

Between Synchronization and Differentiation: Jin Shengtan's Engagement with Du Fu's Poetry

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Ming (1368-1644) literatus Jin Shengtan's (ca. 1608-1661) commentaries on Du Fu's (712-770) poetry and his imitation of Du Fu. The first chapter focuses on Jin Shengtan's commentaries on Du Fu's poem series "Autumn Stirrings Eight Poems," analyzing how Jin Shengtan, through evoking conflicts within the poems, has dramatized the image of Du Fu and also created a particular image for himself. Chapter Two looks at a few poems Jin Shengtan wrote in the style of Du Fu, exploring the specific elements Jin Shengtan has vitalized or glossed over, and further, investigating how he has employed the imitation as a vehicle for establishing his own discourse in a certain social-political context. Jin Shengtan's engagement with Du Fu's poetry has us reflect upon his role as both a literary critic and a poet. This thesis intends to show that in Jin Shengtan's handling of Du Fu's poems, he is synchronizing with Du Fu while at the same time he is also differentiating himself from Du Fu.

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Introduction

Object of Study

As a key figure in the development of traditional Chinese fiction and fiction criticism, Jin Shengtan 金聖歎 (ca. 1608-1661) is particularly well-known for his commentaries on vernacular Chinese fiction (the *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 [*Water Margin*]) and drama (the *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 [*Romance of the West Chamber*]). Yet the actual corpus of his works is far beyond this scope. Along with *Shuihu zhuan* and *Xixiang ji*, Jin Shengtan listed *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Lisao* 離騷 (*Encountering Sorrow*), *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*) and the poetry of Du Fu as “six works of genius” (*liu caizi shu* 六才子書). Jin Shengtan made his determination to comment on all the six works which he deemed remarkable. However he only managed to finish *Shuihu zhuan* and *Xixiang ji* when the newly ascended Qing (1644-1911) government sentenced him to death.¹

Jin Shengtan’s commentaries on poetry, especially, are noteworthy. These include 600 Tang regulated verses, 187 poems by Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), seven pieces of “Xiaoya” 小雅 (“Minor Court Hymns”) from *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Songs*), the *Gushi shijiu shou* 古詩十九首 (the *Nineteen Old Poems*) and twelve song lyrics by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072).² But Jin Shengtan did not simply write commentaries on poems, he composed poetry as well. With an extant corpus of over 380 poems, Jin Shengtan was fairly productive as a poet.

¹ For the background information on Jin Shengtan’s death, see Jason Chia-sheng Wang, “Chin Sheng-t’an,” in William H. Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 292.

² For the detailed content of these works and Jin Shengtan’s commentaries on them, refer to Cao Fangren and Zhou Xishan, eds., *Jin Shengtan quanji*, vol. 4 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1985). Hereafter *JSTQJ*. For an overview of Jin Shengtan’s complete extant works, see Zhou Xishan, “Jin Shengtan zhumu lueshu,” *Suzhou Daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 3 (1986): 59-60.

However, the diversity in Jin Shengtan's works has always been overshadowed by his achievements in fiction commentary. In this thesis, I intend to draw some attention to the less known corner of Jin Shengtan's oeuvre. I will in particular focus on Jin Shengtan's engagement with Du Fu's poetry by looking at his commentaries on Du Fu's poems and his imitation poems of Du Fu.

Literature Review

As David L. Rolston writes in his book *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*, "Jin Shengtan is the single most important figure in traditional Chinese fiction criticism."³ This vital role of Jin Shengtan has also influenced most scholars' focus of research, which unsurprisingly leans towards his handling of vernacular literature. In *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, edited by Rolston, in addition to the chapter on Jin Shengtan's reading of *Shuihu zhuan*, one introductory section Rolston contributed is titled "The Historical Development of Chinese Fiction Criticism Prior to Chin Sheng-t'an [Jin Shengtan]."⁴ Indeed, Jin Shengtan is a name we have to come across when we read a book either focusing on *Shuihu zhuan*, such as Richard Gregg Irwin's *The Evolution of a Chinese Novel: Shui-hu-chuan [Shuihu zhuan]*, or the development of Chinese fiction in general, such as Robert E. Hegel did in his *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*.⁵

Some scholars treat Jin Shengtan's style of reading with more specificity. For instance, Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu in his monograph *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative* chooses to look at the change in the development from history-centered narrative to

³ David L. Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 25.

⁴ For details, see David L. Rolston, ed., *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁵ See Richard Gregg Irwin, *The Evolution of a Chinese Novel: Shui-hu-chuan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953) and Robert E. Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

fiction-centered narrative.⁶ In regard to Jin Shengtan, he focuses on the techniques and methods Jin Shengtan has used in his reading of *Shuihu zhuan*. Similarly, Ellen Widmer in *The Margins of Utopia: Shui-hu hou-chuan and the Literature of Ming Loyatism* also talks about the techniques. She compares Jin Shengtan's criticism of *Shuihu zhuan* with western narrative theorists like Gerard Genette and Roland Barthes.⁷

We can see from above that Jin Shengtan's criticism of *Shuihu zhuan* has been fully exploited whereas his reading of poetry has almost been abandoned. In this regard, John Ching-yu Wang's monograph *Chin Sheng-t'an*, though being short and general, does fill this gap to some degree. It is notable that Wang spends one chapter discussing Jin Shengtan's commentary on Du Fu. With some specific examples, Wang introduces a few things Jin Shengtan admires about Du Fu, being Du Fu's "ability to describe a thing, an event, or an action vividly," the conciseness of Du Fu's poetry, the "highly subtle and suggestive style" and finally Du Fu as "a great man."⁸ Wang also lists two significant features of Jin Shengtan's commentary on Du Fu – one is Jin Shengtan's "close attention to minute textual details" and the other is his "inventive spirit."⁹ Although as he indicates, Jin Shengtan might be too inventive at some point.¹⁰ Wang's observation in this book ushers in a further and deeper understanding of Jin Shengtan's approach to Du Fu's poetry.

Compared with the books mentioned above, some journal articles have gone beyond *Shuihu zhuan* and are of more diversity. Sally K. Church in her "Beyond the Words: Jin Shengtan's Perception of Hidden Meaning in *Xixiang ji*" gives a nuanced study of Jin Shengtan's methods of

⁶ Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 3.

⁷ See Ellen Widmer, *The Margins of Utopia: Shui-hu hou-chuan and the Literature of Ming Loyatism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1987), 79-107.

⁸ John Ching-yu Wang, *Chin Sheng-t'an* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), 107-111.

⁹ Ibid., 113-114.

¹⁰ Ibid., 116.

reading *Xixiang ji*, with a focus on how Jin Shengtan articulates the implicit meaning.¹¹ Liangyan Ge's article "Authoring 'Authorial Intention:' Jin Shengtan as Creative Critic" particularly looks at Jin Shengtan's prefaces to *Xixiang ji* and "reexamines Jin's critical stance on the relationship between the author and the textual meaning."¹² Stephen H. West in his "Jin Shengtan, Mao Qiling, Commentary and Sex, and the *Caizi Mudan Ting* Notes to *The Story of the Western Wing*" chooses to include Jin Shengtan in a discussion on the development of the recreation of a dramatic text.¹³

In terms of researches related to Jin Shengtan's poetic contribution, two articles deserve to be mentioned. Patricia Sieber inventively employs a religious perspective in her articles "Religion and Canon Formation: Buddhism, Vernacular Literature, and the Case of Jin Shengtan (1608-1661)" and "Getting at it in a Single Genuine Invocation: Tang Anthologies, Buddhist Rhetorical Practices, and Jin Shengtan's (1608-1661) Conception of Poetry."¹⁴ Especially in the latter article, Sieber explores how Buddhism exerts its influence upon Jin Shengtan's choice to include certain poems in his Tang poetry anthology. She also shows us that Jin Shengtan's method of interpreting a poem is under the influence of Buddhism. Ji Hao's article "Confronting the Past: Jin Shengtan's Commentaries on Du Fu's Poems" on the other hand can be counted as a study fully dedicated to Jin Shengtan's commentaries on poetry. And since the article concentrates on Du Fu's poetry in particular, it is of much relevance to this thesis. Ji Hao's article touches upon three aspects of Jin Shengtan's commentaries on Du Fu. The first is how Jin

¹¹ Sally K. Church, "Beyond the Words: Jin Shengtan's Perception of Hidden Meaning in *Xixiang ji*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59, no. 1 (June 1999): 5-77.

¹² Liangyan Ge, "Authoring 'Authorial Intention:' Jin Shengtan as Creative Critic," *Chinese Literature: Essay, Articles, Reviews* 25 (December 2003): 1-24. Refer to the abstract on page 1.

¹³ Stephen H. West, "Jin Shengtan, Mao Qiling, Commentary and Sex, and the *Caizi Mudan Ting* Notes to *The Story of the Western Wing*," *CHINOPERL: Journal of Chinese Oral and Performing Literature* 26 (2005-2006): 99-128.

¹⁴ Patricia Sieber, "Religion and Canon Formation: Buddhism, Vernacular Literature, and the Case of Jin Shengtan (1608-1661)," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 28 (2000): 51-68. "Getting at it in a Single Genuine Invocation: Tang Anthologies, Buddhist Rhetorical Practices, and Jin Shengtan's (1608-1661) Conception of Poetry," *Monumenta Serica* 49 (2001): 33-56.

Shengtan solves the “inexplicable” (*bu ke jie* 不可解) aspect in Du Fu’s poetry. The second is what the author terms as “micro-matrix limit,” in which he deals with Jin Shengtan’s “dissection” (*fenjie* 分解) approach. The third is the “macro-matrix limit,” which relates to the canonization of Du Fu’s works and how it affects Jin Shengtan’s interpretation.¹⁵ Ji Hao’s article proposes a paradox which will also be involved in this thesis – Jin Shengtan’s “creativity” and his “seemingly self-effacing submission to certain canonical rules of reading Du Fu shaped by the earlier hermeneutics.”¹⁶ Ji Hao’s observation is mostly based on the *fenjie* approach. This thesis however, aims to catch the nuance of the commentaries per se. In other words, this thesis intends to bring the specific content of Jin Shengtan’s commentaries into focus.

We can easily see from above that Jin Shengtan’s commentaries on poetry are nine times out of ten neglected, let alone the poems Jin Shengtan composed himself. While Jin Shengtan’s poems have unfortunately been consigned to oblivion, we could still find his poetic traces in some records from later commentators. The Qing scholar Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673-1769) in his *Qingshi biecai ji* 清詩別裁集 (*A Distinctive Anthology of Qing Poetry*) includes one poem of Jin Shengtan, namely “Melancholy” (“Chou” 愁), which is actually an imitation poem of Du Fu.¹⁷ Another Qing scholar Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1797) in his *Suiyuan shihua* 隨園詩話 (*Suiyuan Poetry Remarks*) also mentions Jin Shengtan. Yuan says “Jin Shengtan is fond of writing commentaries on fiction, people often despise him” 金聖嘆好批小說，人多薄之。¹⁸ Interestingly, Yuan Mei then quotes one quatrain of Jin Shengtan and describes the poem as

¹⁵ Ji Hao, “Confronting the Past: Jin Shengtan’s Commentaries on Du Fu’s Poems,” *Ming Studies* 64 (September 2012): 63-95.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷ See Shen Deqian, ed., *Qingshi bie cai ji* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shu ju, 1977), 113.

¹⁸ Wang Yingzhi, ed., *Yuanmei quanji*, vol. 3 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1993), 4.

“very delicate and unique” 殊清絕.¹⁹ Jin Shengtan’s worth in terms of poetry writing is somewhat recognized.

Significance of the Research and Chapter Overview

We may conclude from the literature review that although most scholars are aware of Jin Shengtan’s competence in writing commentaries on poetry, they still tend to leave out this side in their research. As to Jin Shengtan’s role as a poet other than a literary critic, it is for the most part completely disregarded. This conscious neglect has its ground if we consider the literary context in late Ming. Tina Lu indicates that by late Ming, poetry had “lost its unique claims to cultural authority” and that “the simple fact that a history of this period can be centered on fiction and drama reflects the displacement of poetry from its central position in the culture.”²⁰ She also points out in late Ming “no critic defended the dignity of the vernacular more vigorously than Jin Shengtan, for whom it did much more than simply occupy the space left over by poetry.”²¹

Given the gap in the current scholarship, this thesis intends to serve as a careful case study of Jin Shengtan’s interpretation of Du Fu’s poetry, including both Jin Shengtan’s commentaries and his imitations. The thesis consists of two main chapters, as briefly described below.

The first chapter focuses on Jin Shengtan’s commentaries on Du Fu’s famous poem set “Qiuxing bashou” 秋興八首 (“Autumn Stirrings Eight Poems”). As the center piece from Du Fu’s late years, the eight poems epitomize Du Fu’s ultimate refinement of writing technique; they also display Du Fu’s introspective reflection of past and present at its most profound level. Jin Shengtan in his commentaries pulls an emphatic narrative out of Du Fu’s highly obscure

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See Tina Lu, “The literary culture of the late Ming (1573-1644),” in Kang-I Sun Chang, ed., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 87.

²¹ Ibid., 86-87.

discourse. He has done so by first identifying a few symbolic images in each poem. He then activates the images by infusing some conflicts connected with Du Fu's psychological condition. By means of a series of "conflict-evoking" activities throughout the eight poems, Jin Shengtan has dramatized the poems and disclosed an alternative image of Du Fu, which is different from the usual way in which Du Fu has been read. Meanwhile, Jin Shengtan has also created a character for himself, beyond his role as a commentator.

The second chapter looks at some poems Jin Shengtan wrote in the style of Du Fu and will be a further study of Jin Shengtan's handling of Du Fu's poems in the fashion of poetic writing instead of literary criticism. Among Jin Shengtan's 25 extant imitations of Du Fu, seven poems are particularly in tune with "Qiuxing" in that they were either written in the same period under a similar context or they share a common thematic motif. Through translating and discussing the seven poems and comparing them with Du Fu's originals, I intend to particularize those elements Jin Shengtan has vitalized or glossed over. The imitations will be discussed particularly through the lens of the social-political background to Jin Shengtan's poetic composition.

This thesis does not aim to be an exhaustive study of Jin Shengtan's output in the poetic arena. Rather, through a nuanced case study of Jin Shengtan's commentaries on a poem series and his imitation poems, it is hoped that this research could bring a new perspective regarding the understanding of Jin Shengtan's approach in his criticism, as well as Du Fu's poetics.

Chapter One

Jin Shengtān's Commentaries on "Qiuxing bashou" 秋興八首

In one of Jin Shengtān's deathbed poems, he sighed deeply at the fact that he was not able to finish his Du Fu commentaries and he said "although I am glad that Tang poetry has been briefly discussed, what can I do with *Zhuangzi*, *Lisao*, *Shiji* and *Du Fu*" 雖喜唐詩略分解，莊騷馬杜待何如？²² After Jin Shengtān's death, his cousin Jin Chang 金昌 (also known as Juezhai 覺齋) collected all the writings he could find and compiled them as a collection titled *Changjing Tang Du shi jie* 唱經堂杜詩解 (*Changjing Study Commentaries on Du Fu's Poems*).²³

This chapter is a study of Jin Shengtān's commentaries on Du Fu's famous poem suite "Qiuxing bashou" 秋興八首 ("Autumn Stirrings Eight Poems," also rendered as "Autumn Meditations" or "Autumn Thoughts").²⁴ Written in 766,²⁵ "Qiuxing" is a piece of work from Du Fu's late years. It has been observed that Du Fu's late years witnessed a prolific increase in poetic creation and an intense refinement of writing technique.²⁶ The latter is well proved in "Qiuxing," as shown in the delicate complexities of the dictions, syntax, symbols, implications, as well as a narrative interwoven with various temporal and spatial dimensions. "Qiuxing" is thus sometimes considered the most difficult among all Du Fu's works. Yet the obscurities have made it necessary, even tempting for later commentators to provide an interpretation and make their own theories.

²² *JSTQJ*, 839.

²³ Changjing 唱經 is the name of Jin Shengtān's study. For information on how Jin Chang brought Jin Shengtān's writings into the current shape, see his preface to the collection. *Ibid.*, 525.

²⁴ From now on, the title will be referred to as "Qiuxing."

²⁵ Ye Jiaying, *Du Fu Qiuxing bashou jishuo* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), 19. See the section "Chronicle" (*Biannian* 編年).

²⁶ For details of Du Fu's poetic writing in his late years, see Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), ch.11.

In Jin Shengtan's case, his commentaries on the poems are more than just a longer annotated version. In the three sections below, I will start with a study of the full commentary on Poem I in "Qiuxing" series. Jin Shengtan's handling of the first poem reflects his basic logic behind the commentaries, as well as some key notions in his poetics. The second section focuses on the main body of "Qiuxing" and discusses those techniques Jin Shengtan has used to evoke conflicts and dramatize the image of Du Fu. In the third section, I will look at the full commentary on the last poem of "Qiuxing." In the particular elaborate interpretation of the last poem, Jin Shengtan's iconoclasm and his identification with Du Fu are further reflected.

Before we move on, some background information should be introduced regarding the authenticity of the commentaries on "Qiuxing," as well as Jin Shengtan's method of analysis. As we will see, there are two versions of commentaries on "Qiuxing." The second version is indicated as "other commentary" (*biepi* 別批).²⁷ In his foreword to *Du shi jie* 杜詩解 (*Commentaries on Du Fu's Poems*), the modern scholar Zhong Laiyin 鐘來因 tells us that Jin Shengtan used to have the habit of showing his commentaries to other people and asking for opinions, with the result that most of his writings were dispersed.²⁸ Jin Chang also mentioned that Jin Shengtan would prepare a copy of Du Fu's poems in his relatives' and friends' places so that he could write down some commentaries whenever he stopped by.²⁹ The *biepi* situation is therefore very likely to be an outcome of Jin Shengtan's communication with other people.

The case of "Qiuxing" however, is more complicated in that not all the commentaries were written by Jin Shengtan himself, as Jin Chang noted:

²⁷ Three poems have "other commentary." The other two poems are "Qianmen xicheng Lushijiu Caochang" 遣悶戲呈路十九曹長 and "Yuwenchao Shangshu zhi sheng Cuiyu Siye zhi sun Shangshu zhi zi chongfan Zhengjian Qianhu" 宇文晁尚書之甥崔司業之孫尚書之子重泛鄭監前湖. See Zhong Laiyin, ed., *Du shi jie* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), 167, 245. This source will be referred to as *DSJ* hereafter.

²⁸ *DSJ*, 6.

²⁹ *JSTQJ*, 525.

矍齋云：唱經批秋興詩，只存五首，中多脫落處，酌取而菴說補之。而菴，唱經畏友也。³⁰

Juezhai says, “Only five of Changjing’s [i.e. Jin Shengtan] commentaries on the ‘Qiuxing’ poems are extant. There are many missing parts and [I] rounded them off with Er’an’s comments. Er’an is Changjing’s esteemed friend.”³¹

Jin Chang never indicated which parts were the “missing parts.” Er’an’s approach to poetry was deeply influenced by Jin Shengtan. Jin Shengtan frequently shared his opinions with Er’an when he was working on his commentaries on Tang poetry.³² In addition, it should also be noted that Jin Chang was not just the editor of Jin Shengtan’s works; he had studied with Jin Shengtan as his disciple for twenty years.³³ Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that those Er’an comments Jin Chang added on legitimately reflect Jin Shengtan’s own method and thoughts. Since all the commentaries are usually accredited to Jin Shengtan and the focus of this chapter is how Du Fu’s poems have been treated, I will not pursue this issue here. However, it is a helpful reminder that what we are encountering in these commentaries is a persona, a “Jin Shengtan” in quotation marks.

As to Jin Shengtan’s method of analysis, he by and large follows a set pattern when he writes commentaries on Du Fu’s poem. He first provides some general comments under the title of each poem. These comments usually contain his interpretation of the title of the poem or some essential theme or features of the poem. In his commentaries on Du Fu’s poetry, he frequently emphasizes the importance of a proper title and he confirms Du Fu’s mastery of it. For instance, in his commentary on the poem “Visiting the Fengxian Monastery at Longmen” (“You Longmen

³⁰ *DSJ*, 177.

³¹ Er’an’s official name is Xu Zeng 徐增. See *Er’an shihua* 而菴詩話 in Ding Fubao, ed., *Qing shihua* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 423. John Ching-yu Wang also explains this issue in his book, see *Chin Sheng-t’an*, 113. For a detailed introduction of Xu Zeng and his relation with Jin Shengtan, see Lu Lin, *Jin Shengtan shishi yanjiu* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2015), ch. 12.

³² Lu Lin, *Jin Shengtan shishi yanjiu*, 339.

³³ *DSJ*, 6. See Zhong Laiyin’s foreword.

Fengxian si” 游龍門奉先寺), he says “to read a poem, vigor should be put in reading a title; those who have vigor to read a title are those who have vigor to read a poem” 看詩氣力全在看題, 有氣力看題人, 便是有氣力看詩人也.³⁴ In the commentary on “By the River I Encounter Water Like Ocean, a Short Account” (“Jiangshang zhishui ruhaishi liaoduanshu” 江上值水如海勢聊短述), Jin Shengtan declares that “[I] often gasp in wonder at the Master’s [ability] to compose poetry and his ingenuity of giving a title” 每嘆先生作詩, 妙於製題.³⁵ We constantly come across comments like this in Jin Shengtan’s commentaries. We could thus expect Jin Shengtan’s incorporation of the understanding of the title “Qiuxing” into his analysis.

