

The Penumbra of the Great Tang: Poetry from the Margins of the Empire at the Turn of the Eighth Century

Xiaofei Tian
Harvard University

In the early spring of 705, the courtier Song Zhiwen 宋之問 (ca. 656–712) was exiled to the far south as a close associate of the Zhang brothers, who lost power and their lives after a coup forced Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (r. 690–705), their patron, to relinquish the throne.¹ Writing a poem addressed to his fellow exiles, Song Zhiwen portrays the moment when he realized, with consternation, that once they arrived in the south, they would not be able to see one another so easily as he had imagined:

逐臣北地承嚴譴 The exiled ministers from the northland received
severe punishment;
謂到南中每相見 we assumed that in the south we could always see
each other.
豈意南中岐路多 Who would have thought that in the south
the crossroads would be so many?
千里萬里分鄉縣 A thousand miles, ten thousand miles: we are sepa-
rated in different towns and counties²

-
- 1 An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the online conference on “Conceptualizing Court Culture with New Methodologies” organized by Tan Tian Yuan and Ted Hui of Oxford University in December 2021, and as an online lecture given at Nanyang Technology University in August 2022. A later version of the paper was presented at the Medieval Studies Workshop organized by Wendy Swartz at Rutgers University in May 2023. I am grateful to the organizers, my discussant Sarah M. Allen, the audiences, and the anonymous readers for their helpful and inspiring feedback. Any remaining errors are my own.
- 2 *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Taipei: Minglun chubanshe, 1971; hereafter *QTS*), 51.626. *Shen Quanqi Song Zhiwen ji jiaozhu* 沈佺期宋之問集校注, ed. Tao Min 陶敏 and Yi Shuqiong 易淑瓊, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001; hereafter *SQSZW*), 2.433. Stephen Owen’s translation with modifications, *The Poetry of the Early Tang* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), 378.

These lines vividly depict the contrast between his imagination of the easily navigated geographies of the empire from the confines of the capital city and his newly gained sense of its vast territories now that he is truly “out there.” Even just in these few lines, he presents a world that is increasingly divided and fragmented: first it is split into north and south, with the south—the land of their exile—being repeated in the same positions in the second and third lines only to dissolve into a bewildering array of towns and counties, which are further divided by thousands and thousands of miles (or, in a textual variant, by numerous mountains and rivers).

A new geopolitical understanding of the empire, accompanied by a more complex self-positioning, emerges with the courtier’s movement from center to margin; a new camaraderie is formed with old colleagues and peers from the court in their shared awareness of dispersal across a vast space. Although there had surely been exiles before, the last decade of the seventh century and first decade of the eighth century, which is the temporal focus of this study, constitute a notable period marked, for the first time in history, by a concentration of poems written from the distant margins of the empire with a rare intensity about the condition of exile. These poems were, furthermore, written on the brink of a large cultural shift: the end of Empress Wu’s reign saw the beginning of the end of court literature as a force to be reckoned with in the larger cultural sphere, and the hope for access to power that the empress had fostered through a series of political measures, now frustrated and dashed, would eventually lead to an espousal of alternative values in opposition to the values of the court. Although these turn-of-the-century exile poems are characterized by a remarkable centripetalism, which will be taken up for analysis in this article, their very production and dissemination from the edges of the empire are fraught with a palpable tension between state power and personal desire, which signifies as much a nostalgic lamentation for what was left behind as the painful birth of a new era.

In recent decades, postcolonial writings witnessed a shift from exile literature to migrant literature as more and more exiled postcolonial writers chose to identify themselves as migrants, which prompted discussions of “exile” as a condition requiring explanation and analysis, rather than a nomenclature to be taken for granted.³ In a 2013 special issue of *Oriens Extremus* on “Chinese Reflections on the Exile Experience after 1949,” the authors of the introduction state that the twentieth century ought to be known as “a century of exile,”

3 See Carine M. Mardorossian, “From Literature of Exile to Migrant Literature,” *Modern Language Studies* 32. 2 (2002), 15–33.

which they argue not only distinguishes it from the nineteenth century but also is “quite different from banishment in pre-modern China.”⁴ All these ponderings draw our attention to the slipperiness of the concept of exile and the need to historicize and culturalize it.

The Chinese terms for exile poetry are, variously, *bianzhu shi* 貶謫詩, *bianzhu shi* 貶逐詩, *qianzhe shi* 遷謫詩, or *liubian shi* 流貶詩. In Tang, *liu* 流 and *bian* 貶 meant very different things in legal terms: *liu* was penal transportation, one of the five punishments *wuxing* 五刑, only secondary to capital punishment, and ranking higher than convict labor 徒, caning 杖, and whipping 笞;⁵ *bian* was demotion or the reduction of rank, salary, and status. The compound term *liubian* 流貶, unattested in extant sources from an earlier time, was frequently used from the eighth century onward to indicate banishment to the outlying southern regions of the empire with an assignment of an inferior position and rank.⁶ The emergence of this term speaks to a newly stabilized category of punitive action that coincides with records of exacerbated harshness toward banished ministers during this time.⁷ In the Southern Dynasties, aristocratic courtiers’ political setback had usually taken the form of relegation to a provincial post, which was often, though not always, fairly close to the capital; and if those courtiers express discontent, their expressions, compared with

4 Thomas Fröhlich and Brigit Knüsel Adamec, “Introduction,” in *Oriens Extremus* 52 (2013): 3.

5 “死、流、徒、杖、笞凡五等，以備五刑。” Du You 杜佑 (735–812), comp. *Tong dian* 通典, collated by Wang Wenjin 王文錦 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 170.441. Also see Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982), comp. *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 39.707.

