns of human emotion. We saw above that it means, among other things, that Ouyang Xiu did *not* seek a ground in either *tian-di*, "Heaven and Earth," or in *li*, "inherent pattern." Both "Heaven-and-Earth" and "inherent pattern," however, make claims about the wider world of phenomena of which man is just a part. In contrast, writing based on the logic of man's affective nature finds its meaning strictly within the realm of human experience. What matters are not objects in themselves, but the human implications of these objects. Egan in his concluding chapter brings out an important implication of this distinction. He cites the Japanese scholar Hayuka Masanori's discussion of a "*hsing/yi* [form/intent] dichotomy in Ou-yang Hsiu's writings about non-literary arts (painting, calligraphy, and music) and . . . the primacy of the latter term in Ou-yang Hsiu's aesthetic theory" (p. 196). The *hsing/yi* dichotomy is a more formal manner of describing the devaluation of surface and concomitant stress on inwardness that we already have seen in Ouyang Xiu's literary writings. This dichotomy also gives rise to a few final thoughts on how Ouyang Xiu's sense of the literary relates to the broader cultural issues of his day.

Yi reflects the activity of a human mind as a particularized disposition towards an object or circumstances.³³ Egan misses this quality of *yi* and the general inner/outer dichotomy to which it points when he loosely translates *yi* as "meaning." The locus of meaning—what "meaning" means—is precisely at issue here. Egan initially "refer[s] to artistic 'meaning' in the broadest sense, that is to both sense and feeling." However, given the imprecision of the terms, Egan stretches *yi* beyond the human and writes of "the ineffable *yi* of nature" (p. 197). His example is a couplet from a poem on playing a zither:

Who would have thought that the profound meaning (*yi*) of towering
mountains and deep waters

³³ More properly, any sentient creature can have intentions. Su Shi, for example, writes of the "intention" of a goose as it sees a man. Su Shi, *Su Shi shi ji* 24.1286.

Could be expressed by these red silk strings.³⁴

In again neglecting the allusion to Bo Ya and Zhong Ziqi, Egan seems to make *yi* an attribute of the physical world rather than an attribute of the humans who respond to that world. Nonetheless, when Egan turns to the broader cultural context of the *hsing/yi* dichotomy in Ouyang Xiu's writings, *yi* returns to an inwardness of meaning embodied in the distinction between *wen* and *dao* (p. 200).

The two sets of dichotomies—*hsing/yi* and *wen/dao*—describe the problems of the discontinuities that confronted Northern Song literati. *Xing*, the world directly accessible to the senses, was in constant transformation. Easy association of the political order with the cosmic order had given way to historical self-consciousness and to an increasingly sophisticated epistemology shaped in response to Buddhism. The relation of man to the world was problematic: Ouyang Xiu constantly tries to coax speech out of Nature, but succeeds only when he is drunk.³⁵ Yet even man's relationship with his cultural past becomes uncertain in the Northern Song. The *wen*, the external patterns (cultural forms) and written texts, they inherit are only husks left behind. "Words do not exhaust the intent," and how can one reconstruct the intent that once animated the received forms? By defusing the *wen/dao* dichotomy, by asserting that the affective responses and intentions of worthy writers of the past deeply inform their *wen* and are manifest in it, Ouyang Xiu offers a way to give new immediacy and universality to the canonical texts of the civilization. Egan writes of a "meaning that lies beneath" the forms (p. 200), but meaning is *within* the forms: *wen* is not just pattern, but patterning, and in writing that is truly patterned one can trace the movement of the mind that created the text.

In seeing the surface of the text as the trace of the emotions and intentions of the writer who creates it, Ouyang Xiu had a tremendous influence on the writing, scholarship, and thought of subsequent generations. Yet his was a world of human meanings—the metaphysical and merely physical eluded him in the end—and his students ultimately went beyond him to larger, more encompassing syntheses. Overshadowed by those who followed, Ouyang Xiu appears simply as an important literary figure in Chinese history. Egan attempts to correct this injustice. Despite his modest goals and reluctance to engage in the discussion of more general issues, Egan's study nonetheless shows us that indeed for Ouyang Xiu the literary encompassed all that truly matters in human experience.

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³⁴ *QY* 53.4a, cited in Egan, page 198.

³⁵ See my discussion of the problems of nature and history in Ouyang Xiu's poetry in *The Poetry of Su Shi (1037-1101)* (Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1983), pp. 54-62.