What follows the general comments is Jin Shengtan’s “dissection” (*fenjie* 分解) of a poem. He divides a poem down the middle and refers to them as “former section” (*qianjie* 前解) and “latter section” (*houjie* 后解) respectively. He then offers interpretation to each section.³⁶ This is the same approach adopted in his commentaries on Tang regulated verse. The two compact middle couplets, i.e. lines 3-6 in a regulated verse are thus split up. Although the *fenjie* approach was widely reviled, Jin Shengtan defended himself against the criticism, as we will see in his commentary on the last poem of “Qiuxing.”

Jin Shengtan’s Commentaries on Poem I and His Poetics

“Qiuxing” was written only few years prior to Du Fu’s death. At that time, Du Fu intended to return to his hometown but found himself stranded in Kuizhou 夔州 (modern Sichuan 四川 province).³⁷ Without much contact with the outside, Du Fu’s life in Kuizhou was

³⁴ *DSJ*, 5-6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

³⁶ Occasionally Jin Shengtan would have some interlinear comments.

³⁷ Sichuan sheng wenshi yanjiu guan, *Du Fu Nianpu* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1958), 102.

quite tranquil.³⁸ Yet the unavoidable aging and illness were also tormenting him.³⁹ Under such circumstances, Du Fu composed the eight poems as reflections of the present in Kuizhou, but mostly as reminiscences of his past in the capital city.

Among all the eight poems, Jin Shengtan particularly emphasizes the leading role of Poem I, as he writes in his commentary on the title:

此詩八首凡十六解。才真是才，法真是法，哭真是哭，笑真是笑。道他是連，却每首斷；道他是斷，却每首連。倒置一首不得，增減一首不得，固已。然總以第一首為提綱。蓋先生爾時所處，實實是夔府西閣之秋，因秋而起興。下七篇話頭，一一從此生出，如裘之有領，如花之有蒂，如十萬師之號令，出于中權也。此豈律家之能事已耶？⁴⁰

This poem set has altogether eight poems with sixteen sections. Indeed these are works of talent. Indeed they are works of craft. Indeed they make one cry. Indeed they make one chuckle. You might say these poems are connected, and yet every poem is separate; you might say these poems are separate from each other, yet every poem is connected. You cannot invert the sequence of a poem, nor could you add or delete one. That is for certain. But always the first poem will be the guide. This is because what the Master truly experienced at that time was the autumn in his west pavilion in Kuizhou. Building on this autumn [scene], his emotions were evoked. What he has to say in the following seven poems, each and everyone, derive from here, just as a coat has its collar, as a flower has its stem, as a military order for an army of a hundred thousand men must be issued from a central command. Isn't [the Master] an expert among poets of regulated verse?

Correspondingly, in Jin Shengtan's commentaries on Poem I, we can expect him to treat the first poem as a navigational microcosm of the whole series. The following pages will present Jin Shengtan's commentaries on Poem I in their entirety, accompanied by the analysis.

Let us first look at lines 1-4, or, in Jin Shengtan's term, the "former section" (*qianjie* 前解):

³⁸ Ibid., 101.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *DSJ*, 176.

其一⁴¹Poem I⁴²

- 1 玉露凋傷楓樹林, Jade-white dew withers and harms forests of maple trees,
 2 巫山巫峽氣蕭森。 on Wu Mountain and in Wu Gorges, the atmosphere, bleak and dreary.
 3 江間波浪兼天湧, Between river's margins the waves churn level with sky,
 4 塞上風雲接地陰。 wind-driven clouds over passes touching earth in shadow.

前解從秋顯出境來，後解從境轉出人來，此所謂「秋興」也。

「露凋傷」、「氣蕭森」六字，寫秋意滿紙。秋者擎也，言天地之氣，正當擎斂之時也。故怨女懷春，志士悲秋，皆因氣之感而然。時先生流寓夔州西閣。夔州，舊楚地，最多楓樹。巫山在夔州，有十二峯，巫峽為三峽之一。白帝城在夔州之東，公孫述於此僭號者。先生雖心在京華而身寓夔州，故即景起興，不及他處。後來無數筆墨，一起一伏，若斷若連，從夔州望京華，以至京華之同學，京華之盛衰，如曲江，如昆明池，如昆吾、御宿、漢陂，凡為京華所有者，感興非一，總不出爾日夔府之秋。故下七首詩，實以此首為提綱也。「江間」承「巫峽」，「塞上」承「巫山」。「波浪兼天湧」者，自下而上一片秋也。「風雲接地陰」者，自上而下一片秋也。⁴³

In the former section, from the “Autumn” [of the title], he conjures up a scene; in the latter section, the scene turns towards the human. This is what is called “Autumn Stirrings (*xing*).”

“Dew withers and harms” [in line 1] and “atmosphere bleak and dreary” [in line 2] in six characters portray autumn filling the page.⁴⁴ “Autumn” (*qiu*) is “gathering” (*jiu*),⁴⁵ which means the matter (*qi*) of heaven and earth is just now coming to a point of convergence. So when the unmarried woman longs for a spring romance and when the righteous man mourns for autumn grief, both are evoked by the matter.

At that time the Master was stranded in his western pavilion in Kuizhou. Kuizhou, a place of old Chu, abounded most with maple trees. Wu Mountain was in Kuizhou and it had twelve peaks. Wu Gorge was among the Three Gorges. White Emperor Castle was to the east of Kuizhou and it was where Gongsun Shu arrogated the title of emperor.⁴⁶ Although the Master's heart was in the capital, physically he was in Kuizhou. Therefore, once he started composing, he touched upon no other place than Kuizhou. The following poems witness ups and downs and the narrative seems to be broken and

⁴¹ For the Chinese text of the poem, see *DSJ*, 177-178.

⁴² For the English translation of the poem, see Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *The Poetry of Du Fu* (Boston/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Inc., 2016), Book 17, 353, <http://www.degruyter.com/viewbooktoc/product/246946>.

⁴³ *DSJ*, 177-178.

⁴⁴ “Six characters” refers to the six Chinese characters.

⁴⁵ Jin Shengtian is using a “sound gloss” method for “秋者擎也.” Ye Jiaying identifies “Xiangyinjiu yi” 鄉飲酒義 in *Liji* 禮記 as the source. See Ye, *jishuo*, 60.

⁴⁶ Gongsun Shu 公孫述 (?-36) is a warlord active during late Xin dynasty (8-23) and early Eastern Han (23-220). He gained his power in Sichuan and proclaimed himself emperor in the fourth month of the year 25. He titled himself as “White Emperor.” For details, see “Biographies of Wei Xiao and Gongsun Shu” (*Wei Xiao Gongsun Shu liezhuan* 隗囂公孫述列傳) in *Hou Han shu* 後漢書.

continuous simultaneously. From gazing upon the capital from Kuizhou, to thinking of his classmates, [symbols of] the prosperity and decline of the capital, places like Twisting River, Kunming Pool, Kunwu Hill, Yusu Brook, Lake Meipi, all these places in the capital – these different things were stirred and evoked [inside him], but they all started from the autumn in Kuizhou. So the following seven poems are indeed led by this first one.

“Between river’s margins” [in line 3] follows from “Wu Gorges” [in line 2]; “over passes” [in line 4] follows from “Wu Mountain” [in line 2]. To say “the waves churn level with sky” [line 3] means that from bottom to top, autumn is all around. To say “wind-driven clouds touching earth in shadow” [line 4] means that from top to bottom, autumn is all around.

【別批】

露也而曰「玉露」，樹林也而曰「楓樹林」，只一「凋傷」之境，而白便寫得白之至，紅便寫得紅之至，此秋之所以有興也。卻接手下一「巫山巫峽」字，便覺蕭森之氣索然都盡。而「波浪」、「風雲」二句，則緊承「巫山巫峽」來。若謂玉樹斯零，楓林葉映，雖志士之所增悲，亦幽人之所寄抱。奈何流滯巫山巫峽，而舉目江間，但湧兼天之波浪；凝眸塞上，惟陰接地之風雲。真為可痛可悲，使人心盡氣絕。此一解總貫八首，直接「佳人拾翠」末一句，而歎息「白頭吟望苦低垂」也。⁴⁷

Other Commentary

It is dew, yet it is called “jade-white dew.” They are forests, yet they are called “forests of maple trees.” Just a scene of “withers and harms,” yet the white has been made extremely white and red extremely red – [it is because] this [color] is what makes autumn so evocative (*xing*). Yet what follows next is “on Wu Mountain and in Wu Gorges” [in line 2], thus bringing one to feel the bleak and dreary atmosphere to its full extent. And the lines on “waves” [line 3] and “wind-driven clouds” [line 4] follow immediately from “Wu Mountain and Wu Gorges.”

If one simply spoke of jade trees in decline with maple forests shining forth, though the righteous man would feel more mournful facing this scene, the noble recluse would also be satisfied lodging his ambitions there. And yet, what good was it, when [he was] stranded in Wu Mountain and Wu Gorges, where [he] raised his eyes and looked at the river, yet saw nothing but the waves churning level with sky; where [he] gazed down from the mountain pass, only to find them shadowed by wind-driven clouds touching earth. This was truly painful and sorrowful, exhausting one’s heart, draining one’s breath.

This section [i.e. lines 1-4] pervades all eight poems, connecting directly with the final line of the last four-line set [in Poem VIII], “fair maidens gathered kingfisher plumes,” where he sighed that “now white-haired, I sing and gaze, head hanging in bitterness.”

⁴⁷ DSJ, 190.

Jin Shengtan points out in the very beginning that “in the former section, from the ‘Autumn’ [of the title], he conjures up a scene” 前解從秋顯出境來. In the commentary, he explains the scene through a lavish and tactical presentation of the autumn. For line 1, Jin Shengtan highlights the color. In the beginning of the “other commentary,” he splits “jade-white dew” (*yulu* 玉露) and “forests of maple trees” (*fengshu lin* 楓樹林) and gives “dew versus jade-white dew” and “forests versus forests of maple trees.” And the contrast between “jade-white dew” and “forests of maple trees” has been made bluntly distinct through an emphasis on the extremely white and red color. For lines 2-4, Jin Shengtan strings all the images together and brings out the pervasiveness of autumn, especially by suggesting “from bottom to top, autumn is all around” 自下而上一片秋也 and “from top to bottom, autumn is all around” 自上而下一片秋也. This also makes lines 3-4 a complementary totality. In the meantime, the color in line 1 and the bleakness of lines 2-4 provide a sharp contrast.

Jin Shengtan has also inserted a few dramatic characters, i.e. “unmarried woman” (*yuannü* 怨女), “righteous man” (*zhishi* 志士) and “noble recluse” (*youren* 幽人) into our reading of the poem. Spring is the season for forlorn female lovers whereas autumn is for men with unfulfilled political aspirations. This contrast provides a foil for Du Fu’s condition in Kuizhou. Line 1 is sad, but with the beauty of the colors it is a fine scene for a recluse. But then, Du Fu kills this bit of enjoyment with the utter bleakness of the following three lines.

Another thing worth noticing is that Jin Shengtan has made the connection between the first four-line set in Poem I and the last four-line set in Poem VIII. He particularly highlights line 5 “Fair maidens gathered kingfisher plumes, as gentle gifts in spring” 佳人拾翠春相問 and line 8 “now white-haired, I sing and gaze, head hanging in bitterness” 白頭吟望苦低垂 of Poem

VIII.⁴⁸ In these two lines there appears another color contrast – from the bright shiny “kingfisher plumes” to the pale drawn “white-haired.” Jin Shengtan has brought out the cohesion within the series and set up his reading of “Qiugxing” as a whole.

Let us now move on to the latter section:

- 5 叢菊兩開他日淚, Chrysanthemum clumps twice have bloomed forth tears of another day,
 6 孤舟一繫故園心。a lonely boat tied up once and for all a heart set on its homeland.
 7 寒衣處處催刀尺, Everywhere clothes for cold weather hasten ruler and blade,
 8 白帝城高急暮砧。walls of White Emperor Castle high, pounding blocks urgent in dusk.

先生寓夔，已兩次見菊。故曰「叢菊兩開」。「淚」言他日不言今日者，目前倒也相忘，他日痛定思痛，則此叢菊亦堪下淚也。此身莫定，不繫在一處，故曰「孤舟一繫」。身雖繫此而心不繫此者，故園刻刻在念。有日兵戈休息，去此孤舟，始得遂心也。嗚呼，豈易言哉！因用「叢菊」、「故園」，轉到寒衣上去。意謂我今客中，百事且暫放下，時方高秋，江山早寒，身上那可無衣？聽此砧聲，百端交集，我獨何為繫於此也？蓋老年作客之人，衣食最為苦事，無食則橡栗尚可充饑，無衣則草葉豈能禦寒哉？「催刀尺」「催」字，「急暮砧」「急」字，甚是不堪。乃從先生見聞中寫出二字來，更覺不堪也！⁴⁹

Living in Kuizhou, the Master had seen the chrysanthemum [bloom] twice, thus “chrysanthemum clumps twice have bloomed forth” [in line 5]. He spoke of another day’s tears, and not of today’s, because he could just forget what was before his eyes. The pain of today could be remembered on “another day,” after the pain had stopped, and then the chrysanthemum clumps would also be able to bring forth tears.

This physical body was unsettled, not fastened to any place, thus “a lonely boat tied up once” [in line 6]. Although body was fastened here, heart was not. “Homeland” was at every moment in [the Master’s] mind. [If] one day, wars ceased, he could abandon this lonely boat, then his heart would be satisfied. Alas, how hard this was to express! Building on “chrysanthemum clumps” [in line 5] and “homeland” [in line 6], he turned to “clothes for cold weather” [in line 7]. By this is meant: “I” am at present a sojourner in Kuizhou, let me stop worrying about other things for a moment, it is deep autumn, rivers and mountains are covered by an early coldness - how can the body do without clothes? [When “I”] listen to the pounding blocks, [“I” feel] a whirl of emotions. How is it that “I” alone am fastened to this place? For old sojourners, clothes and food are the most troublesome matter. No food, acorns can still do. But no clothes, how can grass and leaves keep out the cold?

⁴⁸ For the Chinese text of Poem VIII, see *DSJ*, 185-186. For the English translation, see Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 359, 361.

⁴⁹ *DSJ*, 178.

“Hasten” in “hasten ruler and blade” [line 7] and “urgent” in “pounding blocks urgent in dusk” [line 8] were quite unbearable. And the two words were written out from what the Master had seen and heard, making them even more unbearable.

【別批】

不知者謂「兩開」者是「叢菊」，豈知「兩開」者皆「他日淚」乎？不知者謂「孤舟」何必「一繫」，豈知「一繫」者惟此「故園心」乎？「淚」字上下一「他日」字，妙絕！惟身處其境者知之。七言「處處」，正是先生繫心一處。白帝城在夔府之東，言近以指遠也。肚裏想著家中刀尺，而耳中只聞白帝砧聲，遠客之苦，為之淒絕。砧聲也而下一「城高」字，見得耳為遙聽，眼為懸望，遠客之苦，為之悽絕。

三四承一二，五六轉出七八，知余分解之言非謬。⁵⁰

Other Commentary

Those who do not understand say the ones that “twice bloomed” were the “chrysanthemum clumps.” How could they know that what “twice bloomed” were all “tears of another day?” Those who do not understand say there is no need for “a lonely boat” to be “tied up once.” How could they know that the one that “tied up once” was but “a heart set on its homeland?” Putting the words “another day” above the word “tears” – how clever! Only those who have personally been in such a situation can understand it. When line 7 speaks of “everywhere,” it is saying the Master’s heart was fastened to one place.

White Emperor Castle was to the east of Kuizhou. A place nearby was written of in order to indicate a place far away. In [the Master’s] heart, [he was] thinking about the ruler and blade [for making clothing] in his homeland; while all his ears could hear was the pounding blocks in White Emperor Castle. The bitterness of a sojourner was brought to the utmost of despair by that pounding. He wrote of the sound of the blocks yet followed by speaking of the height of the fort, showing that [he] was hearing from afar and staring into the distance. The bitterness of a sojourner was brought to the utmost of despair by those distant sensations.

Lines 3-4 follow lines 1-2, lines 5-6 bring out lines 7-8. So it can be seen that my way of dissecting a poem is indeed correct.

Jin Shengtan remains attentive to diction in his commentary on the second half of the poem. For line 5, in the “other commentary,” he combines “twice bloomed” (*liangkai* 兩開) and “tears” (*lei* 淚) and inventively suggests that it was not the chrysanthemum clumps bloomed twice, but the poet’s tears. A scene of chrysanthemum blossom is thus turned into a scene of tear drops. And Jin Shengtan considers them tears of days to come, instead of tears of days past, as most critics

⁵⁰ Ibid., 190.

do.⁵¹ His unconventional view shows a sign of his iconoclasm. Similarly, for line 6, he combines “tied up” (*ji* 繫) and “heart” (*xin* 心) and emphasizes that it was the poet’s heart that had been tied up, once and for all, to the homeland. Jin Shengtan evokes a conflict between present and future in lines 5-6. Du Fu was not simply gazing towards the capital, he was also gazing towards an ideal future in which chaos came to an end and he could return to his homeland. But as Jin Shengtan indicates, this day might never come.

For lines 7-8, Jin Shengtan reads them from Du Fu’s point of view and writes the comments in Du Fu’s voice. The commentary thus sounds like Du Fu’s soliloquy that comes off more imposing and emotive and therefore has a force to elicit emotions from readers. Jin Shengtan concentrates on “clothes for cold weather” (*hanyi* 寒衣) and writes about the making of clothes by highlighting the sound of ruler, blade and pounding blocks. He also invents some details about food and clothes, as seen from “acorns” and “grass and leaves.” The scene of lacking cloths and food becomes more vivid.

From above we could see that Jin Shengtan tends to draw the fullest possible picture of a given image in a style of exposition. In the meantime, he is dramatizing the poem and consciously evoking readers’ emotions by adding dramatic characters to the scenes, inventing details and speaking in Du Fu’s voice. These changes he has made are a reflection of his inventiveness and iconoclasm. But they also bear relation to some of his poetics. To understand this, let us look back and read one more paragraph from Jin Shengtan’s general comments on the “Qiuxing” series:

興之為言興也。美女當春而思濃，志士對秋而情至。凡山川林巒、風烟雲露、草色花香，目之所睇，耳之所聞，何者不與寸心相為蘊結？其勃然觸發，有自

⁵¹ Ye Jiaying considers Jin’s interpretation far-fetched and she argues it should be days past. For details, see Ye, *jishuo*, 78.

然矣。乃先生以忠摯之懷，當飄零之日，復以流寓之身，經此搖落之時。其為興也，真興盡之至心灰意滅，更無纖毫之興而有此八首者也。後人擬作者，或至汗牛充棟，亦嘗試于先生製題之妙一尋繹乎？⁵²

To talk about *xing*, beautiful women, in spring, thoughts whirl around; righteous men, facing autumn, emotions emerge. All the mountains, rivers, forests, hills, wind, mist, cloud, dew, color of the grass, fragrance of the flowers, what the eyes can see and ears can hear, is there anything not interlaced with the heart (*xin*)? Its vigorous activation comes about naturally. Thus the Master, with a sincere mind, on this bleak day, also with a wandering body, was going through this desolate time. The Master's *xing* was truly a *xing* that had been worn out, downhearted and dispirited. [The Master] no longer had the slightest amount of *xing*, yet here are the eight poems. Later generations have imitated [the Master], sometimes to the extent of an immense number of books, but have they ever tried to thoroughly investigate the ingenuity of the Master's design of a title?

In this paragraph, Jin Shengtan describes what *xing* 興 is. He touches upon the meaning of *xing* on two levels. One is the interest or mood to enjoy – the literal meaning of *xing*. The other is the *xing* that needs to be stirred or evoked by the nature – the technical sense of *xing*. In his commentaries, Jin Shengtan is mostly dealing with the technical sense of *xing*.

As a technical term, *xing* goes back to the commentaries on *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Songs*).

In the “Great Preface” (*daxu* 大序) to *Shijing*, six principles have been indicated:

故詩有六義焉。一曰風。二曰賦。三曰比。四曰興。五曰雅。六曰頌。

Thus there are six principles (*yi*) in the poems: 1) Airs (*feng*); 2) exposition (*fu*); 3) comparison (*bi*); 4) affective image, (*xing*); 5) Odes (*ya*); 6) Hymns (*song*).⁵³

Usually *feng* 風, *ya* 雅 and *song* 頌 refer to the titles of the three main sections of *Shijing* whereas *fu* 賦, *bi* 比 and *xing* 興 are the three techniques of expression of the poems. Owen further terms *xing* as “affective image” and states that “*xing* is an image whose primary function is not signification but, rather, the stirring of a particular affection or mood: *xing* does not ‘refer

⁵² *DSJ*, 189.

⁵³ For both the Chinese text and the English translation, see Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 45. I have converted Wade-Giles transcriptions to *pinyin* here and after.

to' that mood; it generates it."⁵⁴ According to James J. Y. Liu, "*xing* may be explained as the 'associational mode,' in which the poet begins (*xing*) by presenting a natural phenomenon and then expresses the human emotion inspired (*xing*) by or associated with that phenomenon, instead of directly expressing himself (*fu*, the 'expository' or 'descriptive' mode) or making an explicit comparison between the natural phenomenon and the human situation or emotion (*bi*, the 'comparative' or 'analogical' mode)."⁵⁵

The definitions of *xing* 興 suggest that natural phenomena and human emotions need to collaborate to develop the process of evocation (*xing*). In Poem I, the autumn scene is the natural phenomenon. "Jade-white dew," "forests of maple trees" and all other sub-images are the constituents of the autumn scene. And Jin Shengtan has almost all the images interwoven with Du Fu's mood of sadness and despair. We may say that behind his image-centered narrative is his conscious invocation of the human emotions stirred by the images.