6 In extant writings *liubian* first appeared in a concentrated manner during the reign of Tang Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756), whose several edicts used the term. Dong Gao 董誥 et al., comp. *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987; hereafter *QTW*), 32.358–59, 32.359, 35.384. Wu Jing 吳兢 (670–749) in a memorial to Xuanzong also used the term. *QTW* 298.3025.

7 Zhang Jiuling 張九齡 (678–740) was said to have made the proposal in the 730s that banished ministers be sent to “wild barbarian lands” 五谿不毛之鄉 instead of “nice places” 善地. Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772–842), preface to “Du Zhang Qujiang ji zuo” 讀張曲江集作, in Jiang Weisong 蔣維崧 et al., annot. *Liu Yuxi shiji biannian jianzhu* 劉禹錫詩集編年箋注 (Jinan: Shangdong daxue chubanshe, 1997), 113. In *Tianbao* 5 (746), Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) issued an edict forbidding banished ministers to linger on their journey and demanding that heavy offenders must travel through ten post-stations a day (日馳十驛以上赴任). *QTW* 32.358–59; *Tang huiyao* 41.735. Tang post-stations were supposed to be positioned every thirty *li* apart (see below), although in practice there were a great deal of variations; nevertheless, traveling through ten post-stations a day was a tough ordeal. According to *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, “Ever since then those who were banished more often than not could not survive” 是後流貶者多不全矣. Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), comp. *Zizhi tongjian* (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 215.6872.

many of the poems discussed in this paper, are rather restrained.⁸ One could say, then, that the flourishing of the so-called exile poetry at the turn of the eighth century was the outcome of both changed social practice and changed literary representation.

Chinese scholarship on exile poetry, which has flourished since the 1990s, often adopts a biographical and quantitative approach.⁹ The *bianzhe xintai* 貶謫心態 (“psychological state in exile”) of individual poets is a keyword in many of these writings.¹⁰ A common reiteration is that poetry written in exile is of a superior quality compared to that written in the capital, for the intensely negative feelings of the poet during exile are believed to make their poetry better.¹¹

- 8 For instance, Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), and Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499). The writings of Jiang Yan 江淹 (444–505) when he was relegated to northern Fujian may be an exception. See Paul W. Kroll's essay, “Farther South: Jiang Yan in Dark-est Fujian,” in *Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry*, ed. Ping Wang and Nicholas Morrow Williams (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 2015), 109–135. But even these writings seem rather subdued when being compared to the poems discussed in this article. Once Jiang Yan returned to the capital, his memory of those years paints his experience in an even more rosy manner: “There were sapphire rivers and cinnabar mountains, rare trees and numinous plants, everything I have been most partial to my whole life—and I did not mind how distant was the road that took me there” 爰有碧水丹山，珍木靈草，皆淹平生所至愛，不覺行路之遠矣 (Kroll's translation, with modest modifications; 135).
- 9 For the representative work in this regard, see Shang Yongliang 尚永亮, *Tang wudai zhuchen yu bianzhe wenxue yanjiu* 唐五代逐臣與貶謫文學研究 (Wuchang: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 2007), as well as his *Yuanhe wuda shiren yu bianzhewenxue kaolun* 元和五大詩人與貶謫文學考論 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1993), one of the earliest monographs dedicated to the topic of exile literature, which was revised and reprinted as *Bianzhe wenhua yu bianzhe wenxue: Yi zhong Tang Yuanhe wudashiren zhi bian jiqi chuangzuo wei zhongxin* 貶謫文化與貶謫文學：以中唐元和五大詩人之貶及其創作為中心 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 2004). An interesting article that supplements Shang's studies by using digital methods is Song Xueyan 宋雪雁 et al., “Shuzi renwen shijiao xia Quan Tang shi bianzhe shiren de shikong guiqi fenxi” 數字人文視角下全唐詩貶謫詩人的時空軌跡分析, *Tushu qingbao gongzuo* 圖書情報工作 66.7 (2022.4): 26–34.
- 10 For instance: Tian Caixian 田彩仙, “Cong Song Zhiwen houqishige kanqi bianzhexintai” 從宋之問後期詩歌看其貶謫心態, *Jimei daxue xuebao* 集美大學學報 4.3 (2001): 97–100; Yu Huimin 余慧敏, “Shilun Zhang Yue de bianzhexintai yu bianzhe shi” 試論張說的貶謫心態與貶謫詩, *Hunan wenli xueyuan xuebao* 湖南文理學院學報 31.6 (2006): 88–90; Fang Jinbiao 方錦彪, “Shen Quanqi bianzhe shi chuangzuo xintai tanwei” 沈佺期貶謫詩創作心態探微, *Wenhua xuekan* 文化學刊 6 (2020): 243–45.
- 11 One of the earliest comments in this vein, often cited by scholars, was made by Yan Yu 嚴羽 (fl. 1230s–1240s) in his *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話: “The finest Tang poems were for the most part compositions about military campaigns, exile, travel, and parting” 唐人