In addition to *xing* 興, another keyword *xin* 心 ("heart" or "mind") also deserves some attention. As the rhetorical question Jin Shengtan asks in the general comments, "Is there anything not interlaced with the heart" 何者不與寸心相為蘊結, *xin* 心, heart, is an intangible but indispensable link in the process of evocation because it is where all the emotions and feelings are thought to come from. In the commentaries on Poem I, Jin Shengtan has already started to probe into Du Fu's psychological activities.

But *xin* does not just relate to Du Fu's heart and mind, it also alludes to Jin Shengtan's stand on literary interpretation. In the short anthology *Yuting wenguan* 魚庭聞貫,⁵⁶ which

⁵⁴ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁵ See James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 109.

⁵⁶ *Yuting wenguan* was anthologized by Jin Shengtan's son Jin Yong 金雍 and it usually appeared as the introduction of the much longer anthology of Jin Shengtan's commentaries on heptasyllabic Tang regulated verses. The literal translation of the title is "fish" (*yu* 魚), "courtyard" (*ting* 庭), "listen" (*wen* 聞), "through" (*guan* 貫). The

records Jin Shengtan's general opinions on Tang regulated verse, we constantly encounter the juxtaposition of poetry and *xin*. The following are but a few examples:

詩非異物，只是人人心頭舌尖所萬不獲已必欲說出之一句說話耳。⁵⁷

Poetry is no peculiar thing. It is simply that which comes from one's heart and off the tip of one's tongue, out of absolute necessity, a sentence that has to be spoken out.

詩如何可限字句？詩者，人之心頭忽然之一聲耳。不問婦人孺子，晨朝夜半，莫不有之。⁵⁸

How can poetry be limited to words or sentences? Poetry is a sudden shout from one's heart. Whether it's married women or young children, during early morning or late night, they all have it.

獨有唐律詩是一片心地，一段學問。⁵⁹

Only Tang regulated verses can be a stretch of heart, a trail of knowledge.

Jin Shengtan's adherence to *xin* has its connection with Li Zhi's 李贄 (1527-1602) concept of "On the Child-Mind" (*Tongxin shuo* 童心說),⁶⁰ in which he considers that "free of all falseness and entirely genuine, the child-mind is the original mind of one's very first thought"⁶¹ and "if the child-mind were preserved, then literary quality would never be missing from writing and no person would lack literary ability."⁶² Jin Shengtan is also clearly influenced by Li Zhi's follower

name should be inspired by *Analects*. *Analects* 16: 13 季氏 describes how Confucius taught his son Li 鯉 (courtesy name Boyu 伯魚, both contain the character for "fish") when Li passed through the courtyard. This is consistent with the fact that Jin Shengtan's commentaries on Tang verses were written for his son to read and learn. For details of the background of *Yuting wenguan*, see *JSTQJ*, 32-35.

⁵⁷ *JSTQJ*, 39.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶⁰ For Li Zhi's complete essay on the child-mind, see Stephen Owen, ed. and trans., *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginning to 1911* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 808-811.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 808.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 810.

Yuan Hongda 袁宏道 (1568-1610), who advocates the “true personal nature” (*xingling* 性靈) in writing.⁶³

From Jin Shengtan’s own opinions on poetry, as well as the connections with his predecessors, we can tell that poetry in his understanding is very individualistic, expressionistic and spontaneous. This seems to be at odds with his frequent emphasis on Du Fu’s superb command of the technique in poetic writing. But just as John Ching-yu Wang suggests, the real point is perhaps “in a good poem the description of some object or scenery is never made an end in itself; it is merely a means by which the poet tries to convey what he thinks or feels inside.”⁶⁴ For Jin Shengtan, his mission is to go beyond the object or scenery in Du Fu’s poem and convey those thoughts and feelings that have been kept silent or ambiguous by Du Fu.

Jin Shengtan’s Conflict-evoking Dramatization of “Qiuxing”

In a certain sense, Jin Shengtan’s reading of the main body of “Qiuxing,” i.e. Poem II through Poem VII can be regarded as an extended version of his reading of Poem I. It has been observed that Jin Shengtan latches on to *xing* in his commentaries on Poem I. Later in the handling of the following poems, he goes further to make “Qiuxing” more evocative (*xing*) by dramatizing the poems in a conflict-evoking way. In this section, I intend to look at Poems II - VII in order, delineating the different ways Jin Shengtan has employed to evoke conflicts and discussing what kind of effects the dramatization has brought.

In the end of Poem I, the narrative pauses at the point of “dusk” (*mu* 暮). In Poem II, the scene moves from dusk to night:

⁶³ For some of Yuan Hongdao’s writings, see Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 811-814. For a general introduction of Yuan’s thoughts and his connections with Li Zhi and Jin Shengtan, see James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, 78-83.

⁶⁴ Wang, *Chin Sheng-t’an*, 41.

其二⁶⁵Poem II⁶⁶

- 1 夔府孤城落日斜, On Kuizhou's lonely walls setting sunlight slants,
 2 每依南斗望京華。 then always I trust the South Dipper to lead my gaze to the capital.⁶⁷
 3 聽猿實下三聲淚, Listening to gibbons I really shed tears at their third cry,
 4 奉使虛隨八月槎。 accepting my mission I pointlessly follow the eighth-month raft.
 5 畫省香爐違伏枕, The censer in the ministry with portraits eludes the pillow where I lie,
 6 山樓粉堞隱悲笳。 hill tower's white-plastered battlements hide the sad reed pipes.
 7 請看石上藤蘿月, Just look there at the moon, in wisteria on the rock,
 8 已映洲前蘆荻花。 it has already cast its light by sandbars on flowers of the reeds.

This poem describes Du Fu's one night of gazing towards the capital. The middle two couplets centre upon Du Fu's regretful memory that he could not make it to the capital and that he could not offer any essential help to the court when the country was in trouble. The narrative comes back to the present in lines 7-8. Jin Shengtian's reading of the last couplet merits special attention:

俄然而「落日斜」，俄然又「月上」矣。「請看」二字妙，意不在月也。「已」字妙，月上山頭，已穿過藤蘿照此洲前久矣，我適纔得見也。先生惟有望京華過日子，見此月色，方知又是一日了也！⁶⁸

All of a sudden “setting sunlight slants” [in line 1], all of a sudden the moon had risen [as in line 7]. “Just look” [in line 7] is clever. The intention is not on the moon. “Has already” [in line 8] is clever. The moon had already risen above the hill, passed across the wisteria and been lighting in front of the sandbars for quite a while. And “I” just saw it. The Master could only spend the days by gazing towards the capital. Only upon looking at the moonlight did he realize another day was gone!

「請看石上」，是月之初出，上照藤蘿。「已映洲前」，是月之漸昇，下照蘆荻。自日斜底於堞隱，世人匆匆，輕易忽過者何限？若石上之月，則明明上照藤蘿，何至遽映洲前，已移蘆荻？胸前有無數忠君眷國心腸人，真是刻不能耐耳！有人解做

⁶⁵ For the Chinese text, see *DSJ*, 178-179.

⁶⁶ For the English translation, see Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 353.

⁶⁷ In this line, the variant word for “south” (*nan* 南) is “north” (*bei* 北). Jin Shengtian refers to “south” while Owen's translation is based on “north.” For the purpose of consistency, I've changed “North” to “South” in the English translation.

⁶⁸ *DSJ*, 179.

月在石上，光映洲前，乃至作畫者慣圖此景。真是將神龍作泥鱔弄也，可為古人常歎！⁶⁹

“Just look there...on the rock” [in line 7] describes when the moon just appeared and shone upwards to wisteria. “It has already cast its light by sandbars” [in line 8] describes when the moon had gradually risen and shone downwards upon the reeds. The setting sun had slanted through the battlements and hidden behind. People in this world were absent-minded, how many of them had sloppily spent the days? As to the moonlight on the rock, [the moon] was obviously shining on the wisteria; how come it so suddenly cast light in front of sandbars and had already moved to the reeds? For a person who [i.e. the Master] had his chest filled with loyalty to the emperor and affection to the country, truly this moment [of realizing that the light had shifted] was unbearable! Some interpret this as the moon shone on the rock and [at the same time] reflected upon the sandbar, the way it might commonly be rendered in a painting. [They are] literally taking a sacred dragon as if it were a filthy eel! I sigh for the ancients!

In line 7, “just look” (*qingkan* 請看) is an imperative. Du Fu directs our attention to the moon. Yet as Jin Shengtian points out, “the intention is not on the moon” 意不在月也, Du Fu wants us to notice the movement of the moonlight. William Hung’s more paraphrastic translation of the two lines might give us a better sense of how the moon shifts – “Behold! The moon that lit the ivy-clad, rocky cliff is now shining on the reed poppi on the beach!”⁷⁰ Jin Shengtian has grasped a tension in this movement. In the first paragraph of the commentary above, Jin Shengtian emphasizes the word “has already” (*yi* 已), which suggests the completion of an action and the lasting of it up to the present. Jin Shengtian describes it as “the moon had already risen above the hill, passed across the wisteria and been lighting in front of the sandbars for quite a while.” And Du Fu witnessed all the changes that took place in this process, indicating that he had been up the whole night. The movement of the moonlight is thus dramatized by the lengthiness of time.

In the second paragraph of the commentary, Jin Shengtian somehow turns “has already cast” (*yiying* 已映) to “suddenly cast” (*juying* 遽映). The suddenness erases the lengthiness of

⁶⁹ Ibid., 191.

⁷⁰ William Hung, *Tu Fu: China’s Greatest Poet* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 234.

time and adds a level of haste and anxiety to the movement of moonlight. However, lengthiness and suddenness are both just a delusion of the definite natural time. The delusion is derived from “a chest filled with loyalty to the emperor and affection to the country,” as Jin Shengtan puts in the commentary. Jin Shengtan explicates the image of moonlight in accordance with the subjective tenor of “Qiuxing” and has evoked (*xing*) Du Fu’s psychological activities.

The last few comments are also worthy of mention. By starting the comment “some interpret...” 有人解做, Jin Shengtan pulls the readers out of the moonlight scene and starts to have the readers listen to him as an incisive reader. Jin Shengtan is presenting himself as a model for other readers. He is also trying to create a character for himself. His iconoclasm is also well-reflected when he criticizes the ignorance of the exquisiteness of Du Fu’s poetry. By saying “I sigh for the ancients!” 可為古人常歎, Jin Shengtan drops a subtle hint that he is the one who truly understands Du Fu.

Although Du Fu writes about his state of insomnia in Poem II, he doesn’t quite explain the reason that caused his sleeplessness. This unsolved doubt brings us to the next poem, which starts with a serene early morning:

其三⁷¹

Poem III⁷²

- 1 千家山郭靜朝暉, A thousand homes of the mountain town are serene in the glow of dawn;
- 2 日日江樓坐翠微。 day by day in my river tower I sit in an azure haze.
- 3 信宿漁人還泛泛, Out two nights, the fishermen still drift along;
- 4 清秋燕子故飛飛。 in clear fall skies the swallows keep flying on as ever.
- 5 匡衡抗疏功名薄, Kuang Heng⁷³ advising on policy—deeds and fame both slight.
- 6 劉向傳經心事違。 Liu Xiang⁷⁴ passing on Classics—heart’s goal gone awry.

⁷¹ *DSJ*, 180.

⁷² Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 355.

⁷³ Kuang Heng is a scholar and statesman of the Western Han. He got promoted due to the advice he provided to the emperor.

⁷⁴ Liu Xiang is also a Western Han scholar. He lectured on Five Classics by order of the emperor.

7 同學少年多不賤，The young men I once studied with are now most not of low degree;
 8 五陵裘馬自輕肥。by Five Barrows⁷⁵ their horses are plump and the mantles they wear
 are light.

This poem is clear-cut in structure, with lines 1-4 presenting what Du Fu had seen when he sat in the river tower and lines 5-8 describing what he was thinking in his mind. Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664) in his annotation considers that “Poem III states clearly why the poem series was titled as ‘Qiuxing,’ it is what the ancients called the heart of text” 第三章正申《秋興》名篇之意，古人所謂文之心也。⁷⁶ Poem III touches upon the concerns in Du Fu’s heart and digs into the reason that made autumn this evocative to him.

The concerns in Du Fu’s heart are an essential matter in Jin Shengtan’s commentary. He continues the dramatization of the elements in the autumn scenes. For Poem III, his specific way of doing this is to mirror Du Fu’s concerns through “fishermen” (*yuren* 漁人) and “swallows” (*yanzi* 燕子), in lines 3 and 4. The following are some concentrated discussions on the two elements:

此處翠微，不作佳字用，承以「漁人」、「燕子」，即坐中所見，皆先生自況也。一夜曰宿，再宿曰信。漁人信宿，故可以息矣。「還泛泛」，是喻己之憂勞而無着落也。八月燕子將去，則竟去可矣。「故飛飛」，是喻己羈絆而不得脫然也。⁷⁷

Here “azure haze” [in line 2] is not used as a pleasant phrase. [“Azure haze” is] followed by “fishermen” [in line 3] and “swallows” [in line 4], these are what the Master had seen when he sat [in the tower], both are intended as a reflection of himself. One night is called *su*, one more night is called *xin*. Fishermen [had been out] two consecutive nights (*xinsu*), thus they may rest. But “still drift along” [in line 3] is metaphorically saying that he was anxious and suffering but had nowhere to rest. In October,⁷⁸ the swallows were about to go, then they could just all fly away, but “keep flying on as ever” [in line 4] is metaphorically saying that he was restrained and couldn’t get loose.

⁷⁵ “Five Barrows” refers to a rich and popular area around the capital.

⁷⁶ Ye, *jishuo*, 165.

⁷⁷ *DSJ*, 180.

⁷⁸ The “August” (*bayue* 八月) in Chinese text refers to the eighth lunar month in Chinese calendar. It is usually equivalent to September or October. I chose October to match with the season of autumn.

「千家山郭」下加一「靜」字，又加一「朝暉」字，寫得何等有趣，何等可愛。「江樓坐翠微」，亦是絕妙好致。但輕輕只用得「日日」二字，便不但使江樓翠微生憎可厭，而山郭朝暉俱觸目惱人。三四再承兩句，不嫌自己日日坐江樓，却嫌漁人之信宿；不怪自己日日到翠微，却怪燕子之飛飛。真為絕妙之筆也！⁷⁹

How interesting and adorable it is when he writes the word “serene” after “a thousand homes of the mountain town” [in line 1], and then adds “glow of dawn.” “In my river tower I sit in an azure haze” [in line 2] is also incredibly exquisite. However, just by softly adding the words “day by day,” he makes not only the river tower and azure haze hateful and annoying, but also the mountain town and glow of dawn strikingly irritating. Lines 3-4 further develop lines 1-2. [The Master] had no dislike for his own “day by day sitting in the river tower,” yet he disliked the fishermen’s two nights of stay; [he] found no fault in his own “day by day going to the azure haze,” yet he faulted the swallows for flying around. Truly a fantastic brush!

因日日之坐，不厭其煩，因而自思：欲如匡衡之抗疏，既愧功名之薄；欲如劉向之傳經，又嫌心事之違。輾轉反側，因而想到少年同學，原俱不賤，但只五陵裘馬，自炫輕肥。明知我之心事，而不與我以功名，以致見笑漁人，貽譏燕子耳！⁸⁰

Since [the Master] day by day sat there, never growing impatient, but starting to reflect: [I] want to be like Kuang Heng who admonished frankly, but [I] have already been ashamed of [my] rank’s humbleness; I want to be like Liu Xiang who passed on Classics, yet I loathe the goal’s going awry. [I] toss and turn, then [I] think of the classmates of my youth, already not of low degree. But simply with their horses and mantles in the Five Barrows, they are showing off success and wealth. [They] clearly understand my heart’s concerns, but do not offer me a rank. So that [I am] laughed at by fishermen, and mocked by the swallows!

We can learn from the commentary that “fishermen” and “swallows” are not intended to be just two scenic elements in the nature. In the first paragraph of commentary, Jin Shengtang pinpoints the figurative relation between Du Fu and the two elements. The state of fishermen and swallows is written to be compared with Du Fu’s situation. Part of Du Fu wants to be like fishermen and swallows as they could rest and fly away as they wish. Du Fu starts to identify himself with the two elements. However, Jin Shengtang puts emphasis on the two modifiers “two nights [in line 3]” (*xinsu* 信宿) and “keep...on as ever [in line 4]” (*gu* 故). Further in the second

⁷⁹ *DSJ*, 192.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

paragraph of commentary, fishermen and swallows both as something that has dragged out too long turn into an annoyance to Du Fu. Fishermen and swallows have been transformed from two relatively passive elements into two full-fledged actors playing an active part in Du Fu's psychological condition.

And finally in the third paragraph of commentary, Jin Shengtan is making Du Fu a dramatic character. When the real annoyance, i.e. the gap between ideal and reality comes to light, Jin Shengtan makes Du Fu directly address his fellow schoolmates and discloses his mild resentment. Jin Shengtan's dramatization of the image of "fishermen" and "swallows" brings in some conflicts including Du Fu's conflicts with the outside nature and his inner conflicts. We as readers also come into conflict with Jin Shengtan's account since the Du Fu he has portrayed may not be the one we expect to see. As said earlier, this poem is talking about the concerns in Du Fu's heart. On the surface, his concerns are born out of the failure in political arena. However, Jin Shengtan wants us to hear more of his grumbling. The real object Jin Shengtan is dramatizing here is Du Fu. He is starting to bring out the conflict of Du Fu's different identities. And this becomes more evident from Poem IV when Du Fu starts to unveil his more concentrated recollection of the capital.

其四⁸¹

Poem IV⁸²

- 1 聞道長安似弈棋, I have heard tell that in Chang'an it's like playing chess,
- 2 百年世事不勝悲。 a hundred-year span, the world's troubles, grief beyond enduring.
- 3 王侯第宅皆新主, Mansions of counts and princes all have new masters,
- 4 文武衣冠異昔時。 those in civil and army uniforms differ from olden times.
- 5 直北關山金鼓振, Straight north past fortified mountains kettledrums are thundering;
- 6 征西車馬羽書遲。 from wagon and horse on western campaigns winged dispatches rush.
- 7 魚龍寂寞秋江冷, Fish and dragons grow silent now, autumn rivers grow cold,

⁸¹ Ibid., 181.

⁸² Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 355.

8 故國平居有所思。the life I used to have at home is the longing in my heart.

In Poem IV, Jin Shengtan's reading of the image "fish and dragons" (*yulong* 魚龍) deserves some attention:

正志士枕戈泣血滅此朝食之時，而乃去故國，竄他鄉，對此秋江，曷勝寂寞！曷勝悵悵！此所以寄興魚龍而曰「有所思」者，正思此身為朝廷用也。酈道元水經注：魚龍以秋日為夜。魚龍極動之物，却如此寂寞者，蓋處非其時也。「故國」，猶言故鄉。「平居」，是在故國之平日。見朝廷北討西征，便思戮力效忠久矣，不待今日也。此一首望京華而歎其衰。⁸³

While righteous men were using their spears as pillows, shedding tears of blood, anxious to do battle even before having a little breakfast, [the Master] however left his homeland and fled to another place. Facing this autumn river, what an extreme silence, what an extreme melancholy! What [the Master] expresses through fish and dragons and calls "longing in my heart" [in line 8] is that this body could be of use to the court. Li Daoyuan's (? - 527) *Annotated Classic of Rivers (Shuijing zhu)* says that fish and dragons regard autumn as the night. Fish and dragons are very active creatures, yet they are now silent, because it is not the right time for them.

[In line 8], *guguo* 故國 is particularly referring to the homeland and *pingju* 平居 is referring to the daily life in the homeland. [After the Master] saw the court battling in north and fighting in west, [he] had thus been thinking of devoting himself to the court for a long time. It was not that he had to wait until today to think this.

This poem is about gazing towards the capital and lamenting its decline.

為魚為龍，雖不能自決，然目前惟有寂寞秋江而已。冷既徹骨，意望何為，惟有故國平居，實不能自己其思云爾！⁸⁴

As a fish, as a [hiding] dragon, though there was nothing for him to act upon, there lay before his eyes a forlorn autumn river. Cold was already chilling one to the bone, what was the wish for? Only for the old times in the homeland, and he really could not bring an end to his longing!

Fish and dragons are the two elements that have been dramatized here. And the dramatization has been closely related to Du Fu's psychological activities "longing in my [i.e. Du Fu] heart" (*you suo si* 有所思). Jin Shengtan first presents a contrast between the "righteous men" (*zhishi* 志士) who were "using their spears as pillows (i.e. always ready for battle),

⁸³ *DSJ*, 181-182.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

shedding tears of blood, anxious to do battle even before having a little breakfast” and the Master who was facing an extreme silence. Righteous men were in a dynamic state while Du Fu was staying still like fish and dragons. Jin Shengtian then quotes *Shuijing zhu* and defends for Du Fu’s seemingly untimely silence – “Fish and dragons are very active creatures, yet they are of such silence, because it is not the right time for them.” Du Fu was also waiting for the right time to revive and serve his country. In this sense, it can be said that there exists an identification between Du Fu and the fish and dragons. However, later in the commentary, Jin Shengtian makes Du Fu deny the identification with fish and dragons by stating the fact that “as a fish, as a [hiding] dragon, though there was nothing for him to act upon, there lay before his eyes a forlorn autumn river.” Jin Shengtian first establishes an analogy, and then he breaks it. Du Fu’s identity remains ambiguous and intangible, only the longing in his heart stays solid for him to grasp.

In the commentary on Poem V, which Jin Shengtian describes as a poem about “gazing towards the capital and recalling its prosperity” 望京華而追其盛,⁸⁵ he further explains the reason behind Du Fu’s hibernation in autumn.

其五⁸⁶

Poem V⁸⁷

- 1 蓬萊宮闕對南山, Palace towers of Penglai stand facing South Mountain,
- 2 承露金莖霄漢間。The metal stalk that catches the dew is high in the Milky Way.
- 3 西望瑤池降王母, Gazing west to Onyx Pool the Queen Mother is descending,
- 4 東來紫氣滿函關。from the east come purple vapors and fill Han Pass.
- 5 雲移雉尾開宮扇, Pheasant tails shift in clouds, palace fans open
- 6 日繞龍鱗識聖顏。sunlight circles dragon scales, I see the Emperor’s face.
- 7 一臥滄江驚歲晚, By the gray river I lay once and woke, alarmed that the year had grown late--
- 8 幾回青瑣點朝班。how often did I, by the gates’ blue rings, take my humble place in dawn court’s ranks?

⁸⁵ Ibid., 183.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 182.

⁸⁷ Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 357.

當此之時，先生目擊時艱，何以略無諫議，而坐視其敗？嗚呼，興言及此，為之浩歎！蓋先生雖為右衛參軍，而其層級而上，則有等矣。皇皇殿陛，可以次其列，不得陞其階，況雉扇環遮，親臣密侍，豈得一望見天顏者耶？只因雲移雉尾而暫開宮扇，稍露日色，光耀龍袞，因而一識聖顏耳。從此遂臥滄江，失驚歲晚，朝班預點，曾有幾回？用是憂勞，莫能自慰，長歌當哭，神傷心愴矣！

從「雲移」「移」字中，露出日光，日映龍鱗，方識此是聖人。雖云「識聖顏」，却只遙遙摹擬，瞥見而已，真是化工之筆。

「點」字妙，先生此時之在朝班，只如密雨中的一點耳，雖欲諫議，亦復何從？⁸⁸

At this time [i.e., when he was at court], the Master had witnessed the hard times. How come [he] had no admonitions and sat there watching the defeat? Alas, how we sigh for him when he was moved (*xing*) to speak of this! It is because although the Master was then an adjutant, there were higher ranks above him. The palace staircase was grand; [he] could take his place in the ranks, but could not walk up the staircase. Let alone pheasant fans were covering around, close courtiers were waiting around. How could [he] expect to catch a glimpse of the emperor's face? Only when "pheasant tails shift in clouds" [in line 5], slightly revealing the sunlight, shining upon the imperial dragon robe, could he get a look at the emperor's face. From then on, [the Master had been] lying by the gray river, startled that the year had grown late. Meanwhile, how many times had [courtiers still in the capital] waited to be called at dawn court? Hence came the anxieties and suffering, [the Master] was not able to console himself, [he] composed poems instead of crying, spirit hurt, heart broken!

From the word "shift" (*yi* 移) in "cloud shift" (*yunyi* 雲移) [in line 5], sunlight was revealed, shining upon the dragon scales, then [he] recognized the emperor. Although it is said that "see the Emperor's face" [in line 6], [in fact it is] simply a distant approximation, a fleeting glimpse, that's all. Truly an artful brush!

The word *dian* 點 is clever.⁸⁹ [The Master] at that time was at the dawn court, like a drop (*dian*) in dense rain. While [he] intended to admonish, how could he have done so?

Jin Shengtan has dramatized three verbs in the above commentary – "shift" (*yi* 移) in line 5, "see" (*shi* 識) in line 6 and "take one's place" (*dian* 點) in line 8. Shifting (*yi*) of cloud makes way for bright sunlight, which is supposed to bring a clear look of the emperor, yet it only leads to fuzziness. Jin Shengtan specifies the action "see" (*shi*) as "simply a distant approximation, a fleeting glimpse." The so-called "see" thus becomes another kind of "gazing towards" (*wang* 望), a motif in "Qixing" series. The object of the gaze is the emperor. As to "take one's place"

⁸⁸ *DSJ*, 194.

⁸⁹ *Dian* 點 in this poem refers to the action of taking attendance of the officials at court. It can also be used as a noun, which in most occasions means a very small spot, dot, drop, etc.

(*dian*), Jin Shengtan does not just interpret it as a routine action at the dawn court, he has dramatized it as a particular image of Du Fu – a humble official among many other officials, like “a drop in dense rain.” Even when Du Fu was inside the capital, he remained as an outsider and he still had to gaze (*wang*). The conflict is located in the distance, or in other words, the mid-ground between remoteness and closeness.

In his commentary on Poem VI, Jin Shengtan further exploits the conflict that exists in the distance. In Poem VI, Du Fu continues the memory of the capital. In this poem, the main focus is the Twisting River (*Qu Jiang* 曲江):

其六⁹⁰

Poem VI⁹¹

- 1 瞿唐峽口曲江頭， From the mouth of the Qutang Gorge to the Twisting River's side,
- 2 萬里風烟接素秋。 thousands of miles of wind-blown fog connect pale autumn.
- 3 花萼夾城通御氣， Through the walled passage to Calyx Manor the royal aura passed,
- 4 芙蓉小苑入邊愁。 and into tiny Lotus Park the frontier's sorrows entered.
- 5 珠簾繡柱圍黃鵠， Beaded hangings and sculpted pillars surrounded brown swans,
- 6 錦纜牙樯起白鷗。 from brocade cables and ivory mast rose a white gull.
- 7 回首可憐歌舞地， The head turns with pity and love for those places of song and the dance:
- 8 秦中自古帝王州。 Qin since ancient times has been land of emperors.

身處萬里之外，心注萬里之間，便定然有此等想頭。瞿唐之與曲江，則有間矣，然其相去萬里，里里風烟相接，則素秋之相接可知。乃同此秋光而秦、蜀風景迥異，則豈非以其以漸遞改，當之者溺玩而弗辨乎？此不特地界相接有然，即世運遞更亦無不然。三四緊承：明皇當日敦尚友悌，御氣與花萼交輝；晚歲偶漁聲色，邊愁與芙蓉並慘。當一王之朝，而前後異政，國步遂移。倘辨之早辨，幾何而至如此之劇也！⁹²

[The Master] was in [a place] “thousands of miles” away, [his] heart was pouring into the thousand miles of distance within. [He] would surely have these thoughts. [From] Qutang Gorge to the Twisting River, there certainly was a distance. But although there were “thousands of miles” between them, every mile was connected by wind and dust. Thus the connection of their pale autumns was clear. Despite sharing the same autumn,

⁹⁰ *DSJ*, 183-184.

⁹¹ Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 359.

⁹² *DSJ*, 194.

Qin and Shu had widely different scenes.⁹³ Wasn't it because little by little, subtle changes had taken place, yet the person in power indulged in pleasures and couldn't tell? Not only the boundary of the land was like this [i.e. gradually changing], the world's vicissitudes were also like this.

Lines 3-4 follow immediately: Emperor Xuanzong in his early years advocated friendliness and respect between brothers, the royal aura and Calyx Manor added radiance to each other; in his late years [Emperor Xuanzong] came to pursue sensual pleasures, and frontier's sorrows and Lotus Park were both in utter misery. [Emperor Xuanzong] held the sole power of the empire, yet at the beginning of his reign and at the end of his reign [he] employed different policies; the empire's fate was therefore altered. If [the misjudgment] had been dealt with as soon as possible, how would things have become this serious?

The Twisting River was in the capital city Chang'an whereas Qutang Gorge was in Kuizhou. Thus the distance of "thousands of miles" in line 2 refers to the distance between Kuizhou and the capital. But Du Fu immediately erases this geographical distance with the word "connect" (*jie* 接). We may again look at William Hung's translation to get a better sense of this verb – "A thousand miles of wind and mist share the same autumn."⁹⁴ "Pale autumn" (*suqiu* 素秋) went across the boundary and it was shared by Kuizhou and the capital. In line 4, Du Fu uses another verb "enter" (*ru* 入) to indicate the blurring of boundary between Kuizhou and the capital. The news of "frontier's sorrows" (*bianchou* 邊愁) did not just enter into the park, it also entered into Du Fu's ears. It should also be noted that the two Chinese characters "autumn" (*qiu* 秋) and "sorrow" (*chou* 愁) are similar in both appearance and sound. Although "frontier's sorrows" in the poem refers specifically to chaos caused by war,⁹⁵ now that the boundary is blurred, they have been merged together with Du Fu's sorrow.

Likewise, Jin Shengtan in his commentary emphasizes that autumn could transcend the distance. But he goes further and dramatizes the distance through some alteration in the already

⁹³ Qin refers to present-day Shaanxi, the province where Chang'an was located; Shu refers to the present-day Sichuan, where Kuizhou was located.

⁹⁴ Hung, *Tu Fu*, 235.

⁹⁵ To be more specific, "frontier's sorrows" should refer to the An Lushan Rebellion which broke out in 755.

established plot. Jin Shengtian seems to put Du Fu in a presumed scene where he could pour out his admonition to the emperor. Du Fu in a hypothetical scene pointed out sharply that “the person in power indulged in pleasures and couldn’t tell the subtle changes that have taken place.” He also stated Emperor Xuanzong ‘s misconduct in a critical way. However, the decline was irreversible and the assumed admonition only took effect in a fictitious narrative. In this regard, the distance between Kuizhou and the capital has otherwise been lengthened.

But Jin Shengtian seems to have no intention to resolve the issue of boundary at this stage. In his commentary on the next poem, he further blurs the distance between Kuizhou and the capital. Poem VII concentrates on the scenes in Kunming Pool in the capital:

其七⁹⁶

Poem VII⁹⁷

- 1 昆明池水漢時功, The waters of Kunming Pool are a deed of the days of Han,
- 2 武帝旌旗在眼中。 pennons and banners of Emperor Wu are right before my eyes.
- 3 織女機絲虛夜月, Loom threads of the Weaver Woman lie empty in the moonlit night,
- 4 石鯨鱗甲動秋風。 stone Leviathan’s fins and scales stir the autumn wind.
- 5 波漂菰米沉雲黑, Waves toss wild grass seed sinking in cloudy black,
- 6 露冷蓮房墜粉紅。 dew is chill on the lotus pod shedding powdery red.
- 7 關塞極天惟鳥道, Fortified passes stretch to the skies, a way for only birds,
- 8 江湖滿地一漁翁。 lakes and rivers fill the earth, and one old man, fishing.

The following are Jin Shengtian’s general comments on Poem VIII:

此因曲江而更及昆明池也，最為奇作。前諸作皆亂後追想，此作特於事前預慮。千年來，人只當平常讀去，辜負先生苦心久矣，可歎也！⁹⁸

Building from Twisting River, this poem moves further to Kunming Pool. This is the most marvelous piece. All the previous poems are retrospections after the chaos. This poem alone is about what should have been considered before that [cataclysmic] event. In a thousand years, people have merely read [this poem] ordinarily. They have been failing the Master’s great pains for too long, what a pity!

⁹⁶ *DSJ*, 184-185.

⁹⁷ Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 359.

⁹⁸ *DSJ*, 184.

Jin Shengtan's conceit is quite visible in the above comments. He is telling the readers that he is about to enlighten all of them with his unprecedented reading of Du Fu's poetry. In the case of Poem VII, Jin Shengtan particularly gives a distinctive perspective in his reading of Lines 5-8. Qiu Zhao'ao in his annotations concludes that lines 3-4 "describe a magnificent scene in the pool and follow the previous 'before my eyes' [in line 2]" 記池景之壯麗，承上眼中來 and lines 5-6 "visualize a desolate scene in the pool and turn to the following 'fortified passes' [in line 7]" 想池景之蒼涼，轉下關塞去.⁹⁹ Jin Shengtan however, sets the scene in lines 5-6 in Kuizhou instead of Kunming Pool. According to Ye Jiaying, Jin Shengtan is the only critic who holds this opinion.¹⁰⁰

The following paragraphs are Jin Shengtan's commentary on the second half of the poem:

上解已畢，忽換筆作轉。五六二句，不從昆明池來，蓋為下解「江湖滿地一漁翁」作轉也。若謂昆明且置，吾今身在峽中，日與水相習，當此秋深之際，菰米波漂，蓮房粉墜，一時衰颯如此，則江湖之上，實切隱憂。況時方戰伐，蜀山鳥道，為關塞之至險，乃自上皇回鑾以後，僭亂相仍，極天之險，竟無足恃。顧此江湖，滔滔皆是，將何底止耶？然而抱江湖之憂者，只一個漁翁，雖憂亦安所用之？其必在當事慮患於未然哉！「漁翁」，蓋先生自謂也。¹⁰¹

The first half of the poem comes to an end, swiftly the poet's brush turns to a transition. Lines 5-6 do not come from Kunming Pool, because they are for the purpose of turning to line 8 "lakes and rivers fill the earth, and one old man, fishing." It is as if he were saying, let us set aside Kunming Pool for the moment, "I" am now inside the gorge, where day by day ["I"] get used to the waters here, and in this deep autumn, wild grass seeds are tossed by waves, lotus pods are dropping the powdery red [petals]. Such is the desolation of this moment, and so "I", in this region of rivers and lakes, am truly pained by it most deeply.

Moreover, at that time the war was on, and though mountains of Sichuan only had a way for birds, and so was well protected behind the most precipitous fortified passes, after Emperor Xuanzong returned to the capital, rebellions were still on,¹⁰² and even this

⁹⁹ Qiu Zhao'ao, *Du shi xiang zhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 1494. This source will be referred to as *DSXZ* hereafter.

¹⁰⁰ Ye, *jishuo*, 470.

¹⁰¹ *DSJ*, 185.

¹⁰² During the An Lushan rebellion, Emperor Xuanzong was once forced to leave Chang'an and took refuge in Chengdu. For a brief account of this, see Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 368.

most heavenly protected place could not be relied upon. The lakes and rivers were rolling on, when would be the end [of all the troubles]?

However [the one who was] concerned for the troubles in the lakes and rivers, was but one fisherman. Despite the concerns, where could he put them into use? It would have been necessary for things to have been nipped in the bud before this time. “Fisherman” is referring to the Master himself.

五六轉到黎民阻飢，馬嵬亦敗，亦以不忍斥言，故為隱語。猶言菰米為波所飄，而遂沉雲之黑，固所料也，亦所甘也。詎意蓮房紅粉，亦遽墜于冷露，豈所料哉？尚忍言哉！目今關塞極天，往來閉塞，可通惟有鳥道。江湖滿地，渙然瓦解，繫心只一漁翁。縱有嘉謀，又將焉展也哉？¹⁰³

Lines 5-6 turn to commoners’ starvation and the disaster at Mawei [post station].¹⁰⁴ [The Master] did not have the heart to criticize bluntly, thus [he] veiled the language. In particular it is said that wild grass seeds were tossed by waves, finally sunk in black of cloud, the scene of which [the Master] had expected and willingly accepted. [But] who would have thought lotus pods with powdery red [petals] also ended up tumbling in the chill dew? Could this be expected? How could one have the heart to talk about it?

Now [the Master] had seen that the fortified passes stretched to the skies, passages were blocked, and the only way was the one for birds. Lakes and rivers filled the earth, scattered, collapsed, [the one whose] heart was fastened [to the capital] was but the fisherman. Even if he had good strategies, how would he put them to good use?

It’s very unlikely that Jin Shengtian came up with his interpretation without knowing other annotations. In addition to an attitude of being different (his iconoclasm), he might also want to make a change so as to fit his approach of dissection (*fenjie*). The latter section is thus on Kuizhou whereas the former section is on the capital. But if we take distance into consideration, Jin Shengtian is not without grounds. It is possible that he moves the scene in lines 5-6 to Kuizhou so as to suggest that Du Fu has completely blurred the distance between here in Kuizhou and there in the capital. The boundary no longer exists and Du Fu’s longing for the capital has reached its peak.

¹⁰³ DSJ, 196.

¹⁰⁴ After Emperor Xuanzong fled Chang’an, he was once at a post station called Mawei, where his army refused to continue the trip unless he had his concubine executed. See Owen, *Anthology*, 368.

It looks like Jin Shengtan is leading us to a *dénouement* in his handling of the second to last poem. We may also look at how he deals with Du Fu's identity. In his opinion, lines 5-6 help bring out line 8, in which "fisherman" (*yuweng* 漁翁) is the key image. Unlike the fishermen in Poem III, the fisherman here is not an element in the outside scene viewed by Du Fu. This fisherman is Du Fu himself. Du Fu as a stranded fisherman could not have his talent appreciated. Unlike the birds in line 7, Du Fu could not fly over the fortified passes. There was no unobstructed way for him. In the second paragraph of commentary, Jin Shengtan also relates lines 5-6 to some very specific historic scenes. The sinking of wild grass seeds is a sign of starvation and the falling of the powdery red lotus petals is very likely alluding to the death of Emperor Xuanzong's concubine. It seems Du Fu has finally succumbed to his role as an outsider and he is able to perceive the changes in a more uninvolved light. In this sense, we can say that Jin Shengtan has confirmed Du Fu's identity.

But we should also notice that Jin Shengtan ends the commentary with a "how" question. Though rhetorical, the Master in the commentary is indeed thinking about going out. Jin Shengtan has not yet given a closure to the conflict-evoking dramatization.

The Cadenza: Jin Shengtan's Reading of Poem VIII

In the last poem of "Qiuxing," Lake Meipi is under focus. Ye Jiaying in her annotations concludes that "Poem VIII serves as a conclusion of the eight poems, there is immeasurable nostalgia and regret lingering. [If we simply] read the poem on its surface, of course Lake Meipi is the main focus" 此章為八詩總結，有無限懷思唱歎之餘音，就字句之表觀之，自以溪陂為主。¹⁰⁵ But she further points out that "however, if we read the poem based on the emotions it contains, then this poem does not just reflect upon Lake Meipi, it writes about Meipi only to stir

¹⁰⁵ Ye, *jishuo*, 490.

[other mood or affection]” 然若就其所蘊含之情意觀之，則此詩所感歎懷思者，實不僅漢陂而已，不過藉漢陂以發之耳。¹⁰⁶ This statement brings us back to the poetic technique *xing*.

Through the very end of the series, Du Fu is still evoking some particular emotions. It is as if he has made the last poem a cadenza of the series. However, those emotions, being implicit and vague, rely most on the annotators to make them explicit to readers.

Jin Shengtan in his commentary is also doing a little cadenza on the last poem. He makes an extremely emphatic and elaborate narrative out of the poem and he adds in his own attitude. In this section, I will present Jin Shengtan's commentary on Poem VIII in its entirety and discuss how Jin Shengtan dramatizes this last poem and, finally, what kind of closure he has given to Du Fu's identity.

Let us start from his reading of the first four lines of the poem:

其八¹⁰⁷

Poem VIII¹⁰⁸

- 1 昆吾御宿自逶迤，At Kunwu Hill the Yusu Brook winds around and away,¹⁰⁹
- 2 紫閣峯陰入漢陂。where the shadow of Purple Tower's crest falls into Lake Meipi.¹¹⁰
- 3 紅豆啄餘鸚鵡粒，Sweet-smelling rice,¹¹¹ pecked the last, for parrots, the grains;
- 4 碧梧棲老鳳凰枝。sapphire tung trees, perch of old, the phoenix's branches.

末一首，乃其眷戀京華之至也。前解極言長安風土之樂。昆吾，地名，有亭。御宿，川名，有苑。漢武帝宿于此，故曰御宿。漢陂，魚甚美，因以為名，在紫閣峯之陰。遊漢陂者，必從昆吾、御宿經過，「紫閣峯陰」，因漢陂而及之也。

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *DSJ*, 185-186.

¹⁰⁸ Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 359, 361.

¹⁰⁹ Kunwu Hill and Yusu Brook are both in the imperial Shanglin Park (*Shanglin Yuan* 上林苑) that Emperor Wu of Han built. See *DSXZ*, 1497.

¹¹⁰ Purple Tower's crest is part of South Mountains. Lake Meipi, to refer to Owen, is "at the edge of South Mountains southwest of the capital, was a popular place for excursions." Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 414.

¹¹¹ Instead of "red beans" (*hongdou* 紅豆) that Jin Shengtan refers to, Owen's translation "sweet-smelling rice" is based on *xiangdao* 香稻. Other variant readings include *hongdao* 紅稻 and *hongfan* 紅飯, both could be translated as "red rice" (*dao* 稻 is more like rice stalks whereas *fan* 飯 usually means cooked rice). Ye Jiaying in her annotation considers *xiangdao* 香稻 as the most correct reading. See Ye, *jishuo*, 484-485.

先生年老，浪跡夔州，意在歸隱。因昔嘗同岑參兄弟遊漢陂，經昆吾、御宿，喜其風土之良，故切切念之，特掛筆端耳。三四句法奇甚。畜鸚鵡者，必以紅豆飼之，先生自喻不苟食也。啄之而有餘，此真豐衣足食之所矣。黃帝即位，鳳集東園，棲梧樹，終身不去，先生自喻不苟棲也。棲之而至老，此又安居樂業之鄉矣。可見長安盛時，且不必說到天子公侯極意遊玩，乃至布衣窮居，儘足自適有如此也。¹¹²

In the last poem, the Master's attachment to the capital reaches the maximum.

The first four lines elaborate upon the pleasures of the local customs in Chang'an. Kunwu was a name of a land and it had pavilions. Yusu was a name of a river and there was an imperial park there. Emperor Wu of Han used to "reside" (*su* 宿) there, thus [the river] was called "Yusu."¹¹³ In Lake Meipi, fish were delicious (*mei*), hence the name. [Lake Meipi] was shrouded in the shadow of Purple Tower's crest. Those who traveled to Meipi must pass through Kunwu and Yusu. "Shadow of Purple Tower's crest" [in Line 2] was approached through Meipi. The Master in his old age was wandering in Kuizhou, with the intention of secluding from the world. In the past, [the Master] once had a tour to Lake Meipi with Cen Shen and his brother. [He] passed through Kunwu and Yusu and liked the fine local customs there. Therefore [he] missed Lake Meipi deeply and especially wrote about it in the poem.