In this article, instead of thinking of court and exile as being on the two opposite ends of the spectrum, I propose reading the turn-of-the-eighth-century poems written in exile as being on the same continuum of court poetry in its traditional definition,¹² for they are characterized by an intense centripetalism that is manifested in several interconnected aspects reinforcing and giving impetus to one another: 1) the replication of the court network in terms of the poems' circulation and readership; 2) poets' continuous participation in the discursive structure of a court-capital ecosystem through the deployment of verse forms habitually practiced in court compositions; 3) the constitution of what I call a *petitionary genre* in terms of the poems' sentiments and rhetoric. These aspects, I further contend, create a connection between the center and the distant edges of the empire that prior to this time may have existed administratively but not conceptually or imaginatively. In other words, the poems written at the margins of the empire expanded the imagination about the empire and in that sense shortened the distance between center and periphery. What had previously remained intellectual and cartographic knowledge now became viscerally experienced landscapes of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. At a time when mobility was considerably limited by curfews, passes, and vehicular technologies,¹³ banishment to faraway

好詩多是征戍、遷謫、行旅、離別之作。From He Wenhuan 何文煥 (1732–1808), *Lidai shihua* 歷代詩話 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 699. For a comprehensive account and analysis, see Wu Guangxing 吳光興, *Ba shiji shifeng: Tansuo Tangshi shi shang Shen Song de shiji* 八世紀詩風: 探索唐詩史上沈宋的世紀 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2013), 18–28.

- 12 In an article published in 1995, Zu-yan Chen points out that the term “court poetry” had not been defined as a literary term in major English and Chinese dictionaries. He cites Stephen Owen, who first used the term in *The Poetry of the Early Tang*: “The term court poetry properly describes the occasional circumstances of a poem’s composition; here we are using the term loosely to denote a period style, that of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries when the court was the center of poetic activity in China” (*The Poetry*, 437, n. 4). Chen offers the following definition: “Court poetry can be defined as the poetry addressed by courtiers to their sovereigns or vice versa, and the poetry written by courtiers for a formal occasion.” Zu-yan Chen, “Impregnable Phalanx and Splendid Chamber: Chang Yüeh and the Aesthetics of High T’ang Poetry,” *CLEAR* 17 (1995): 80.

- 13 Tang practiced a strict curfew system, and violators of curfews would be punished by law. See the entry on “curfew violation” 犯夜 in Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (594–659) et al., comp. *Tanglü shuyi* 唐律疏議 (Taiwan: Hongwenguan, 1986), 26.489–90. As a measure of population mobility control, travel permits known as *guosuo* 過所 were issued by the government for eligible applicants, and violators would be punished. See Liu Xu 劉昫 (887–946) et al., comp. *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975; hereafter *JTS*), 43.1839–840; *Tanglü shuyi* 8.172–76. For a brief discussion of these measures in Tang, see Zheng Xianwen 鄭顯文, “Dunhuang Tulufan wenshu zhong suojiande Tangdai jiao-

places, accomplished by a decreed use of exclusionary post-station horses and carriages, ironically became a sanctioned and expedited means of traversing new territories.¹⁴ There are simultaneous expansion and contraction of space caused by the production and circulation of these poems, by new connections made between one end of the empire and another. This, I would like to suggest, has a much greater importance for the real-time conception of the empire and, by extension, the conception of self-identity than an idealized vision of imperial geography outlined in geographical writings and received truisms about “the king’s land” (*wangtu* 王土) and “the king’s subjects” (*wangchen* 王臣) in the traditional canon do.

Yet, the exiled poets seem to have found an uncanny analogy between the highest echelon of Tang society, namely members of the imperial family and the courtiers attending to them, frequently figured as immortals (*shenxian* 神仙), and the hellish dark reaches of the empire infested with demons and goblins (*wangliang* 魍魎), since both the highest and lowest remain invisible to the mortal eye. Most of the time they desperately want to get out from the clutches of the latter and regain the grace from which they fell, but occasionally, they pause and contemplate the freedom they might achieve in anonymity and disappearance from the System, just falling off the map of civilization, order, and imperial rule. In this ambivalent fantasy, the land of punishment and exile, the penumbra of the Great Tang empire, briefly morphs into the utopia of the Peach Blossom Fount, in an uncanny enactment of a medieval Chinese version of “prison and utopia.”

Post-station: Readership and Materiality

According to Song Zhiwen’s biography, “Zhiwen was banished twice, and he journeyed across the Yangzi River and the Five Ranges. All his compositions were circulated far and near. His friend Wu Pingyi put them together and compiled them into a collection of ten scrolls, which was transmitted in the world” 之間再被竄謫，經途江嶺，所有篇詠，傳布遠近。友人武平一為之纂集，成十卷，

tongguanli de falüguiding” 敦煌吐魯番文書中所見的唐代交通管理的法律規定, in *Xinan shifan daxue xuebao* 西南師範大學學報 31.6 (2005): 136–37.