Lines 3-4 have a very unusual structure. Those who raised parrots would feed them with red beans. The Master was implying that he would not eat just any food. [The parrots] pecked and there were beans left. This truly was a place that had ample food and clothing. When the Yellow Emperor took the reign, phoenix had resided in the eastern park, perched on the parasol tree, not going anywhere for the rest of its life.¹¹⁴ The Master was implying that he would not take just any shelter. [The phoenix] perched on the tree until it got old. So this was also a land [where people could] live and work with contentment. From this can be seen Chang'an in its time of prosperity. There is no need to speak of the emperor or the noblemen on their pleasure outings, for even a humble man dwelling apart would have everything needed for his satisfaction.

【別批】

此解與「玉露凋傷楓樹林」句命意相同，蓋極寫秋之可興也。漢陂之旁，則有紫閣峯。紫閣峯之前，則有昆吾、御宿逶迤之逕。值此白露既零，楓葉鮮妍之際，自昆吾、御宿，逶迤而前，漾然漢陂，峯陰澄潔，誠有令人不知興之何自起者！況鸚鵡啄餘，當此衣食豐盈之盛；鳳凰棲老，又承莫安可久之基。其足之蹈、手之舞，又寧有涯量哉！¹¹⁵

Other Commentary

¹¹² *DSJ*, 186.

¹¹³ *Yu* 御 in Chinese culture is usually associated with an emperor.

¹¹⁴ This interpretation is from *Shuo Yuan* 說苑, in which it says "when the Yellow Emperor took the reign, phoenix had resided in the eastern park, perched on the Emperor's parasol tree, not going anywhere for the rest of its life" 黃帝即位，鳳集東園，棲帝梧樹，終身不去。See *DSXZ*, 1498.

¹¹⁵ *DSJ*, 196.

The first four lines share the same proposition with “Jade-white dew withers and harms forests of maple trees” [line 1 in Poem I]: to depict autumn’s evocativeness (*xing*) with full intensity.

By the side of Lake Meipi, there was Purple Tower’s crest. In front of Purple Tower’s crest, there were winding paths as Kunwu and Yusu. At this time, jade-white dew had fallen and maple leaves were shining bright. To “wind forward” from Kunwu and Yusu, Lake Meipi was rippling and the shadow of the Purple Tower’s crest looked transparent, truly making people not know where the evocation (*xing*) came from!

In addition, parrots pecked beans and there was left-over, at a time when clothing and food were abundant; phoenix perched [on the parasol tree] until it got old, at a time when a foundation that could endure was laid. Waving the hands in joy, stamping the feet in joy, wasn’t there a limit of it!

Jin Shengtan concludes that in Poem VIII “the first four lines elaborate upon the pleasures of the local customs in Chang’an” 前解極言長安風土之樂. In lines 1-2, Du Fu mostly gives a string of place names. Jin Shengtan in the commentary further provides a little details of each place. When he explains why Lake Meipi is given such a name, he tells us that the fish in the lake is delicious. This bit of detail about natural produce is never mentioned by other annotators,¹¹⁶ yet it testifies to the fact that Chang’an is a place with fine local customs. Jin Shengtan also mentions Du Fu’s tour with the Cen brothers. When he says that Du Fu “missed Lake Meipi deeply and especially wrote about it in the poem,” he might also be indicating the simple pleasures such as the delicious fish Du Fu once enjoyed there.

Lines 3-4 specify the prosperous scenes. Two of Jin Shengtan’s comments however, look particularly peculiar – “The Master was implying that he would not eat just any food” 先生自喻不苟食也 and “the Master was implying that he would not take just any shelter” 先生自喻不苟棲也. Ye Jiaying even considers the comments as “forced and far-fetched interpretation and completely without any merits” 穿鑿附會之言，全無足取.¹¹⁷ Indeed, these two comments do not seem to be compatible with other descriptions of prosperity and abundance. But if we relate

¹¹⁶ For other annotators’ comments on lines 1-2, see Ye, *jishuo*, 491-503.

¹¹⁷ Ye, *jishuo*, 510.

them to the thematic motif of Du Fu's longing for the capital, we can make the guess that Jin Shengtan is suggesting only the capital city suffices to be Du Fu's shelter. The uniqueness of the capital lies in not just the fact that it had witnessed cataclysm and hence been able to stir traumatic feelings in Du Fu, but also the fact that it is the very place where Du Fu had always yearned to have his ambition achieved. The west pavilion in Kuizhou is only a temporary shelter. Jin Shengtan has problematized the prosperous scenes in lines 3-4 and dramatized the image of Du Fu. He is again trying to bring out the restless and unsettled side of Du Fu.

Let us now move on to Jin Shengtan's commentary on the second half of the poem:

5 佳人拾翠春相問, Fair maidens gathered kingfisher plumes, as gentle gifts in spring,
6 仙侶同舟晚更移。sharing a boat, undying companions moved further on that evening.
7 綵筆昔曾干氣象, My colored brush in former outings ventured upon the atmosphere,
8 白頭吟望苦低垂。now white-haired, I sing and gaze, head hanging in bitterness.

後解從上轉下，轉到今日大曆元年丙午秋作此秋興詩。以結出吟望之苦也。言當日昆吾、御宿、漢陂之間，陸有為陸，水有為水。「佳人拾翠」則於陸，「仙侶同舟」則於水，亦既窮極水陸之興矣。佳人與美人、麗人不同，從上至下，從下至上，節節看去，無有不佳，曰佳人。巧笑美目，胡天胡帝，曰美人。彼此爭妍，相去不遠，曰麗人。「仙侶」，如李、郭同載，望若神仙是也。「春相問」、「晚更移」，着一「春」字、「晚」字，乃反擊「秋」字。「相問」、「更移」，乃暗提「興」字。五六二句，正欲轉到今日作秋興詩也。「綵筆昔曾幹氣象」，先生曾於蓬萊宮獻三賦，干動龍顏。雖實有此事，然此處提出，非自誇張，不過借作轉語，以反襯出「白頭吟望」七字來。言此天涯窮老，望京華如在天上。既不見有拾翠之人，亦復無有同舟之侶。白頭淪落，侘傺無聊，徒屈從前干氣象之筆，以作此苦殺皇天之詩，即何能禁淚之淫淫下哉？「吟」，吟秋興。「望」，望京華。一頭吟，一頭望；一頭望，又一頭吟。于是頭低到膝，淚垂至頤，其苦有不可勝言者。

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The latter section [lines 5-8] turns from the past to the present day. In the autumn of Bingwu of the first year of Dali period,¹¹⁹ the "Qiuxing" series was composed. So that the bitterness of "sing and gaze" [in line 8] can be brought out.

It is said that in the old days, between Kunwu, Yusu and Meipi, there were land and water. "Fair maidens gathered kingfisher plumes" [in line 5] took place on the land

¹¹⁸ *DSJ*, 186-187.

¹¹⁹ Bingwu 丙午 is a traditional Chinese way to count the year, it refers to the year 766. Dali 大曆 refers to the regnal period 766-779 of Emperor Daizong of Tang, who reigned from 762 to 779.

whereas “undying companions shared a boat” [in line 6] took place in the water, exploiting fully the evocation (*xing*) from both water and land. “Fair maidens” (*jiaren* 佳人) [in line 5] is different from *meiren* or *liren*.¹²⁰ From top to bottom, from bottom to top, to look at her from every angle, there is nowhere imperfect, that is called “*jiaren*.” To give a sweet smile with a pair of beautiful eyes, taking advantage of the gods and emperors, that is called “*meiren*.” To compete with others on beauty but the beauty is not far from each other, that is called “*liren*.” “Undying companions” [in line 6] are like Li and Guo sailing on the same boat, like immortals when looked at from afar.¹²¹ In “as gentle gifts in spring” [line 5] and “moved further on that evening” [line 6], the word “spring” and the word “evening” work as a counterattack to the word “autumn.” “As gentle gifts” and “moved further” have the implication of *xing* 興. Lines 5-6 are about to turn to today’s composition of the “*Qixing*” series.

“My colored brush in former outings ventured upon the atmosphere” [line 7] alludes that the Master once offered three poetic expositions (*fu*) at Peng-lai Palace and his talent moved the emperor.¹²² Although it was the case, [the Master] brought it up here not for exaggeration, but to use it to turn to “now white-haired, I sing and gaze, head hanging in bitterness” [line 8]. [The Master] was saying he was in the edge of the world, poor and old. [He] gazed towards the capital, it was as if [the capital] was far away in the sky. He did not see any beauties “gathering kingfisher plumes,” nor were there any “companions sharing a boat.” White-haired, he looked forlorn; dejected, he had no one to depend upon. [He could] only take the brush that once “ventured upon the atmosphere” to compose this poem that had deeply distressed the heaven. How could he keep the tears from flowing down? “Sing” [in line 8] is singing the “*Qixing*” poems; “gaze” [in line 8] is gazing at the capital. [The Master was] singing while [he was] gazing; [he was] gazing while [he was] singing. Then [his] head lowered to the knee, tears rolled down [his] cheeks. The bitterness was beyond description.

【別批】

五言佳人則拾翠尋芳，女子尚有同情。六言晚移則仙侶相從，入夜還須秉燭。揮毫落紙，筆走雲烟，矢口成章，上干氣象，所固宜也。却悄悄下一「昔」字，便令兩解七句都成鬼哭，直逼出「白頭吟望苦低垂」七字來，總結如上八首十六解六十三句四百四十一字。手舞足蹈了半日，却是瓦解冰消，烟盡灰燼，更無處可出鼻孔息也！

「白頭」已是傷心，白頭而「低垂」更傷心。以白頭而「吟」、而「望」、而「苦」、而到底「低垂」，此傷心之所以徹骨也！

¹²⁰ The more straightforward translation of *jiaren* 佳人 is beauties or beautiful girls. *Meiren* 美人 and *liren* 麗人 have the similar meaning.

¹²¹ Li refers to Li Ying 李膺, a governor in Eastern Han. Guo refers to Guo Tai 郭泰, an Eastern Han scholar. According to “Biography of Guo Tai” (*Guo Tai zhuan* 郭泰傳) in *Hou Han shu*, “Guo Tai and Li Ying sailed on the same boat, all the guests looked at them at a distance and thought they were immortals” 泰與李膺同舟而濟，衆賓望之，以為神仙焉。See *DSJ*, 189, the eighth note.

¹²² In the tenth year of the Tianbao period [i.e. 751] during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, Du Fu offered “Three Grand Poetic Expositions of Rites” (*San da li fu* 三大禮賦) at the court. See *DSXZ*, 2103.

八首十六解詩，皆從「吟望苦」三字中吟出來、望出來、苦出來。若其「低垂」，則未作此詩之前，固如此低垂；既作此詩之後，到底亦只如此低垂也。

試看八首詩，是一首，還是八首？增得一首否？減得一首否？增得一句、減得一句否？試看八首詩，是分解的，還是不分的？是聖歎勉強穿鑿否？錦心繡口才子，當共證之。

詩本以八句為律，聖歎何得強為之分解？須知聖歎不是好肉生瘡，正是對病發藥。唐制八句，原只二句起，二句承，二句轉，二句合，為一定之律。徒以前後二聯可以不拘，而中四句必以屬對工緻為選。因而後人互相沿習，徒競纖巧，無關義旨。至近代作詩，竟以中四句為身，而頭上倒裝兩句為起，尾上再添兩句為結。

夫人莫不幼而聞，長而以為固然。自提筆搖頭，初學吟哦，以及倨坐撚髭，自雄詩伯，無不以為此斷斷不易之體。

抑豈知三四之專承一二，而一二用意高拔，比三四較嚴；五六轉出七八，而七八含蓄淵深，比五六更切。寧可以起結二字抹却古人無數心血耶？聖歎所以不辭饒舌，特為分解。罪我者謂本是一詩，如何分為二解？知我者謂聖歎之分解，解分而詩合。世人之濶解，解合而詩分。

解分前後，而一氣混行；詩分起結，而臃腫累贅。

蓋有不得不蒙譏力諍者！千載而下，或能見諒也。附識于此。¹²³

Other Commentary

Line 5 describes fair maidens gathering kingfisher plumes and seeking for flowers. Women had their compassion. Line 6 describes moving further in the evening with undying companions. When night fell, candles were brought out to prolong the pleasure. [The Master] wielded the brush and scribbled on the paper. The brush moved like cloud and mist, in an instant a poem was completed. [The Master's brush] ventured upon the atmosphere, as it should be. Yet "former" was stealthily slipped into the line, making Lines 1 through 7 wail like ghosts, forcing out "now white-haired, I sing and gaze, head hanging in bitterness" [line 8] which summed up the above eight poems in sixteen sections with sixty-three lines and four hundred and forty-one characters. [The Master] danced with hands and feet [i.e. a kenning for "writing poetry"] for so long, yet in the end tiles cracked and ice thawed, mist gone and only ashes left, there was no place where [the Master] could catch a breath!¹²⁴

"White-haired" was already heart-breaking, white-haired and "head hanging" was even more heart-breaking. In white hair, [the Master] would "sing" and "gaze" and [feel] "bitterness" and in the end, "head hanging." This is why the heart-break was to the bone!

The eight poems in sixteen sections all derive from "sing," "gaze" and "bitterness." As to "head hanging," before [the Master] composed this poem, [he] already hung his head like this. After [he] composed this poem, he still had to hang his head like this.

Look at the eight poems. Are they one poem, or eight poems? [Can we] add one more poem or not? [Can we] leave out one poem or not? [Can we] add one more line or not? [Can we] leave out one line or not? Look at the eight poems, are they dissectable or

¹²³ *DSJ*, 196-197.

¹²⁴ The two phrases "tiles cracked and ice thawed" (*wajie bingxiao* 瓦解冰消) and "mist gone and only ashes left" (*yanjin huijin* 烟盡灰燼) both describe a state of falling apart and collapse.

not? Am I giving some strained and far-fetched interpretations or not? Those talents with a brocaded heart and an embroidered mouth will be the judge.¹²⁵

“Since a [Regulated Verse] poem originally took eight lines as its rule, how can I analyze it by forcibly dividing it into two parts? It should be known that I am not trying to grow an ulcer on a piece of wholesome meat: I am simply suiting the remedy to the disease. When the Tang poets prescribed eight lines [for the Regulated Verse], it originally meant to take two lines as “beginning” (*qi*), two lines as “continuation” (*cheng*), two lines as “shift in meaning” (*zhuan*), and two lines as “summation” (*he*). This is a fixed rule. Then [some Tang poets] simply made the first and last couplets metrically more flexible, while regarding it a merit to have two fine antithetical couplets in the middle. Consequently, later poets began to follow the set pattern and vainly to compete for what is fine and delicate, while ignoring the main meaning [of the poem]. When people write poetry of late, they go so far as to take the middle four lines to be the main body of the poem, and then insert two lines at the front as the beginning and add two lines to the end as the conclusion.”¹²⁶

People in their childhood hear [the set pattern]. After they grow up, they take it for granted. From the day they pick up the pen and start learning to chant a poem, till they sit square, twirl the beard and claim to be the senior of poetry, they simply regard it as an absolutely unchangeable pattern.

“How would they know that lines three and four solely continue lines one and two, and that the meaning of the latter is high and lofty and [their organization] stricter than the former; and that lines five and six yield lines seven and eight, and that the latter are subtle and deep and yet more moving than the former? How can they use the two words “beginning” and “conclusion” to obliterate the countless efforts of the ancients? For this reason, I do not mind being quarrelsome, or to analyze a poem by dividing it [into two parts]. Those who blame me say that a poem is originally a single entity, so how can it be split into two sections? But those who know me say that in my analysis of a poem, when divided into sections, the poem actually becomes one; and that in the murky analysis of others, when the sections are put together, the poem actually splits apart.”¹²⁷

To divide a poem into former section and latter section, yet there is coherent air streaming from beginning to end. To split a poem with beginning and conclusion, then it becomes redundant and cumbersome.

“This is why I cannot but argue earnestly even at the risk of being ridiculed. A thousand years later my effort may be appreciated.”¹²⁸

Three points stand out in Jin Shengtan’s particularly long commentary on the latter section. The first is that in his reading of lines 5-6, he has embellished these two lines with

¹²⁵ The phrase “brocaded heart and embroidered mouth” (*jinxin xiukou* 錦心繡口) is usually used to describe an elegant and refined literary style or polished and flowery literary writing. Here they are Jin Shengtan’s ideal peers, skilled literary interpreters.

¹²⁶ This paragraph of translation [i.e. from 詩本以八句為律 to 尾上再添兩句為結 in the Chinese text] is borrowed from John Ching-yu Wang, *Chin Sheng-t’an*, 106-107. I’ve changed the Wade-Giles transcriptions to *pinyin*.

¹²⁷ This paragraph [i.e. from 抑豈知三四之專承一二 to 解合而詩分] is also borrowed from Wang, *Chin Sheng-t’an*, 107.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

additional details, even to a degree of exaggeration. He spends quite a few words explaining how *jiaren* 佳人 is different from *meiren* 美人 and *liren* 麗人. He points out that “the word ‘spring’ (*chun* 春) and the word ‘evening’ (*wan* 晚) work as a counterattack to the word ‘autumn’ (*qiu* 秋).” The fastidiousness about words on one hand is Jin Shengtan’s way to confirm Du Fu’s superb mastery over diction. On the other hand, Jin Shengtan is also indirectly showing off his incisiveness.

The second point is that Jin Shengtan has concentrated on the three words “sing” (*yin* 吟), “gaze” (*wang* 望) and “bitterness” (*ku* 苦) in line 8 to give an ultimate portrait of Du Fu. The weary whitish hue and lowering posture in line 8 stands in contrast to the bright and uplifting line 7. Jin Shengtan specifically mentions the time Du Fu composed expositions at Penglai Palace in his comments on line 7. Later in “Other Commentary,” Jin Shengtan uses “danced with hands and feet” 手舞足蹈 as a kenning for Du Fu composing and chanting the “*Qiuxing*” series. The imagery of dancing with hands and feet could also refer to the excitement from those days when Du Fu’s talent was recognized. However, now the scene turns into “yet tiles cracked and ice thawed, mist gone and only ashes left, there was no place where [the Master] could catch a breath!” Glorious past is written only to bring out the opposite present. “*Qiuxing*” ends with the Master’s “head hanging in bitterness.” This posture symbolizes the cease of singing (*yin*) and gazing (*wang*). It also symbolizes a resolution of the conflict-evoking dramatization. Jin Shengtan lays aside the unsettling and restless part and portrays Du Fu’s final image as a stabilized introspective one.

The third point can be found in the last part of the commentary, in which Jin Shengtan no longer centers upon the “*Qiuxing*” series, but starts to defend his “dissection” (*fenjie*) approach. He puts himself in a position between the ancient (*guren* 古人, in this case Du Fu) and the

“talents with a brocaded heart and an embroidered mouth” (*jinxinxiukou caizi* 錦心繡口才子) from the later generation. He regards himself as the medium for getting Du Fu’s message across. This attitude of Jin Shengtān is frequently expressed in his commentaries on Du Fu’s poetry. For instance, in the commentary on “To Observe a Horse Painting by General Cao at Secretary Wei Feng’s Residence” (“Wei Feng Lushi zhai guan Cao Jiangjun huamatu ge” 韋諷錄事宅觀曹將軍畫馬圖歌),¹²⁹ Jin Shengtān says “The Master has embroidered a pair of *yuanyang*, and I, Shengtān, have handed over the golden needle” 先生既繡出鴛鴦，聖歎又金針盡度 and “I wrote these words to the later generation and they should learn it” 寄語後人，善須學去也。¹³⁰ In other words, Jin Shengtān is indicating that his commentary is the golden needle here.

When Jin Shengtān writes commentaries on the eight poems, he is also differentiating his comments from Du Fu’s poems. The differentiation is reflected both from the content and the style, i.e. what Jin Shengtān has said and how he says it. By concentrating on certain images and embellishing the narrative with additional details, Jin Shengtān has evoked a series of conflicts and displayed a dramatized image of Du Fu. The way Jin Shengtān presents his interpretation is also to some extent dramatized as Jin Shengtān has invested himself with a certain character when he shows up as the “incisive Shengtān” that speaks for Master Du. The differentiation provides Jin Shengtān a way to parallelize and identify with Du Fu, as he repeatedly claims in the commentaries that he is the one who truly sees through Du Fu’s poems. In this sense, the

¹²⁹ For the Chinese text, see *DSXJ*, 1152.

¹³⁰ For the commentary, see *DSJ*, 140. *Yuanyang* refers to mandarin ducks. In Chinese culture, a pair of mandarin ducks is the symbol of conjugal love. Here *yuanyang* refers to the fine poetry Du Fu wrote. Golden needle refers to the method or technique in writing poetry. Jin Shengtān’s words on *yuanyang* and golden needle very likely originate from one of Yuan Haowen’s 元好問 (1190-1257) poems, in which Yuan writes, “*Yuanyang* have been embroidered, you can just present them to the audience, yet the golden needle should not be passed to others” 鴛鴦繡了從教看，莫把金針度與人。See Zhong Xing, ed., *Yuan Haowen shiwen xuanzhu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 11.

differentiation has become another kind of assimilation, which makes Jin Shengtan synchronize with Du Fu.

Chapter Two Jin Shengtan's Imitation of Du Fu

Although Jin Shengtan is best known for his work on the commentary spectrum, he also composed a considerable amount of poems. His poem collection is titled *Chenyin lou shixuan* 沉吟樓詩選 (*Selected Poems of the Tower of Intonation*).¹³¹ In this collection, over 380 poems are included, among which 25 are indicated as imitations of Du Fu.¹³²

In his preface to *Chenyin lou shixuan*, the Qing scholar Li Chonghua 李重華 (1682 – 1755) made some brief remarks about Jin Shengtan's interpretation and imitation of Du Fu:

若少陵詩，於唐人中言之加詳，意其理解獨運。及見《沉吟樓遺詩》若干篇，乃知先生於少陵，寢卧言笑，才彌高而用心蓋彌篤也。¹³³

As to Du Fu's poetry, [Jin Shengtan] particularly singled him out from the Tang poets and provided more detailed interpretation. I thought his understanding is very unique and inventive. It was not until I saw some poems from the *Chenyin lou* collection that I realized Jin Shengtan had gone deep into the way Du Fu slept, rested, talked and laughed. His talent is extraordinary and his intent is even more sincere.

In *Changjing Tang Du shi jie*, Jin Chang also had a short comment regarding Jin Shengtan's imitation of Du Fu:

¹³¹ The English translation of the title is borrowed from Jason Chia-sheng Wang, "Chin Sheng-t'an," in William H. Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 293. Poems in *Chenyin lou shixuan* were not collected by Jin Chang (Jin Shengtan's cousin). Although in the collection of Jin Shengtan's commentaries on Du Fu's poetry, Jin Chang did include some of Jin Shengtan's imitations of Du Fu. The reason Jin Chang did not present all the poems Jin Shengtan wrote is very likely to be the political situation at that time and some of Jin Shengtan's poems could be very controversial. The poems in *Chenyin lou shixuan* were instead collected and compiled by two persons, one is the Qing scholar Liu Xianting 劉獻廷 (1648-1695), the other is Jin Shengtan's son-in-law Shen Liushu 沈六書. It is believed that more poems are still missing. For related information, see the publication notes and Li Chonghua's preface in Liu Xianting, ed., *Chenyin lou shixuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubenshe, 1979). See also Zhou Xishan, "Jin Shengtan zhumu lueshu," *Suzhou Daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 3 (1986): 59-60.

¹³² In the 25 imitations of Du Fu, 19 poems are indicated as "Imitating Du Shaoling" (*Ni Du Shaoling* 擬杜少陵), 4 poems as "Imitating Du" (*Ni Du* 擬杜), 2 poems as "Borrowing from Du" (*Jie Du* 借杜). For details, see *Chenyin lou shixuan* (CYLSX hereafter), 28-34, 39, 74, 89, 123-124, 151.

¹³³ For the complete preface, see CYLSX, 1-2. Since the version from Shanghai guji publisher is a photographic reproduction of a Qing manuscript and there is no punctuation, I have also consulted the edited version *Jin Shengtan quanji* (JSTQJ).

唱經詩不一格，總之出入四唐，淵涵彼土，而要其大致，實以老杜為歸。茲附刻借杜詩數章，豈惟虎賁貌似而已。¹³⁴

Changjing's [i.e. Jin Shengtan] poems have no set style. In general, they cover the whole range of the fourfold periodization of Tang poetry [i.e. early Tang, high Tang, middle Tang and late Tang], encompassing it all. But on the whole, they could truly be traced back to Du Fu's poetry. Here I attach some imitations of Du Fu.¹³⁵ Who would say he has only imitated the surface?

Li Chonghua and Jin Chang confirmed the profound impact Du Fu had upon Jin Shengtan and they both spoke highly of Jin Shengtan's imitations. Their compliments suggest that Jin Shengtan had imitated not just the pattern or the style of Du Fu's poetry, but rather, some intrinsic essence of Du Fu's poetry. This prompts us to think what the nature of Jin Shengtan's imitation is. Similar to commentary, imitation is another form of literary interpretation of the source text. But unlike commentary, in which the commentator's role is mainly a reader, imitation is a more brutal confrontation with the source text in that the commentator becomes a creator and he rewrites the source text.

In this chapter, I will continue the study of Jin Shengtan's engagement with Du Fu's poetry by looking at seven of his imitations. In order to facilitate the discussion, following each source poem by Du Fu, I will attach a brief annotation from Qiu Zhao'ao which summarizes the gist and structure of Du Fu's poem. I will especially situate the imitations in a context contemporary with Jin Shengtan and explore how this context influences him to make his voice sound by means of Du Fu's poetry. The first section is an introduction of the social-political background to Jin Shengtan's poetic compositions. The second section looks at Jin Shengtan's representation of Du Fu's image through some poems on animals. The third section centers upon some poems

¹³⁴ *DSJ*, 276.

¹³⁵ Jin Chang's original words in Chinese are "poems borrowing from Du" (*jie Du shi* 借杜詩). As previously noted, Jin Shengtan only marked two poems as "borrowing from Du." Jin Chang was referring to Jin Shengtan's imitations of Du Fu in general in his remark.

specifically written as a response to a time of chaos. The act of imitating requires Jin Shengtan to synchronize with Du Fu, completely or partially. However, as we will see in the following two sections, Jin Shengtan continues to differentiate himself from Du Fu. The differentiation also imposes paradox and ambiguity on the synchronization. It will be observed how differentiation and synchronization have achieved a state of coexistence within the imitation poems.

The Background to Jin Shengtan's Poetic Compositions

The downfall of the Ming dynasty and the following Qing conquest that took place in 1644 is crucial to our understanding of Jin Shengtan's poetic compositions. As Chao-ying Fang has observed, "The career of Chin Jen-jui [i.e. Jin Shengtan] can be understood only in the light of the social and political background of his day. The land was overrun with bandits, the literati spent their energies in the formation of rival factions, and the dynasty was losing its sovereignty through the Manchu invasion."¹³⁶ Although 1644 is generally regarded as the time of the transition from Ming to Qing, the Ming remnant regime [i.e. the Southern Ming] lasted in mainland China until 1662. Suzhou 蘇州, the city Jin Shengtan resided in, was in the Jiangnan region where the anti-Qing activities were very intense.¹³⁷ Another fact worth noticing is that Jin Shengtan was born in the late years of the Wanli 萬曆 (1563-1620) reign, a period that witnessed significant signs of the decline of the empire.¹³⁸ Therefore, it can be concluded that Jin Shengtan had lived his entire life under the influence of the struggling of the Ming dynasty, from the beginning of its deterioration to the eventual demise of the regime.

¹³⁶ See Chao-ying Fang, "Chin jen-jui," in Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing period, 1644-1912* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1943), 164. "Chin jen-jui" 金人瑞 [i.e. "Jin Renrui" in *pinyin*] is Jin Shengtan's former name.

¹³⁷ Jiangnan 江南 in a geographic sense usually refers to the Yangtze River Delta area. For more information of the Qing conquest of the Jiangnan region and for a careful discussion on the Southern Ming, see Lynn A. Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644-1662* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

¹³⁸ For a detailed account of the Wanli reign and the history of Ming prior to 1644, see Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Within the context of late Ming, it is not hard to see why Jin Shengtan has prioritized Du Fu over other poets. As Stephen Owen states, “Du Fu, the ‘poet-historian,’ was a powerful model, and numerous poems bear moving witness both to particular incidents in the Qing conquest and to the spirit of resistance.”¹³⁹ Nevertheless, in addition to the concerns about the political situation and Du Fu’s superior writing technique, would it be possible that Jin Shengtan is also suggesting a desire for recognition and achievement via Du Fu, as he did in his commentaries on the “Qiuxing” series? To answer this question, we need to take a look at Jin Shengtan’s attitude towards the Ming-Qing transition.

The following is a brief account of Jin Shengtan’s activities after the fall of Ming:

革鼎後，絕意仕進。¹⁴⁰

After the Ming-Qing Cataclysm, [Jin Shengtan] abandoned the intention of pursuing an official career.

明亡後，終日兀坐，以讀書著述為務。¹⁴¹

After Ming was conquered, [Jin Shengtan] sat up straight all day long, devoting himself to reading and writing.

初，明之亡也，吳下講學立社之風猶盛，各立門戶，互相推排。人瑞以驚才絕艷，遨遊其間。¹⁴²

At that time, Ming was conquered. In the Wu area [i.e. Suzhou prefecture], the practice of giving lectures and founding literary societies was particularly prevalent. Different societies and schools were founded and they jostled against each other. Renrui [i.e. Jin Shengtan] with his spectacular talent roamed freely among them.

Jin Shengtan was never an anti-Qing activist. He decided to withdraw himself from a world in a new order. Yet despite the fact that he neither involved himself in resisting Qing government nor

¹³⁹ Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 1128.

¹⁴⁰ *DSJ*, 278. See “The Biography of Jin Shengtan” 金聖歎先生傳 by Liao Yan 廖燕 from his *Ershiqi song Tang wenji* 二十七松堂文集 (*Writings from the Study of Twenty-seven Pine Trees*).

¹⁴¹ *DSJ*, 279. See the entry “Jin Renrui” 金人瑞 by Cai Mianyin 蔡丐因 from *Qingdai qibai mingren zhuan* 清代七百人傳 (*Biographies of Seven Hundred Notables of the Qing*).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 281.

did he lean towards the new regime, being an active member in those literary societies, he still exposed himself to political and cultural currents. As Wai-ye Li points out, “many remnant subjects of the Ming were involved in loyalist resistance, commented on social ills, debated moral and philosophical questions, or were deeply concerned with the definition and transmission of tradition.”¹⁴³ However, in Jin Shengtan’s late years, he tended to show identification with the Qing government.

To look at Jin Shengtan’s attitude to the Qing emperor, we may read the following prefatory notes he wrote for one of his poem series:

順治庚子正月，邵子蘭雪從都門歸，口述皇上見某批才子書，諭詞臣「此是古文高手，莫以時文眼看他」等語，家兄長文具為某道。某感而淚下，因北向叩首敬賦。
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In the first month of the Gengzi year [i.e. 1660] during the reign of Emperor Shunzhi, Shao Lanxue returned from the capital.¹⁴⁵ He said that the emperor saw my commentaries on the works of genius and told his ministers these words, “this is a master-hand of classical writing, do not size him up with the eye of eight-legged essays.” My cousin Zhangwen [i.e. Jin Chang] let me know this word by word. I was so grateful that I shed tears. I thus faced towards north, kowtowed and I offered the poems respectfully.

Despite Jin Shengtan’s eccentricity and his contempt for social conventions, the Confucian urge in him never died away. As John Ching-yu Wang states, “When he undertook to annotate Tu Fu’s [Du Fu] poetry in the last years of his life, he admired Tu Fu [Du Fu] not only as a great poet, but also as a conscientious and loyal minister in the best tradition of Confucian statesmanship.”¹⁴⁶ However, we can sense from the above notes that Jin Shengtan’s feeling of

¹⁴³ See Wai-ye Li’s introduction in Wilt L. Idema, Wai-ye Li and Ellen Widmer, eds., *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 8.

¹⁴⁴ *CYLSX*, 120. See also *JSTQJ*, 858. These serve as a short preface to Jin Shengtan’s poem series “Chungan bashou” 春感八首 (“Spring Thoughts Eight Poems”).

¹⁴⁵ Shao Lanxue 邵蘭雪 is Jin Shengtan’s friend. See Lu Lin, *Jin Shengtan shishi yanjiu*, 510.

¹⁴⁶ John Ching-yu Wang, *Chin Sheng-t’an*, 37.

identification very likely came less out of any utilitarian political concerns than an appreciation for great talent being recognized.

Impersonation of Animals and the Alternative Image of Du Fu

In Chapter One, we discussed Jin Shengtan's dramatization of Du Fu through some specific images such as "fishermen," "swallows" and "fish and dragons." In this section, we will have a further study of Jin Shengtan's representation of Du Fu's image through some individual poems specifically pertaining to animal images.

Three of Du Fu's poems will be discussed. The first poem features "muntjac," a deer-like animal. According to *The Amplification of Roots and Herbs* (*Bencao yanyi* 本草衍義), a Chinese materia medica work quoted by Qiu Zhao'ao, muntjacs "mostly live deep in the mountains and they could make a sound similar to the clash of cymbals" 山深僻處頗多，其聲如擊破鉢。¹⁴⁷ This description suggests two features of the muntjac that a poet might make use of to make an allusion – a muntjac is hidden from view, but its sound could get itself noticed.

The following is Du Fu's "The Muntjac" (*Ji* 麋):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>麋¹⁴⁸</p> <p>1 永與清溪別，</p> <p>2 蒙將玉饌俱。</p> <p>3 無才逐仙隱，</p> <p>4 不敢恨庖厨。</p> <p>5 亂世輕全物，</p> <p>6 微聲及禍樞。</p> <p>7 衣冠兼盜賊，</p> <p>8 饕餮用斯須。</p> | <p>The Muntjac¹⁴⁹</p> <p>Permanently, [I] said farewell to the limpid brook.</p> <p>[I] am indebted for being placed with other sumptuous food.</p> <p>Lacking the talent to pursue an immortal recluse,¹⁵⁰</p> <p>[I] dare not hate the cook.</p> <p>Time of chaos makes light of preserving an animal's life,</p> <p>a soft sound could lead to fatal misfortune.</p> <p>Well-dressed officials also become bandits,</p> <p>wolfing [him] down in a little while.</p> |
|--|---|

¹⁴⁷ DSXZ, 1533.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ For another translation of this poem, See Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 389.

¹⁵⁰ According to the Daoist hagiography *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳 (*Biographies of Divine Immortals*), one divine recluse turned into a muntjac after a few decades of dedication to Daoism. See the third note in DSXZ, 1533.

詠鹿，歎其不當鳴而鳴也。上四，代鹿寫意，自悔不能見幾遠害，下乃慨世之貪味而殘生者。¹⁵¹

[The poem] writes about the muntjac, sighing that it bleated when it shouldn't. In lines 1-4, [the poet] took the muntjac's place and expressed its inner thoughts, regretting that it was not able to detect the bad omen and stay away from the misfortune. Lines 5-8 lament those in the world who are greedy and slaughtering animals.

In the English translation, I have bracketed the pronouns "I" in the first half of the poem and "him" in line 8 because the voice of the poem is not clearly defined. However, we can assume that the poem, especially the first half is written in the voice of the muntjac, as it suggests in Qiu Zhao'ao annotation above. In lines 5-8, the voice is much more ambiguous as we could read the four lines either as the self-reflection of the muntjac or as an observation from the poet. The rhetorical humility of lines 1-4 makes lines 5-8 seem objective. Du Fu sympathizes with the muntjac, but he does not let the sympathy run wild. He identifies himself with the muntjac. But in the meantime, he keeps his distance from it.

In the previous chapter, we have discussed that Jin Shengtan in his commentaries has evoked the conflict between remoteness and closeness. In his imitation of this poem, he also takes distance into consideration:

鹿 ¹⁵²	The Muntjac
擬杜少陵	Imitating Du Shaoling
1 青谿聞最遠，	In the green gully, the muntjac could be heard from the farthest,
2 未必接華筵。	yet it ought not necessarily reach to a splendid feast.
3 何事烟霞客，	Why is it that a guest from mist and cloud
4 陳身匕箸前。	is being presented in front of the knives and chopsticks?
5 呦呦微不慎，	Bleating bleating the sound, a slight carelessness.
6 濯濯竟難全。	Robust robust the body, it is hard to get preserved.
7 苹草今從長，	Let the duckweed grow!
8 餘生已不還。	for in [my] remaining life, [I] cannot ever return.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² *CYLSX*, 31. See also *JSTQJ*, 800.

Jin Shengtian has made two major changes in his imitation. The first is that his poem is almost fully dedicated to the muntjac. There is no line directly describing the opponent of the muntjac. Despite the absence of the image of a greedy official, the muntjac is still in a position being controlled. In line 1, with the word “heard” (*wen* 聞), Jin Shengtian puts the muntjac in a weak position. The muntjac is being heard and it has been defined as the object of attention from the very beginning. In line 3, Jin Shengtian addresses the muntjac as the “guest from mist and cloud” (*yanxia ke* 烟霞客). Further in line 4, the “guest” appears as a cooked dish “being presented” (*chensheng* 陳身) on the table. Lines 5-6 explain the cause that leads to the muntjac’s misfortune. Lines 7-8 can be read as the muntjac’s declaration. Jin Shengtian ends the poem in the muntjac’s voice with an assertive tone.

The second change is that Jin Shengtian has embellished the narrative with a little suspense. This is in particular reflected from line 2. To understand the suspension, we may take a look at Jin Shengtian’s commentary on this poem, especially the following two comments:

「蒙將」二字，下得滑稽。反若深感其不棄者，言外有玉石俱焚之痛可知。¹⁵³

The two characters *meng* 蒙 *jiang* 將 [in line 2] are used with wit. It is as if the muntjac is deeply grateful for not being abandoned, with the implication that the Master felt the pain from burning the jade and stone together [i.e. the good is destroyed together with the bad].

「微聲及」者，謂不必真正犯難，但使姓名在人齒頰，即當不保，即莊子所謂「以不才終其天年」也。¹⁵⁴

“A soft sound could lead to fatal misfortune” [line 6] is saying that it does not even take an actual move, as long as a person’s name is being talked by people’s mouths, he gets no protection instantly. This is what Zhuangzi implies by saying “because of its worthlessness, [this tree] is able to live out the years Heaven gave it.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ *DSJ*, 207.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ The translation of Zhuangzi’s words is borrowed from Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 209. Zhuangzi was once walking in the mountain and he saw a big lush tree. However, the woodcutter didn’t cut it because the big tree was of no practical value for anything.

The first comment shows that Jin Shengtan has paid attention to the odd “indebted to” (*meng jiang* 蒙將) in line 2. The muntjac is supposed to feel miserable about its dim fate because it “has no talent” (*wucai* 無才) to catch up with the “immortal recluse” (*xianyin* 仙隱) and has to be killed by the “cook” (*paochu* 庖厨), as lines 3-4 tell us. However, Jin Shengtan indicates that the muntjac is probably grateful for not being abandoned. In line 2, “sumptuous food” (*yuzhuan* 玉饌) represents a grand feast the muntjac never expects to be part of. But now, it has reached there and it is a symbol of acceptance and recognition. In the imitation, Jin Shengtan brings out the implication of “indebted to” through the first two words “not necessarily” (*weibi* 未必) in line 2. Despite the fact that the muntjac could bleat loud, the loudness does “not necessarily” take it anywhere. The sound has to be heard. “Soft sound” (*wei sheng* 微聲) in line 6 of Du Fu’s poem is matched by “slight carelessness” (*wei bushen* 微不慎) in the imitation. If without the recognition from the hunter, the sound won’t stir up anything.

The central theme of Du Fu’s poem is that it is hard to remain intact during a time of chaos. Jin Shengtan in the imitation does not set up a clear backdrop. He places emphasis on the muntjac itself and it is an image of a designated muntjac that has been constructed. In Du Fu’s poem, line 3 claims that the muntjac “has no talent.” Jin Shengtan removes the humility and presents the muntjac as a chosen one, a recognized one.

In addition, in the second comment, Jin Shengtan brings up the idea of “worth” or “talent” (*cai* 才), an essential concept in his works. We may read another group of poems on captured animal to further study how Jin Shengtan deals with *cai* 才.

Zhuangzi then said the above words. For the complete anecdote, see the chapter “The Mountain Tree” on pages 209-210.

The following poem by Du Fu features a kind of fish that can be as long as two to five meters:

黃魚¹⁵⁶

The Sturgeon¹⁵⁷

1 日見巴東峽, Each day it is seen in the Badong Gorge,¹⁵⁸

2 黃魚出浪新。sturgeon rolling out fresh from waves.

3 脂膏兼飼犬, Their fat and flesh will also be used to feed dogs,

4 長大不容身。so long and big that they won't be given space to grow up.

5 筒桶相沿久, The custom of catching fish with bamboo and wood has been lasting long,

6 風雷肯為伸。since when are the wind and thunder willing to offer help?¹⁵⁹

7 泥沙卷涎沫, In the mud and sand they roll up, sharing their spittle;

8 回首怪龍鱗。turning their heads, there are amazed at the scaly dragons.

詠黃魚，歎長大而罹患也。上四言取之狼籍，下致哀憫之意，雖欲援救而不能矣。¹⁶⁰

[The poem] writes about the sturgeon, sighing that they were so long and big that they got into trouble. Lines 1-4 talk about how they were taken in a mess. Lines 5-8 express the feeling of pity. Although [the poet] intended to rescue them, he could not find a way to do so.

In this poem, Du Fu is more like an onlooker without any direct involvement in the narrative. He presents the sturgeon fish as if he is drawing a picture of it. Lines 1-2 are a background scene with bright fresh color. In lines 3-4, Du Fu gives a close-up of the appearance of the sturgeon. Meanwhile, with the appearance of the dogs, the color of the picture abruptly turns dark and dull in the second half. The sturgeon in this poem is similar to the tree in Zhuangzi's anecdote in that the fish is likewise too big to be of any practical value. But unlike the tree which gets to live long, the sturgeon is killed instead.

¹⁵⁶ DSXZ, 1535.

¹⁵⁷ For another translation, see Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 391.

¹⁵⁸ Badong is the name of a county which locates at the bank of Yangzi River. It is very likely that Badong Gorge refers to Wu Gorge here since Wu Mountain is within the Badong area.

¹⁵⁹ Regarding this line, Qiu Zhao'ao refers to the Ming scholar Shao Fu's 邵傅 note: "In spring, the water is warm, the carp fish turns into a dragon, then the wind and thunder follow it" 三月浪暖，鯉化為龍，則風雷從之。See DSXZ, 1535. The implication is probably the sturgeon cannot turn into a dragon.

¹⁶⁰ DSXZ, 1535.