14 Li Dehui 李德輝 gives an excellent account of the regulated use of post-station resources in *Tang Song shiqi guanyi zhidu jiqi yu wenxue guanxi zhi yanjiu* 唐宋時期館驛制度及其與文學關係之研究 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2008), 57–73. There might be expansion or laxation of rules in the eighth and ninth century (Li, 112–15), but the state continued to try to exert control over the post-stations through the Tang.

傳於代.¹⁵ To consider the circulation and readership of poems written in exile, state-sponsored post-stations, *yi* 驛, were one of the most important venues. Judging from the occasional titles, numerous Tang poems were composed at post-stations, whereas no poem bears such a title in extant pre-Tang writings.¹⁶ Post-stations first became a notable site of poetry composition and circulation in poems written by exiles at the turn of the eighth century.

The Tang invested heavily in a well-developed post-station system. According to the *Six Canons of the Tang* (*Tang liudian* 唐六典), completed and presented to the throne in 739, there were 1,639 post-stations throughout the empire, with one set up every thirty *li*.¹⁷ The post-stations on land were connected by a state-maintained route known as a post-station road (*yilu* 驛路) or an official road (*guanlu* 官路 or *guandao* 官道).¹⁸ These post-stations not only served to relay information and tribute to and from the court but also functioned as hostels for envoys and officials going to the provinces or coming to the capital. Banished ministers, escorted by officers known as Supervisors (*gang* 綱) and Managers (*dian* 典), were ordered to be dispatched speedily through post-stations (*chiji faqian* 馳驛發遣).¹⁹

15 JTS 190b.5025. Wu Pingyi (d. ca. 741) was also the compiler of the court poetry chronicle *par excellence*, *An Account of the Literature Institute of the Jinglong Era* (*Jinglong wenguan ji* 景龍文館記).

16 Tang post-stations and their relationship to literature are the topic of much Chinese scholarship in recent years. Li Dehui's work mentioned above is the most comprehensive, precise, and well-documented. Also see Wu Shuling 吳淑玲, *Tangdai yizhuan yu Tangshi fazhan zhi guanxi* 唐代驛傳與唐詩發展之關係 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2015).

17 The original note of the *Six Canons* lists 1,297 post-stations on land, 260 by rivers, and 86 amphibian sites, which add up to 1,643 post-stations. Li Linfu 李林甫 (d. 753) et al. comp., Chen Zhongfu 陳仲夫 annot., *Tang liudian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 5.163. The numbers fluctuated through the Tang (see Li, *Tang Song*, 13–17), and the actual distance between post-stations depended on regions. As mentioned earlier, some post-stations were much closer to each other than thirty *li*. See Wang Hongzhi 王宏治, “Guanyu Tang chu guanyi zhidu de jige wenti” 關於唐初館驛制度的幾個問題, in *Dunhuang Tulu-fan wenxian yanjiu lunji* 敦煌吐魯番文獻研究論集 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1986), 288; also Li, *Tang Song*, 32–35.

18 See Li, *Tang Song*, 148–53.

19 For *gang* and *dian*, see *Tangli shuyi*, 11.216. Many relegation edicts state that the exiled officials be escorted by emissaries and dispatched without delay through post-stations. For instance, Xuanzong's edict banishing Qi Huan 齊澣 (d. 750) and Ma Cha 麻察: “Both be escorted by emissaries and driven away speedily through post-stations” 仍並差使馳驛領逐. QTW 23.267. Xuanzong's edict banishing his Korean general Wang Maozhong 王毛仲 (d. 731): “Have an emissary escort him speedily through post-stations to his destination; no straying is allowed” 差使馳驛領送至任, 勿許東西. QTW 30.338. Emperor Suzong's 肅宗 (711–762) edict banishing his financial minister Diwu Qi 第五琦 (712–782): “He shall be exempted from execution by beheading and punished by being exiled to the wilderness.