Before we turn to Jin Shengtan's imitation, let us first take a look at his commentary, in which he revolves around the question of *cai* 才 (talent). The following few paragraphs are Jin Shengtan's complete commentary on Du Fu's "The Sturgeon":

General comments on the poem:

為兒時，自負大才，不勝侘傺。恰似自古迄今，只我一人是大才，只我一人獨沉屈者。後來頗頗見有此事，始悟古來淹殺豪傑萬萬千千，知有何限？青史所紀，磊磊百十得時肆志人，若取來與淹殺者比較，烏知誰強誰弱？嗟哉痛乎！此先生黃魚詩所以始之以「日見」二字，哭殺天下才子也！¹⁶¹

When I was young, I was conceited and thought I was a great talent. I couldn't bear any frustration. It was like since ancient time till today, only I alone was the great talent, only I alone went unrewarded. Later on I frequently saw such things happen. Then I started to realize that since ancient time thousands of millions of extraordinary people have been buried. Who knows what the limit is?

In the annals of history, there's a cluster of a hundred people who were in luck and able to have their own way. If compared with the buried and dead ones, who would know who's strong and who's weak? Alas, how painful! This is why the Master opened this poem with the words *ri* 日 (each day) and *jian* 見 (see), lamenting all the talents in the world!

Commentary on former section [lines 1-4]:

「日見」，猶言一個也，又是一個也。「出浪新」，「新」字妙。初出時，看他何等氣色，何等意思！可憐後文，竟飼犬不容去也！第三四句寫大才不適小用，便至到處狼籍。蓋先師當日，既有莫究莫殫之用，便會計當，牛羊長，無所不至也。此身本自難容，犬又何罪乎哉？「日見」二字，一氣貫四句一解。¹⁶²

Ri 日 and *jian* 見 are saying that the sturgeon were coming up one after another. "New" (*xin* 新) in line 2 is brilliant. When [the sturgeon] first came out, look how well it looked, how good it appeared! Sadly, later on, they were used to feed the dogs, unfree to go! Lines 3-4 are saying that big talent doesn't suit small use, which leads to the messy scenes everywhere.

Confucius in the past had his unexhausted use, thus he worked as an accountant, and he also took care of cattle and sheep.¹⁶³ There was nothing he hadn't done. The body [of the sturgeon] was hard to get preserved anyway, what sins did the dogs have?

¹⁶¹ *DSJ*, 205.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 205-206.

¹⁶³ According to Zhong Laiyin's note, this allusion is from "Wan Zhang" 萬章 in *Mencius*, in which it says "Confucius used to be a minor official looking after the barn and he said 'just to keep the account clear.' He used to be a minor official looking after the livestock and he said 'just to keep the cattle and sheep healthy and strong'" 孔

The two words *ri* 日 and *jian* 見 permeate the four lines in the former section.

Commentary on latter section [lines 5-8]:

頗聞世間嘗有風雷，會送神龍上天。今日何獨不為黃魚一效神力？嗟乎！事出新奇，則風雷亦肯。沿習既慣，即筒箒相看。安見鄉里小兒，朝朝暮暮，而能物色天子宰相者哉？末二句，不怪泥沙，反怪龍鱗。怪泥沙，猶以龍鱗自負；怪龍鱗，則竟以泥沙自畢也。嗚呼！才子以才而建功垂名，則誠才之為貴。若才子以才而終至於飢餓以死，回首思之，我何遜於屠沽兒而一至於此？真不怪飢餓怪殺有才矣！¹⁶⁴

I often heard in this world once there were wind and thunder that would send the dragon to the heaven. Today, why didn't [wind and thunder] render the sturgeon a divine service? Alas! Out of novelty, wind and thunder would say yes. But since the custom has long been set, then the wind and thunder just ignored them in the bamboo and wood traps. Who had ever seen country bumpkins recognize there could be a prime minister of the emperor among them? They were just so used to seeing him around day and night.

In the last two lines, [the sturgeon] were not amazed at mud and sand, but amazed at the scaly dragons. Were they to be amazed at mud and sand, it would mean that they were still proud as dragons-to-be; when they were amazed at the scaly dragons, they resigned themselves to dying in the mud and sand.

Alas! [If] talented men achieved success and made their name because of talent, then talent was indeed valuable. If talented men ended up starving to death because of talent, then when I looked back and thought about it, I would know why I was inferior to a butcher and wine-seller and ended up this low. Truly [I] should blame not starvation but talent!

In the commentary, Jin Shengtan is very attentive to the two opening words *ri* 日 (each day) and *jian* 見 (see). It can be imagined how Du Fu stood by the river bank every day, looked at the sturgeon rolling out from the water and also witnessed how they were killed later. And this is much the same way as Jin Shengtan looked at those “buried and dead” (*yansha* 淹殺) talents in history. The commentary starts with “when I was young” 為兒時. It is then said “later on” 後來 and “I started to realize” 始悟. In the end, it is said “when I look back and think about it” 回首思之. A clear timeline can be found in this nearly autobiographical narrative. Jin Shengtan blurs the

子嘗為委吏矣，曰：「會計當而已矣。」嘗為乘田吏，曰：「牛羊茁壯長而已矣。」. See the note in Ibid., 206.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 206.

boundary of time and space and parallelizes himself with Du Fu in the sense that hundreds of years later they would both be remembered as buried talents.

Compared with the commentary, Jin Shengtang's imitation of the poem takes the sharp edge off and he employs a more introspective perspective:

黃魚 ¹⁶⁵	The Sturgeon
擬杜少陵	Imitating Du Shaoling
1 自分終巴峽，	I assumed I would end up in Badong Gorge,
2 誰知列上筵。	who knew I would be exhibited at a grand feast.
3 偶乘風浪出，	By chance, on wind and waves, I show up;
4 遂受網羅牽。	at once, I get trapped by fish net.
5 綠藻君從密，	Green algae, you are growing thick;
6 清江我不還。	limpid water, I'm not returning.
7 惟慚未深隱，	Only regret that I didn't hide deep,
8 那敢望人憐。	how would I dare to expect people's compassion.

Jin Shengtang makes identification with the sturgeon from the very beginning, as indicated from the switch to the first person “I assume” (*zifen* 自分) in line 1. He takes on the role of sturgeon and makes the poem read like a confession. Interestingly, he never talks about the sturgeon's size, neither does he mention the scaly dragon. He omits two features which have otherwise been highlighted in Du Fu's poem. Instead, Jin Shengtang emphasizes how the sturgeon, by an occasional and incautious appearance, had fallen into trouble. This echoes with line 6 “a soft sound could lead to fatal misfortune” 微聲及禍樞 in Du Fu's “The Muntjac.”

As with the “Qiuixing” poems, the two poems on captured creatures have been dated to the year 766 when Du Fu was living temporarily in Kuizhou.¹⁶⁶ The presentation of the muntjac and the sturgeon could be either an analogy or a contrast to Du Fu's condition during his time in

¹⁶⁵ CYLSX, 34. JSTQJ, 802.

¹⁶⁶ DSXZ, 1533, 1535. In addition to the two poems, Du Fu has six more similar poems on creatures written in the same year. The titles of the six poems are as follows: “Yingwu” 鸚鵡 (“The Parrot”), “Guyan” 孤雁 (“The Lonely Wild Goose”), “Ou” 鷗 (“The Gull”), “Yuan” 猿 (“The Gibbon”), “Ji” 雞 (“The Rooster”) and “Baixiao” 白小 (“The White Small Fish”). These eight poems are sometimes discussed as a group. See DSXZ, 1529-1536.

Kuizhou as Du Fu, though hiding away from the outside, was not under any unexpected threat. However, Jin Shengtan seems to be indicating that Du Fu did not completely resign himself to concealment or tranquility. Deep inside Du Fu's heart, he perhaps wanted to be heard and sought after, even to the extent that it might cost his life.

The third Du Fu poem we are about to read was written in 770, the last year of Du Fu's life.¹⁶⁷ Du Fu left Kuizhou in the spring of the year 768 and this poem was written when he was living in a boat in Tanzhou 潭州 of Hunan.¹⁶⁸

燕子來舟中作¹⁶⁹ Written in the Boat when the Swallows Came¹⁷⁰
 1 湖南為客動經春， In Hunan, being a guest, I have gone through springs.
 2 燕子銜泥兩度新。 Swallows with mud in their mouth have twice renewed their nests.
 3 舊入故園嘗識主， In the past, they flew into my home garden, they used to recognize
 their master.
 4 如今社日遠看人。 Nowadays, during spring and autumn festivals, they look at me from
 afar.¹⁷¹
 5 可憐處處巢居室， I pity you swallows, having to nest your home here and there.
 6 何異飄飄託此身。 But how is it different from my resigning myself to a drifting life?
 7 暫語船檣還起去， Momentarily, you talk to me on the mast, but then, you fly away-
 8 穿花貼水益霑巾。 through flowers, skimming the surface of water, and more teardrops
 have wet my kerchief.

上四客舟逢燕，下四對燕自傷。¹⁷²

In lines 1-4, [the poet] met the swallows in his boat; in lines 5-6, facing the swallows, [the poet] pitied himself.

Unlike the previous two poems, in which the animals are the dominant subject, this poem has the image of swallows as an element in the scene. There is no ambiguity as to the voice of

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 2063.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. See also *Du Fu Nianpu*, 127, 140.

¹⁶⁹ *DSXZ*, 2063.

¹⁷⁰ For another translation, see Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 23, 195.

¹⁷¹ The festival is for the sacrifice to the god of the land and it is held twice a year (spring and autumn). There will be quite a lot of activities. It is said that swallows would come during the spring session and fly away in autumn. Ibid., 2064.

¹⁷² Ibid., 2063.

the poem. The poet is the speaker here. But it adds some complexity to the imitation because in this case Jin Shengtan could not simply claim the identity of Du Fu directly via the voice of an animal. In addition, because the swallow is such a frequently occurring image, it is thus of more abstraction compared with the muntjac and the sturgeon.

The following is Jin Shengtan's imitation:

燕子來舟中作 ¹⁷³ 擬杜	Written in the Boat when the Swallows Came Imitating Du Fu
1 無官只合置天涯，	Without an official post, I could only settle in the end of the world.
2 偏有尋人燕子斜。	However, there are swallows slanting in looking for someone.
3 舊歲未曾為地主，	In the past year when I owned my own property, they did not do so.
4 今春真累過寒家。	But this spring they do, many times at that, when I'm living as a poor man.
5 村村社鼓邀分肉，	Village by village, festival drum is inviting people to share meat.
6 岸岸朱輪赴看花。	Riverbank by riverbank, red-wheeled wagons are attending the flower fair.
7 諒汝從來飛不慣，	I suppose you have never got used to flying on such an occasion-
8 灘邊篷底寂無譁。	beside the sandbank, beneath the tents, silent and still, without any noise.

In Du Fu's poem, emphasis is laid on the swallows' act of leaving, as reflected from lines 3-4 in which the swallows did not recognize their old master and simply watched him from afar and also lines 7-8 in which the swallows only lingered a short moment on the boat, not knowing that the poet hoped they could stay longer to keep him a company. The distance between the poet and the swallows has been emphasized. In Jin Shengtan's imitation, the distance tends to be erased, as shown from line 4 in which the swallows paid the poet a visit and also lines 7-8 in which the poet was conjecturing what was in the swallows' mind. However, this closeness is accompanied by some grudging feelings. In line 2, Jin Shengtan has used the word *pian* 偏, which I have loosely translated as "however." *Pian* 偏 has the implication that the appearance of

¹⁷³ CYLSX, 124-125. JSTQJ, 861.

the swallows was unexpected, even against the poet's will. Further in lines 7-8, the swallows seem to be forced to be silent among the busy festival riverbanks and tents. The unwillingness reveals the impact from the uncontrollable outside, as previously indicated in the poems on muntjac and sturgeon.

On the other hand, the unsettled side of Du Fu has exposure in the imitation. Line 1 in the original poem simply says the poet was a wandering guest. Jin Shengtan in the imitation starts with the fact that the poet was unemployed. He shows the reason behind the wanderings and it again implies that the poet could not release his unfulfilled political ambition. Moreover, "looking for someone" (*xunren* 尋人) in line 2 is also significant because the poet as someone who still had ambitions left but remained unrecognized would surely hope to be looked for. And we can learn from lines 3-4 that the swallows had flown through the poet's place "many times" (*lei* 累). It is as if the poet had resigned himself to the frustration described in line 1. "However" (*pian* 偏), the swallows showed up and reminded the poet of the worldly affairs outside. Lines 5-6 are an extension of the "spring and autumn festivals" (*sheri* 社日) in line 4 of Du Fu's poem. The two verbs "inviting" (*yao* 邀) and "attending" (*fu* 赴) both gesture that the poet should go out.

From the study of the three groups of poems, it can be observed that Jin Shengtan tends to bring out an alternative image of Du Fu in the imitations. By saying "alternative," it is meant that the image Jin Shengtan represents in the imitations is different from the one in Du Fu's poems. Jin Shengtan keeps the image of an unrecognized talent as a constant presence in the staging of Du Fu. He has vitalized the passivity and taken on an active role by claiming the voice of the animals and stimulating a vibrant relation between the activities of the animals and the psychological condition of the poet.

Poetic Response to a Time of Chaos

In this section, four groups of poems will be studied from a perspective related to the impact political turmoil could have on the poetic creation. Although the four Du Fu poems Jin Shengtian imitated in this section were not an on-the-spot description of chaos, their reflective nature provides Jin Shengtian an effective way to channel his own response to a time of chaos into the imitation.

The first poem was written in 759 when Du Fu was living temporarily in a place called Qinzhou 秦州 in remote western China.¹⁷⁴ Du Fu previously gave up his official post and moved to Qinzhou with his family.¹⁷⁵ Although he only had a very short stay in Qinzhou,¹⁷⁶ this period was no less significant in terms of his poetic writing. On one hand, as Owen concludes, “in the poems from Qin-zhou, for the first time, we see Du Fu beginning to treat the small matters of everyday life, and finding in those small things deep significance.”¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, Qinzhou poems were written during the rebellion and could potentially offer a specific perspective as the direct response to turmoil. It would be critical for us to see how Jin Shengtian as a literatus who lived through the transitional period from Ming to Qing had employed such a topic.

The following poem is Du Fu’s “Tong Ping” 銅瓶 (“The Bronze Flask”):

銅瓶¹⁷⁸

The Bronze Flask¹⁷⁹

- 1 亂後碧井廢， Since the chaos, the green well had been abandoned;
- 2 時清瑤殿深。 during peaceful time, jade palace was deep.
- 3 銅瓶未失水， The bronze flask did not leave the water,

¹⁷⁴ *Du Fu Nianpu*, 52-59.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Du Fu lived in Qinzhou for less than four months. See *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 426.

¹⁷⁸ *DSXZ*, 624.

¹⁷⁹ For another translation, see Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 8, 185.

4 百丈有哀音。through a hundred meter there came a sorrowful sound.¹⁸⁰
 5 側想美人意，Pondering over the palace lady's mind-
 6 應悲寒甃沉。she must have been sad about the flask's falling into the cold well.
 7 蛟龍半缺落，The carved dragon has half worn away,
 8 猶得折黃金。yet still it can be pawned for gold.

銅瓶，有感興廢也。首二另提，中四應時清，末二應亂後。¹⁸¹

“The Bronze Flask” reflects upon prosperity and decline. The first two lines are separate [from the main structure]. The middle four lines correspond with “peaceful time” (*shi qing* 時清) [in line 2]. The last two lines correspond with “since the chaos” (*luan hou* 亂後) [in line 1].

Jin Shengtan also has a very brief general comment on this poem:

銅瓶，是宮中汲水器，久沉廢井，新出世間者。豈先生于秦州見有此物耶？¹⁸²

The bronze flask is a container used in the palace for drawing water [from a well]. It had been sunk in the dead well for a long time and just reappeared in this world. Was it the Master saw such a thing in Qinzhou?

Since the bronze flask is an object used in the palace, it will naturally be related to “prosperity and decline,” as Qiu Zhao’ao points out, which is clearly not a small matter as cleaning up one’s garden.¹⁸³ But if we regard the flask simply as an object Du Fu encountered in Qinzhou, it would be enough for us to see how simplicity could turn into momentum of uneasiness during the time of chaos.

As suggested in Qiu Zhao’ao’s annotation, lines 1-2 have a quite unusual role in terms of structure. Line 1 is narrating the past. Line 2 turns backward to the time when it was peaceful before the chaos. Line 2 therefore works as an interjection of a more distant past. And Du Fu doesn’t bring the narrative back to the present until the last two lines. Jin Shengtan has an

¹⁸⁰ In this line, “a hundred meter” (*baizhang* 百丈) refers to the long rope used to tie the flask and get water from the well. See *DSXZ*, 624.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² *DSJ*, 89.

¹⁸³ Du Fu wrote about some very trivial household matters in other Qinzhou poems. For details, see Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 426.

interlinear comment on line 1 - “a line on its own, not connecting with the following line, an incredibly marvelous stroke” 獨作一句，不與下連，筆態奇絕。¹⁸⁴ We can also look at part of his more detailed comments on the correlation between line 1 and the rest of the poem:

「亂後碧井廢」，獨作一句，此銅瓶之所以出世也。只五字便截住，却追想碧井之未廢時，井上則有深殿，殿中則有美人，美人則轉百丈，百丈則出哀音。銅瓶此時為清時致用，人受其福，知有何限？¹⁸⁵

“Since the chaos, the green well had been abandoned” [line 1] is a line on its own, explaining why the bronze flask reappeared in the world. Right after line 1, there came a full stop. [The poet] instead recalled the time when the green well had not been abandoned – above the well there was the deep palace, inside the palace there was the palace lady, the palace lady turned towards the rope which was one-hundred meter long, one –hundred meter then brought out the sorrowful sound. The bronze flask was then fully used in a peaceful time. People gained benefit from it, who knows what the limit is?

Three points are highlighted in the commentary. First, it is emphasized that “chaos” (*luan* 亂) in line 1 is the reason that the flask could come out. Then in stringing together the images in lines 2-5, i.e. “jade palace” (*yaodian* 瑤殿) in line 2, “a hundred meter” (*baizhang* 百丈) in line 4 and “palace lady” (*meiren* 美人) in line 5, Jin Shengtian gives an account of the experience of the flask during peaceful time, which makes up for the gap between line 1 and the other lines.

Second, Jin Shengtian seems to have fore-grounded “palace lady” as a medium between the bronze flask and the outside. She is the one who would pull the rope, bring upward the flask and make it connect with the palace. In lines 5-6, Du Fu is imagining that the palace lady might feel “sad” (*bei* 悲) when she witnessed the flask’s falling. In this feeling of sadness, the palace lady realized that the flask had fallen into the well and could no longer be used to draw water.

¹⁸⁴ *DSJ*, 89. Only a few poems have interlinear comments. Perhaps Jin Shengtian felt the line was so peculiar or well written that he had to give another comment in addition to the normal block comments.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

The third point is related to the value of the bronze flask. In Jin Shengtan's words, the flask was once "fully used" (*zhiyong* 致用) in the palace. Drawing water from the well was the flask's real value and it did not get recognized until the moment it fell down. And it was not until it came out of the well that it regained its value, only the value was an entirely different one. In lines 7-8, the bronze flask was plucked from obscurity and made a potential gold mine. But it is worth noting that the scene of pawning the flask for gold, which perhaps took place in a street market, is in stark contrast to the previous palace scene. The reversal of the flask's fortune is not with too much dignity. The seemingly rising movement in the end of the poem is in fact another falling.

Through disruption of narrative and ellipsis of information, Du Fu's poem creates a tension between the two selves of the bronze flask, showing that the true worth of the flask is at lost.

Now let us turn to Jin Shengtan's imitation:

銅瓶 ¹⁸⁶	The Bronze Flask
擬杜少陵	Imitating Du Shaoling
1 美人脫纖手，	Palace lady released it from her delicate hands,
2 此日下寒泉。	on this day the flask fell into the cold well.
3 泥蝕夔龍盡，	Eroded by mud, the carved dragon was almost gone;
4 天令體格全。	yet Heaven had kept its shape and aura complete.
5 遭時方喪亂，	The time encountered is just under turmoil,
6 欲汝更遷延。	hopefully you could get a longer delay.
7 明福全無信，	There is completely no sign of tomorrow's fortune,
8 深為早出憐。	I take deep pity on your early exposure.

Jin Shengtan starts the poem with the palace lady, the medium that connects the bronze flask and the palace. The first scene he presents is the falling of the bronze flask, marked by the two words "released" (*tuo* 脫) in line 1 and "fell into" (*xia* 下) in line 2. In lines 3-4, he describes the flask's appearance when it reappeared. Compared with Du Fu's poem, Jin Shengtan has provided

¹⁸⁶ CYLSX, 28. JSTQJ, 797.

more detailed information. In line 1, the palace lady's hands are described as "delicate hands" (*xianshou* 纖手). In line 2, a specific time "on this day" (*ciri* 此日) is indicated. Line 3 tells us that the dragon on the flask was "eroded by mud" (*nishi* 泥蝕), contrasting sharply with the delicate hands. Line 4 is almost a complementary line to the last couplet in Du Fu's poem. "Shape and aura complete" (*tige quan* 體格全) corresponds to "half worn away" (*ban queluo* 半缺落) in line 7 of Du Fu's poem. Jin Shengtian even brings up the omnipotent "Heaven" (*tian* 天), a power that goes beyond the force of history

We can see that in lines 1-4, Jin Shengtian is trying to make the account less fuzzy and more decisive. He is reaching for an answer and a resolution. In a sense he has problematized the original poem. Du Fu does not make any judgmental comments in his poem. The only two words with human emotions "sorrowful" (*ai* 哀) in line 4 and "sad" (*bei* 悲) in line 6 are written from the perspective of the palace lady. He simply lays out a picture of the bronze flask's encounter. Jin Shengtian makes a big change on this as he has almost spent the entire second half of the imitation offering his thoughts on the reappearance of the flask. It is as though the flask was in front of him and he was talking to it in a quite emotional way. He seems to indicate that the bronze flask would be better off inside the dark dead well because its true identity and worth would only get alienated and falsified outside. Therefore, the message he is trying to send in the last lines could be read as a warning to others. It could also be read as a conceited self-assurance because he might be suggesting that the bronze flask should remain hidden the way the true meaning of a literary work should be hidden until a brilliant critic, in this case Jin Shengtian, arrives to uncover it.