The post-stations were important nodal points on a vast network of textual circulation in several ways. First, many poems were entrusted to government messengers (*yishi* 驛使) to be taken from one place to another. For instance, Cen Shen 岑參 (715–770) writes in “Replying, in Guozhou, to the Poem that Judge Zhen of Shaanxi Sent Me” 虢中酬陝西甄判官見贈: “The other day, through the post-station messenger, / you bestowed on me your poem on joining the army” 前者驛使來, 忽枉行軍詩.²⁰ When Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) was prefect at Hangzhou and his good friend Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) at Yuezhou 越州 (also in Zhejiang), they sent poems to each other through post-stations. Bai’s poem, “In Drunkenness I Seal This Poetry Tube to Send to Weizhi [Yuan Zhen]” 醉封詩筒寄微之, concludes with this couplet: “I say to the postal clerks of the two prefectures: / ‘Do not refuse to pass our poetry tubes back and forth’” 為向兩州郵吏道, 莫辭來去遞詩筒.²¹ Ren Hua 任華 (fl. 730s–760s), an eccentric, addressed a long poem to Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), “Sending to Reminder Du” 寄杜拾遺, which ends with, “Urgently I entrust my letter to the postal messenger—send this to Reminder Du for me” 火急將書憑驛使, 為報杜拾遺.²² Second, some poems were composed at a post-station and left there on full view for future readers, as the walls of post-stations, like a public message board, provided a space for these business travelers to inscribe their poems, who knew full well that they would be read, memorized, or copied by later travelers.²³ As Bai Juyi vividly states in “Seeing the Poems by Yuan the Ninth at Lan-qiao Post-station” 藍橋驛見元九詩: “Every time I arrived at a post-station, the moment I got off my horse, / tracing the walls and circling the pillars, I’d look for your poems” 每到驛亭先下馬, 循牆繞柱覓君詩.²⁴ The first records of inscrib-

He shall be permanently banished to Yizhou [modern Guizhou] and dispatched speedily by post-station horses. Thereupon, the Supervisor will take him to his exile destination and no straying is permitted” 宜寬殊死之命, 俾就投荒之謫, 可除名長流夷州, 馳驛發遣, 仍差綱領送至彼所, 勿許東西. *QTS* 42.462. Also see Li, *Tang Song*, 138–39.

20 *QTS* 198.2031.

21 *QTS* 446.5001. Bai Juyi’s “poetry tube” was made of bamboo and used as a mailing container for a poetry scroll. See his poem, “I Write Poems with Weizhi Back and Forth and Always Send the Poems in A Bamboo Tube; Coordinator of Pitchpipes Chen Admired It and Composed a Poem, and I Respond with This Piece” 與微之唱和來去常以竹筒貯詩陳協律美而成篇因此答. *QTS* 446.5005.

22 *QTS* 261.2903.

23 See Yan Jihua 嚴紀華 *Tangren tibi shi yanjiu* 唐人題壁詩研究 (Taipei: Hua Mulan wen-hua chubanshe, 2008), and Christopher M.B. Nugent’s discussion of it in the larger context of Tang poetry’s materiality and dissemination in *Manifest in Words, Written on Paper: Producing and Circulating Poetry in Tang Dynasty China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center Press, 2010), 199–214.

24 *QTS* 438.4870. Yuan Zhen also mentioned seeing Bai Juyi’s poems in post-stations. One of

ing poems on post-station walls came to us from the exiled courtiers at the turn of the eighth century, which will be discussed in the next section. Last but not the least, as will be shown below, some poems were composed at a post-station and presented to other traveling officials or exiles passing through, who would then take the poems away with them. While one could certainly send (*ji* 寄) poems to specific addressees or disseminate poems to faraway places through friends traveling for private purposes and staying at private guesthouses, post-stations provided the most reliable and expeditious means of textual circulation.

In late 703, a well-documented incident took place in the court of Empress Wu: the brothers favored by the empress, Zhang Yizhi 張易之 (d. 705) and Zhang Changzong 張昌宗 (d. 705), accused Wei Yuanzhong 魏元忠 (d. 707), Censor-in-chief, and Gao Jin 高繼 (d. 703/704), Aide of the Rites Bureau and the lover of Princess Taiping 太平公主 (d. 713), Empress Wu's daughter, of conspiring with the Crown Prince against the empress in a private conversation. When the empress asked the Zhang brothers how they came by the information, they cited Zhang Yue 張說 (667–731) as a witness to the alleged conversation.²⁵ Blackmailed by the Zhang brothers, Zhang Yue agreed to testify against Wei and Gao; but when he was summoned to appear in front of Empress Wu, he stated that he had been coerced by the Zhang brothers and that the reported conversation had never happened to his knowledge. The Zhang brothers were enraged, and an unhappy empress decided to banish all three of them—namely, Wei Yuanzhong, Gao Jin, and Zhang Yue—to the far south.²⁶

On his way to Qinzhou 欽州 (in Guangxi), Zhang Yue wrote a poem at a post-station: “At the Luba Post-station, I Heard Censor Zhang and Judge Zhang Were Arriving, But I Was Unable to Stay and Wait for Them, and I Leave This Poem for

his quatrains “On Luokou Post-station” 駱口驛 reads: “Many lines of characters on the walls of the post-station: / Cui and Li left their names, Wang and Bai their poems. / All day long there was no one to talk to; / I would not leave the walls until it was time to go” 郵亭壁上數行字，崔李題名王白詩，盡日無人共言語，不離牆下至行時。QTS 412.4567. The poem has a long note appended to it, specifying that Bai's poem be inscribed on the northern wall. *Yuan Zhen ji biannian jianzhu* 元稹集編年箋注, annot. Yang Jun 楊軍 (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 2002), 141. To this quatrain Bai Juyi responds with, “My clumsy poems on the wall: nobody cares for them; / stained by birds, attacked by moss, the words are fragmented. / There is only the sentimental Censor Yuan, who does not begrudge / wiping off the dust with his embroidered clothes to read them” 拙詩在壁無人愛，鳥汗苔侵文字殘。唯有多情元侍御，繡衣不惜拂塵看。QTS 437.4849.

25 See Paul W. Kroll, “On the Date of Chang Yüeh's Death,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 2.2 (1980): 264–65.

26 JTS 78.2707; 97.3051. For Gao Jin as Princess Taiping's lover, see Wang Pu, comp. *Tang huiyao*, 64.1105; see also *Zizhi tongjian*, 207.6564.

Them” 盧巴驛聞張御史張判官欲到不得待留贈之.²⁷ Censor Zhang and Judge Zhang were emissaries from the court. Officials traveling on king’s business or in exile were required to cover a certain distance every day.²⁸

旅竄南方遠	Traveling far in banishment to the southern region,
傳聞北使來	at the post-station I hear that emissaries are coming from the north.
舊庭知玉樹	One knows the jade trees from the former courtyard;
合浦識珠胎	now at Hepu I recognize the pearls in embryo. ²⁹
白髮因愁改	My hair has turned white because of sorrow;
丹心托夢回	this cinnabar heart returns home in a dream.
皇恩若再造	If the imperial grace could grant a new life,
為憶不然灰	please remember this pile of ashes that no longer burns.

Zhang Yue begins the poem by stating the occasion and goes on to pay a compliment to the emissaries in the second couplet. In the third couplet, he juxtaposes the images of white hair (sorrow) and cinnabar heart (loyalty) to stir sympathy. The final couplet, alluding to the story of Han Anguo 韓安國 (d. 127 BCE), the imprisoned Han official who had famously stated that even dead ashes might be rekindled one day (and was indeed rehabilitated),³⁰ is unequivocal in voicing the poet’s hope that the emissaries intercede for him at the court. The poem is written in the five-syllable-line “regulated” form popular in court compositions of the day; while no literary masterpiece, it demonstrates an assured command of the metrical rules and the craft of parallelism, and effectively con-

27 QTS 87.953. Also see *Zhang Yue ji jiaozhu* 張說集校注, annot. Xiong Fei 熊飛, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 1.297–98.

28 According to Tang code, exiled officials were required to cover “seventy *li* a day by horse, fifty *li* by donkey or on foot, and thirty *li* by carriage” 馬日七十里, 驢及步人五十里, 車三十里 (*Tanglü shuyi* 3.68). Regarding his travel schedule on his way to the destination of his exile, Song Zhiwen writes in a poem, “Traveling by Boat from Hongzhou Headquarters, I Give an Honest Account of My Journey” 自洪府舟行直書其事: “Journeying on a strict schedule, I have not a moment of rest, / day and night I travel through wind and waves” 嚴程無休隙, 日夜涉風水. QTS 51.623. *SQQSZW*, 2.423. Except for Xuanzong’s 746 edict, there is no evidence that exiled officials were *universally* required to travel even faster than officials on business as Wu Shuling claims; Xue Jue’s 薛珏 786 memorial about a ban of tarrying in post-stations (請禁淹留館驛奏) was directed at emissaries, especially military personnel (QTW 526.5349; *Tang liudian* 61.1061). Wu, *Tang dai yizhuan*, 57–58.

29 Hepu (in modern Guangxi) is famous for producing pearls. Jade tree is a common metaphor for a fine man.

30 Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–87 BCE), comp. *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 108.2859.

veys the poet's message and gets the job done. In this regard, we may consider this piece representative of contemporary court poetry. The poet might be far away from the court, but his poetic craft and mannerism stayed the same.

During their exile journey, Gao Jin and Zhang Yue encountered each other at the post-station in Duanzhou 端州 (in modern Guangdong). They spent a night there and shared a meal together before going separate ways. Perhaps on this occasion Zhang Yue wrote a poem, "Presented to Gao Jin the Sixth in the South" 南中贈高六戩,³¹ which echoes the poem addressed to the court emissaries but contains some interesting twists:

北極辭明代	Under the North Pole Star we took leave of the bright age,
南溟宅放臣	in the Southern Deep lodge the exiled ministers.
丹誠由義盡	The cinnabar heart of loyalty is spent from the sense of right;
白髮帶愁新	white hair grows anew with sorrow.
鳥墜炎洲氣	A bird falls from the sky, overcome by the air of the fiery region;
花飛洛水春	as flowers are flying across the springtime Luo River.
平生歌舞席	At the banquet of dance and song, frequented in old times,
誰憶不歸人	who would remember the man who is not coming home?

Just like in the poem to the emissaries, this poem begins with a contrast of north and south: the Pole Star represents the monarch, whereas the Southern Deep recalls the ocean in *Zhuangzi* to which the mythical Peng bird, transformed from a leviathan, migrates from the northern seas. It is an image of metamorphosis: although fallen from grace, the poet sees himself and his friend as great creatures going through an amazing change. This positive, if self-aggrandizing, identification is nevertheless undercut by the downward movement from the stars to the sea, which reproduces the descending trajectory of the courtier banished from the court, always as figured as heaven in early Tang court poetry, to the margins of the empire.