The next poem was dated to the year 766 when Du Fu was in Kuizhou, same as the “Qiuxing” series and the poems on captured creatures we discussed earlier.¹⁸⁷

提封¹⁸⁸ The Territory¹⁸⁹
 1 提封漢天下, The territory [of Tang] is the land of Han,
 2 萬國尚同心。ten thousands of fiefdoms still share one heart.
 3 借問懸車守, May I ask the retired governor,
 4 何如儉德臨? what could be better than governing with restraint and virtue?
 5 時徵俊乂入, Frequently summoning people with great talent and morality,
 6 莫慮犬羊侵。then there would be no need to worry about the invasion of dogs and sheep
 [i.e. the enemy].
 7 願戒兵猶火, I wish that [our sovereign] would be as wary of war as one is of fire,
 8 恩加四海深。then the royal graciousness would be bestowed upon the whole country
 deeply.

此章總結，直究當時致亂之由，以垂為永戒也。¹⁹⁰

This poem is a conclusion.¹⁹¹ It bluntly probes into the cause of the chaos in the past, so it can be passed on as a warning.

The following is Jin Shengtan’s imitation:

提封¹⁹² The Territory
 擬杜少陵 Imitating Du Shaoling
 1 提封盛唐國, The territory of the High Tang,
 2 猶故太宗時。still the same as it during the reign of Emperor Taizong.
 3 直以軍書下, But then because an order of military draft has been sent down,
 4 翻令百姓疑。The commoners grow uneasy in their hearts.
 5 臣嘗聞俎豆, I¹⁹³ have heard something about rites and sacrifice,

¹⁸⁷ DSXZ, 1519-1520.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 1527-1528.

¹⁸⁹ For another translation, see Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 17, 383.

¹⁹⁰ DSXZ, 1528.

¹⁹¹ There are eight poems Du Fu composed that share a common theme as described in “The Territory.” The eight poems are usually discussed as a group and “The Territory” is the last poem in the group. The previous seven poems are “Dongfang” 洞房 (“The Bridal Chamber”), “Suxi” 宿昔 (“The Past”), “Nenghua” 能畫 (“Skilled at Painting”), “Douji” 鬪雞 (“The Cock Fighting”), “Lili” 歷歷 (“The Vivid”), “Luoyang” 洛陽 (“The City Luoyang”) and “Lishan” 驪山 (“Mount Li”). See DSXZ, 1519-1527. In *Duyi* 杜臆 (*Conjecturing Du Fu’s Poetry*), it is concluded that “the eight poems all recall the past in Chang’an, the language is ironic so as to give a warning to the emperor and officials at that time and find a solution to cope with the aftermath” 八章，皆追憶長安往事，語兼諷刺，以警當時君臣，圖善後之策也。See DSXZ, 1520, the introductory note.

¹⁹² CYLSX, 33. JSTQJ, 801.

6 素不學旌旗。But I've never learned anything about the flags [of war].¹⁹⁴
 7 田野荒蕪甚，The farms and fields are so barren,
 8 深憂黠虜知。I worry deeply that our cunning enemy should know of it [i.e. our internal famines].

Both poems point out in lines 1-4 that endless war was the problem that existed in governance. In Du Fu's poem, lines 5-6 propose a suggestion. In Jin Shengtan's imitation, there is no solution provided, but the allusion to Confucius in lines 5-6 indicates that in Jin Shengtan's view the right way to rule a country is to rule by humaneness and proper rites instead of by force. In the imitation, the poet addressed himself as *chen* 臣, as if he held a post at court and was making an admonition to the emperor. In Du Fu's poem, lines 7-8 give us a bright expectation. Jin Shengtan's imitation however, ends with a bleak scene. He might be suggesting that Du Fu's expectation could only be an illusion. Jin Shengtan lived in the future that Du Fu anchored his hope in. But the future is still torn apart by wars and is as chaotic as the time Du Fu lived in. The imitation testifies to the delusional future that Du Fu was looking forward to. Jin Shengtan chose to leave the poem in a dark and pessimistic scene which was in need of revival, like the way he had left the bronze flask.

The next poem was written in 769 when Du Fu was in modern Hunan 湖南 province.¹⁹⁵ Before we read the poems, some background information regarding the two "Consorts of Xiang" (*Xiang furen* 湘夫人) needs to be mentioned. *Xiang* 湘 is the abbreviation for Hunan province. The two consorts refer to E'huang 娥皇 and Nuying 女英. They were both married to Emperor Shun 舜. After Shun died during his tour around the country, E'huang and Nuying drowned

¹⁹³ Loosely translated as the first person "I," *Chen* 臣 is actually the form of title officials would use when they talk to the emperor.

¹⁹⁴ Lines 5-6 alludes to the first teaching from the fifteenth chapter "Duke Ling of Wei" (*Wei Ling Gong* 衛靈公) in *Analects* – "Duke Ling of Wei asked Confucius about arraying troops. Confucius responded, 'Things on rites and sacrifice, I've heard some; things on the military, I've never learned anything.' The next day Confucius left." 衛靈公問陳於孔子，孔子對曰：「俎豆之事，則嘗聞之矣；軍旅之事，未之學也。」明日遂行。

¹⁹⁵ DSXZ, 1955.

themselves in the Xiang River. People thus built the temple in memory of the two consorts and their uncompromising loyalty towards their husband.¹⁹⁶

湘夫人祠¹⁹⁷ The Temple of the Consorts of Xiang¹⁹⁸
 1 肅肅湘妃廟，Dignified dignified, the Temple of the Consorts of Xiang;
 2 空牆碧水春。from the broken wall, limpid river can be seen, it is spring.
 3 蟲書玉佩蘚，The worms carve words upon the mosses on the jade pendants;
 4 燕舞翠帷塵。swallows do dances upon the dust on the kingfisher curtain.
 5 晚泊登汀樹，In the evening I go ashore on the wooded bank,
 6 微馨借渚蘋。for a faint incense, I borrow duckweed from the shoals.
 7 蒼梧恨不盡，In Cangwu,¹⁹⁹ sorrow is endless;
 8 染淚在叢筠。the consorts shed their tears on the bamboo clumps.²⁰⁰

上四，祠中之景，記其淒涼。下四，祠外之景，致其感慨。²⁰¹

Lines 1-4 describe the scenes inside the temple, writing about its desolation. Lines 5-8 describe the scenes outside the temple, showing the poet's thoughts.

The following is Jin Shengtan's imitation:

湘夫人祠²⁰² The Temple of the Consorts of Xiang
 刺亡國諸臣 Satirizing the officials of a conquered empire
 擬杜少陵 Imitating Du Shaoling
 1 緣江水神廟，Along the river there is a temple for the goddesses,
 2 云是舜夫人。it is said they are consorts of Emperor Shun.
 3 姊妹復何在，Yet where are E'huang and Nuying?
 4 蟲蛇全與親。Worms and snakes are all the ones that are close to this place.
 5 褰幃儼然坐，Pulling the curtain, statues of the consorts are solemnly standing there-
 6 偷眼碧江春。stealing a glance at the limpid river, the spring scene.
 7 未必思公子，They are not necessarily thinking of their husband,
 8 虛傳淚滿筠。the tale of "shedding tears all over the bamboos" is just fictitious.

¹⁹⁶ For the tale of Shun and his consorts, see Ibid. Relevant information can also be found in Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 163.

¹⁹⁷ *DSXZ*, 1955.

¹⁹⁸ For another translation, see Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 22, 51, 53.

¹⁹⁹ Cangwu is the place where Emperor Shun was buried.

²⁰⁰ It is said that after Shun died, E'huang and Nuying cried so much that even the bamboos got stained by their tears. See the fifth note in *DSXZ*, 1955.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² *CYLSX*, 30. *JSTQJ*, 799.

There are two distinct changes in the imitation. One is that Jin Shengtan has provided a subtitle to the imitation. The subtitle openly announces the intention that this poem is written to “satire the officials of a conquered empire.” The second is he has almost completely reversed the image of the two consorts. E’huang and Nuying are no longer holy goddesses, but two dissolute women. Although there is no subtitle or any additional note in Du Fu’s poem, it is commonly considered that he wrote the poem to implicitly express his loyalty to the country and emperor through the tale of the loyal consorts.²⁰³ Jin Shengtan’s imitation would turn into a complete parody if without the additional subtitle.

The imitation is now used by Jin Shengtan as an ideal vehicle for writing his own poetic response to the specific political situation in his time. This reveals an important function of imitation poetry particularly pertinent to a context of turmoil. As Nicholas Williams puts in his book, “imitation poetry’s role in political protest, as elsewhere, is founded in its way of simultaneously concealing and revealing the self, as well as establishing the autonomy of the poet in a world in which he was otherwise powerless.”²⁰⁴

Unlike the previous muntjac and sturgeon that are alienated by the world or the bronze flask whose value is falsified by the world, the image of the Consorts of Xiang is fixed and supposed to be immune from any outside influence. However, as we have seen, Jin Shengtan himself has provided a deliberate misrepresentation. The dignified temple is almost demonized in the imitation. Through breaking the stereotyped faithful image of the consorts, Jin Shengtan is possibly expressing the skepticism of consistent loyalty in a time full of uncertainties.

²⁰³ For annotators’ interpretation of Du Fu’s poem, see *DSXZ*, 1955-1956.

²⁰⁴ Nicholas Morrow Williams, *Imitations of the Self: Jiang Yan and Chinese Poetics* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 210.

The last Du Fu poem we are about to read is titled “Melancholy” 愁 (“Chou”). It was written in spring of the year 767 when Du Fu was in Kuizhou.²⁰⁵

愁²⁰⁶

Melancholy²⁰⁷

原注：強戲為吳體。Original note: Making myself write in Wu style for enjoyment

1 江草日日喚愁生，River weeds, every single day, arouse the growth of melancholy;

2 巫峽泠泠非世情。in Wu Gorges, water sounds crisp and melodious, without any humane sympathies.

3 盤渦鸞浴底心性，In the whirlpool, herons are bathing, what temperament is that?

4 獨樹花發自分明。The only tree that flowers makes itself stand out.

5 十年戎馬暗南國，Ten years of war,²⁰⁸ darkening the northern realm;

6 異域賓客老孤城。in this foreign land, a guest is getting old in a lonely city.²⁰⁹

7 渭水秦山得見否，Could Wei River and Qin Mountains be seen again?²¹⁰

8 人今罷病虎縱橫。I am now exhausted and sick, tyrannies rampage like tigers.

上四，敘夔州景物，觸愁之端。下四，憶長安時事，致愁之故。²¹¹

Lines 1-4 describe the scenery in Kuizhou, touching the edge of melancholy. Lines 5-8 tell the thoughts on the current affairs in Chang'an, conveying the cause of his melancholy.

There are two conflicts in Du Fu's poem. The first one occurs in the contrast between the outside “scenes” (*jing* 景) and inner “feelings” (*qing* 情).²¹² We can tell from Qiu Zhao'ao's annotation that this poem is evoked by Kuizhou scenes and in the mean time, it is a meditation on the capital city. The pattern is thus similar to the “Qiuxing” series. However, unlike the “Qiuxing” poems which were written in a season mostly connected with “melancholy,” this poem was composed in spring, the season of life and hope. But Du Fu was in no mood for such a spring. The growing river weeds in line 1, the crisp and melodious water in line 2, the bathing

²⁰⁵ DSXZ, 1599. See also *Du Fu Nianpu*, 110.

²⁰⁶ DSXZ, 1599.

²⁰⁷ For another translation, see Owen, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, Book 18, 67.

²⁰⁸ An Lushan Rebellion broke out in 755 and this poem was written in 767, there were roughly ten years in between.

²⁰⁹ “Lonely city” (*gucheng* 孤城) refers to Kuizhou. See DSXZ, 1599.

²¹⁰ Both Wei River and Qin Mountains refer to the capital city Chang'an. Ibid.

²¹¹ DSXZ, 1599.

²¹² For a detailed explanation of the two terms, see Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 585.

herons in line 3 and the blooming tree in line 4 – the scenes that are supposed to be cheerful all turn into the source of melancholy. Du Fu sets himself against the surrounding environment.

The second conflict occurs in the second half of the poem. Du Fu again revolves around the issues of identity and distance. There exists no unification between the ideal self in mind and the actual self in reality. In line 6, Du Fu calls himself a “guest” (*binke* 賓客). The role of “guest,” as Owen says in his analysis of another of Du Fu’s late poems, is “the human known in relation to a subjective topography, a physical displacement of journeys and returns in which all locations but one remind him he is not ‘at home’.”²¹³ The role Du Fu gives himself in the poem is a guest, an outsider. In line 6, “foreign land” (*yi yu* 異域) and “lonely city” (*gucheng* 孤城) imply a sense of isolation. This explains his attitude towards the spring scene in lines 1-4. Du Fu kept a distance from his current community and instead conveyed a longing for another place, in this case the capital. But he did not belong to the capital either and he was not sure if he could go back to the capital, as it says in line 7. Du Fu succumbed to neither his ideal self nor his actual self. As a result, the exact position of him remains ambiguous to us.

Jin Shengtān’s imitation resolves the problem of ambiguity:

愁 ²¹⁴	Melancholy
擬杜	Imitating Du Fu
1 江水流春不當春，	River water is running, carrying spring- but not considered as a spring
	in my eyes;
2 江花江草故愁人。	river flowers and river weeds insist on bothering a person.
3 開頭揅舵汝何往？	Poling the boat, turning the rudder, where are you heading to?
4 擊鼓鳴鐃皆不倫。	Beating the drum, hitting the cymbal, both without any order. ²¹⁵

²¹³ Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen, eds., *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T’ang* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 96.

²¹⁴ *CYLSX*, 124. *JSTQJ*, 860.

²¹⁵ In *Rites of Zhou* 周禮, it is said that “the golden cymbal is used to stop the drum beating” 以金鐃止鼓. Jin Shengtān is probably indicating that the poetic persona had lost the sense of direction since he couldn’t get the right order from the instruments. Since drum and cymbal are also used to give orders during war, Jin Shengtān might also be indicating the chaos caused by war.

- 5 巫峡啼猿真迸血, In Wu Gorges, the gibbons are truly crying blood;
 6 楚天朝雨最通神。the morning rain from the Chu sky can best communicate with the deity.²¹⁶
 7 老夫欲寄精誠去, I intend to send my utmost sincerity,
 8 憑仗高風達紫宸。by virtue of a gust of wind, to the Zichen palace.²¹⁷

Jin Shengtan's resolution of ambiguity can be illustrated from three aspects. First, in terms of structure, there is an ellipsis in Jin Shengtan's presentation of the spring scenes and he instead gives a stretch to the underlying cause of melancholy. In lines 1-2, he simply uses three general images "river water" (*jiangshui* 江水), "river flowers" (*jianghua* 江花) and "river weeds" (*jiangcao* 江草) to illustrate spring. Instead of showing specific scenes, as Du Fu does in the first half of his poem, Jin Shengtan simply tells us in a summarizing way that the time is spring and it is "troubling me" (*chouren* 愁人). Jin Shengtan does not give readers any chance to ponder over detailed images and their implications. He comes straight to the point. The opening two lines in the imitation can be considered as a diegetic mode of Du Fu's more mimetic narrative.

But Jin Shengtan is not just being concise in lines 1-2, he is also trying to be conclusive. We can find the trace of conclusiveness from "not considered as" (*budang* 不當) in line 1 and "insist on" (*gu* 故) in line 2. Conciseness and conclusiveness have combined to create an effect of confirmation. This brings up the second way of resolving ambiguity, which lies in Jin Shengtan's use of confirmative diction. In line 4, we encounter another negative phrase "without any order" (*bulun* 不倫). In line 5, Jin Shengtan employs "truly" (*zhen* 真) to highlight the scene of the gibbons crying blood. In line 6, he uses a superlative "best" (*zui* 最) to modify the mystical power of the rain. In line 7, he again uses a superlative "utmost" (*jing* 精) to describe the

²¹⁶ Chu 楚 is a state in ancient Zhou 周 Dynasty. Its territory includes the Kuizhou area. Therefore, here the "Chu sky" refers to the sky of Kuizhou.

²¹⁷ Zichen 紫宸 is the name of a Tang palace, in which the Emperor usually hears and administers state affairs.

sincerity. Jin Shengtian avoids a moderate tone and frequently emphasizes absoluteness. He sets an indubitable tone for his imitation.

So far we have touched upon almost the entire poem except line 3 and line 8. Jin Shengtian poses a question “where are you heading to” (*ru hewang* 汝何往) in line 3. This could be just a rhetorical question since line 4 has the implication that the world is not in order and no shelter could be found. However, Jin Shengtian further provides an answer to the question in the last two lines. The poet has a clear target and is in no way directionless. He intends to send his “utmost sincerity” (*jingcheng* 精誠) to the emperor’s palace. In other words, he yearns for recognition and he wants to achieve his ambition. The “Du Fu” in Jin Shengtian’s imitation expresses his pride and confidence regardless of the unfulfilled ambition. The “Du Fu” has been given a full exposure of his hidden self. In this group of poems, Du Fu leaves the poem in a dark, pessimistic scene while Jin Shengtian makes the ending high-spirited and vigorous.

From the study of the four groups of poems, we can make the observation that Jin Shengtian’s imitations can work as a text complementary to Du Fu’s poems. This complementary convergence however, is achieved by writing from the opposite side of Du Fu’s perspective. Two forces help to bring about Jin Shengtian’s reversal. One is the impact of the Ming-Qing cataclysm. Almost a thousand years had elapsed since Du Fu composed those poems, yet chaos and confusion remained the same. In the imitations, there is some harshness added to shatter the illusions about an ideal future. The other force is Jin Shengtian’s identification with Du Fu. On one hand, Jin Shengtian makes his imitations different to show the readers that he is able to decipher the hidden messages and bring Du Fu’s brilliance to light. On the other hand, Jin Shengtian has a transcendental sympathy for Du Fu. Although Du Fu never really made it in the

political arena, his poems should be remembered and recorded with the passage of time. And Jin Shengtan, with his interpretation of Du Fu, should not be buried either.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have endeavored to make some meaning of Jin Shengtan's tactical interpretation of Du Fu in both commentaries and imitations. Instead of offering a generalized discussion on Jin Shengtan's works on poetry or centering upon the methodological *fenjie* approach, I have chosen to turn the spotlight on the nuanced specifics by looking closely at the content *per se* in a few examples.

To make the conclusion, I would like to bring the attention back to the two keywords in the title of this thesis – synchronization and differentiation. Throughout Jin Shengtan's commentaries and imitations, he is showing the readers that only in his hands could Du Fu's poems be revived. His claim of Du Fu's intent, together with the timeless sympathy he shared with Du Fu, give the effect of having his text and Du Fu's text move at same speed on the same page. In this sense, an effect of synchronization has been achieved. Specifically speaking, Jin Shengtan's synchronization with Du Fu is demonstrated in two aspects. The first aspect is inherent in Jin Shengtan's role as a commentator and a reader. Du Fu's poems as the objective texts are the "facts" that Jin Shengtan needs to base his interpretation upon. This natural relation requires Jin Shengtan to stay homologous with Du Fu, and this is achieved by leaning towards Du Fu's psychological activities. The second aspect lies in Jin Shengtan's occasional deliberate identification with Du Fu. Jin Shengtan makes constant claims in the commentaries that he is the one who truly fully apprehends the ingenuity in Du Fu's poetry. And further in the imitations, he juxtaposes himself with Du Fu as buried talents that ought to be appreciated by later generations.

Jin Shengtan's differentiation with Du Fu can also be understood from two sides. The first is Jin Shengtan's iconoclasm, i.e. when Jin Shengtan is being "different." His different side

is reflected from those places where his words stand out as being inventive, interesting or even ostentatious. In the second chapter, I especially considered Jin Shengtan's poems as some poetic responses to a time of chaos and suggested that the social political context at that time has to a certain degree forced Jin Shengtan to be that different from Du Fu. The differentiation is also displayed in the character Jin Shengtan has created for himself. Occasionally Jin Shengtan would stay away from the synchronization and portray himself as an independent reader presenting Du Fu's brilliance to other readers whom he deemed as benighted.

Through this study I have tried to show in Jin Shengtan's engagement with Du Fu's poetry, the "synchronization – differentiation" relation, which seems to be paradoxical, has worked as a reciprocal one. Du Fu's hidden character gets vitalized in Jin Shengtan's commentaries and imitations and some untold stories have been brought to life. Jin Shengtan has also gained power from Du Fu's poems to voice his own anxieties about living in a world full of changes.

Admittedly, it will be cart-before-horse thinking if we prioritize Jin Shengtan's contribution to poetry over vernacular literature, not to mention the fact that he is clearly not of much significance when compared with other late Ming poets such as Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664) or Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609-1672). However, as the poetic responses produced in a chaotic but critical transitional Ming-Qing period, Jin Shengtan's poems deserve to be studied in their own right, especially when Jin Shengtan has prioritized Du Fu, chronicler of the An Lushan rebellion, over other poets.

In regard to this topic, there are also some other potential questions for future studies to follow. For instance, we could step forward from Jin Shengtan's interpretation of Du Fu and look at his other poetry-related works and build up a picture of Jin Shengtan's poetics. In addition, as

shown in the “other commentary” (*biepi* 別批) situation in the “Qiuxing” series, Jin Shengtan is not the only one involved in the circulation and formation of his works. Given the development of print culture in late Ming, it would be interesting to look at how Jin Shengtan’s works were brought into their current shape.

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