In the second couplet we once again see the juxtaposition of cinnabar heart with white hair, which professes innocence and invites pity. The third couplet is supposed to represent a shift in the regulated poem, and Zhang Yue does that with a masterful stroke: the Peng bird implied in the first couplet is being

31 QTS 87.953. Zhang Yue also composed a poem upon separation, "Parting from Gao Jin the Sixth at Duanzhou" 端州別高六戩 (QTS 87.951). The poem is translated in Owen, *The Poetry of the Early Tang*, 389–90.

turned into the proverbial falcon that, according to the account of the Eastern Han general Ma Yuan 馬援 (14 BCE–49 CE), was so affected by the pestilential miasma of the far south that it would fall into a stream in mid-flight.³² In a parallel couplet it is common for bird and flower to form a pair, but the poet takes the familiar pairing in a melancholy direction, as the fallen bird in the far south is mimicked by the fallen flowers of late spring in the capital Luoyang. Late spring is the time of Lustration Festival, a major holiday celebrated by nobles and commoners alike on the banks of the Luo River. Clearly with these merry partygoers in mind, the poet concludes with a question and a gesture of supplication. Just like in the poem addressed to the emissaries, he hopes to be remembered (*yi*) by those who are enjoying the good life at court, and that will be the only chance for him and his friend to rise again.³³

In Qinzhou Zhang Yue wrote many poems when parting from emissaries from the capital, and these poems were most likely written in post-stations where the emissaries were put up during their visit and farewell banquets were customarily held upon their departure.³⁴ One concludes with an open request that the emissary disseminate the poem to the audience back at home:

秋雁逢春返	The autumn geese return when encountering spring,
流人何日歸	on what day can this banished man go home?
將余去國淚	Taking my tears of leaving the capital,
灑子入鄉衣	I sprinkle them on your homecoming clothes.
饑獠啼相聚	Starving langurs cry out as they gather;
愁猿喘更飛	sorrowful gibbons pant, then leap again.
南中不可問	The far south cannot be inquired after:
書此示京畿	I write this to show the good people of the capital. ³⁵

Since post-stations were the nodes in a vast, efficient transportation and communication network connecting the empire, poems written at post-stations

32 Fan Ye 范曄 (398–446), comp. *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 24.838.

33 The last couplet of the poem might have been an allusion to Gao Jin's special status as Princess Taiping's lover, but unfortunately the phrase "the man who is not coming home" became a poetic prophecy, for Gao Jin died in exile. A year later, Zhang Yue, on his return to the capital, came through the Duanzhou post-station again, and wrote a poem to lament his friend: "On My Way Home I Reached Duanzhou Post-station Where Previously I Parted from Gao the Sixth" 還至端州驛前與高六別處 (QTS 87.956; *Zhang Yue ji* 2.369), translated by Owen in *The Poetry of the Early Tang*, 390.

34 For the post-stations' function as space for banquets, see Li Dehui, *Tang Song*, 211–17.

35 "Seeing Off An Emissary in Lingnan" 嶺南送使. QTS 87.952. *Zhang Yue ji* 1.283.

were guaranteed a high visibility and easier dissemination. Poets were aware of and counted on this fact, regardless of whether they explicitly stated it as Zhang Yue does in this poem. In other words, they wrote poems with a larger readership than the immediate recipient(s) in mind, the significance of which will be discussed in the section on the petitionary genre.

A Virtual Courtly Gathering

On his way to Qinzhou in 710, Song Zhiwen passed through Jingzhou (in Hubei) and presented a poem to Cui Rizhi 崔日知 (d. ca. 728), a former colleague at court who was serving as Jingzhou Administrator at the time.³⁶ The poem is fragmented, but the last four lines read:

明主無由見	I have no means of seeing our wise sovereign,
群公莫與言	none of the various lords would put in a word for me.
幸君逢聖日	On the day when you, dear sir, encounter the Sage, ³⁷
何惜理虞翻	I hope you will not begrudge making an appeal for Yu Fan. ³⁸

An exiled courtier would frequently make such requests for intervention, a topic we will return to below in the section on the petitionary genre. The relationships that he wished to cultivate and maintain were not, however, always hierarchical and top-oriented, nor was his need to communicate supposed to only serve utilitarian purposes. The court was more than just a center of power: it was a material setting, a political institution, a movable and moving community, and a *sense* of that community. The community interacted on numerous occasions and for many different purposes, including court meetings, outings to scenic sites, banquets in the palace, and private gatherings amongst the courtiers. Writing in a post-station enabled the courtier to carry on the practice of group composition in a virtual gathering and preserve that very sense of community even when the community itself was broken up in physical reality.

In early 705, barely two years after the Wei Yuanzhong incident, the Zhang brothers were executed in a coup, and Empress Wu was forced to abdicate

36 The poem is entitled "Setting Out from Jingzhou, I Present This to Administrator Cui" 初發荊州贈[崔]長史. *QTS* 52.639. *SQQSZW*, 2.543–44.

37 The Sage refers to the emperor.

38 Yu Fan (164–233) served under Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252) in the State of Wu during the Three Kingdoms period and was banished to Jiaozhou for his outspokenness.

to the Crown Prince, who would be Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 705–710). Almost twenty courtiers associated with the Zhang brothers were sent into exile, and among them were some of the best-known men of letters: Cui Rong 崔融 (653–706) was banished to Yuanzhou 袁州 (in modern Jiangxi), Li Jiao 李嶠 (ca. 645–714) to Tongzhou 通州 (Sichuan), Wang Wujing 王無競 (d. ca. 706) to Guangzhou 廣州, Song Zhiwen 宋之文 to Longzhou 隴州 (Guangdong), Yan Chaoyin 閻朝隱 (ca. 712) to Yazhou 崖州 (Hainan), Du Shenyan 杜審言 (ca. 640s–708) to Fengzhou 峰州 (Vietnam), and Shen Quanqi 沈佺期 (d. 713) to Huanzhou 驩州 (Vietnam). This was the first largest group exile of prominent writers in the Tang. Many of them had been part of the team tasked with compiling a massive encyclopedia entitled *Pearls and Blossoms of the Three Teachings* (*Sanjiao zhuying* 三教珠英) in the late 690s. While they were working at it, “they conversed from morning to evening, composed poetry, and gathered at parties” 日夕談論，賦詩聚會.³⁹ In fact, they reportedly had such a good time that they did not do much work for a long time, and the encyclopedia was only completed thanks to one or two industrious souls.⁴⁰ Now that this group was dispersed to various destinations of their exile, it led to a proliferation of poems, and we will discuss two clusters here.

When passing through Huangmei 黃梅 (in Hubei) on his way to the far south, Song Zhiwen wrote the following poem: “During My Journey, on the Cold Food Festival, I Wrote This Poem in the Linjiang Post-station at Huangmei and Sent It to Cui Rong” 途中寒食題黃梅臨江驛寄崔融.⁴¹

馬上逢寒食	On horseback I encounter the Cold Food Festival;
愁中屬暮春	in sorrow I happen upon late spring.
可憐江浦望	What a pity that, in the gaze afar at the river's ford,
不見洛陽人	I do not see the person of Luoyang.
北極懷明主	Looking to the North Pole Star, I pine for our bright lord;
南溟作逐臣	by the Southern Deep I serve as an exiled officer.
故園腸斷處	In my hometown, the place of heartbreak:
日夜柳條新	day and night the willow branches are growing anew.

The poem begins with spatial transition and the cyclical movement of time. Triggered by the strange experience of observing the Cold Food Festival on

39 JTS 102.3175, 78.2707.

40 That is, Xu Jian 徐堅 (650s–729) and Zhang Yue. JTS 102.3175.

41 QTS 52.640. SQQSZW 2.421.

horseback, each subsequent couplet contains within it the shifting perspective in space and the painful awareness of change from past to present. The last couplet continues the double foci on time and space but is centered on a hidden pun: it was customary to break a willow branch (*liǔ*) and give it to the departing friend to urge him to stay (*liú*); but what is broken here is the poet's heart that, unlike the willow, cannot heal and renew. The image of springtime sprouting back in the hometown hints at the merry celebration of the Cold Food Festival in the capital and the rule of a new emperor, whose grace to his subjects is regarded as life-giving.

Cui Rong wrote a response that matches Song's poem couplet by couplet and repeats certain words:⁴²

春分自淮北	At mid-spring I set out from the north of Huai,
寒食渡江南	on Cold Food Festival crossing to the River's south.
忽見潯陽水	Suddenly I see the water of Xunyang, ⁴³
疑是宋家潭	I still think it is Song family's pond.
明主闔難叫	Our bright lord's gate is difficult to knock open;
孤臣逐未堪	the outcast officer's exile is ever unbearable.
遙思故園陌	As I think afar on the paths of my hometown:
桃李正酣酣	peaches and plums are right now in fiery bloom.

Like Song Zhiwen, Cui Rong also structures each couplet along the space-time axis. The second couplet connects the present with the past through a momentary misapprehension, as the poet fancies still standing by the pond at Song Zhiwen's home estate. The last couplet rewrites the original couplet with different trees: peach and plum instead of willow, whose full blossoming seems to mock the poet's sorrow.

Another courtier, Hu Hao 胡皓 (fl. 700–715), also wrote a matching piece.⁴⁴ He begins his poem by recalling one of the most famous late-spring gatherings of all times, the gathering at Lanting, whose communal pleasure accentuates the pain of the present breakup of community:

⁴² QTS 68.765–66.

⁴³ Xunyang is just a little further to the south of Huangmei.

⁴⁴ QTS 108.1123. We do not know much about Hu Hao, but since four of his poems are preserved through the *Pearl Scholars Collection* 珠英學士集, he was presumably one of the *Sanjiao zhuying* compilers under the aegis of the Zhang brothers and sent into exile as a member of the Zhang brothers' social circle. *Quan Tang shi bubian* 全唐詩補編, ed. Chen Shangjun 陳尚君 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 19.

聞道山陰會 I have heard of the gathering at Shanyin;
 仍為火忌辰 and these again are the hours of banning fire.
 途中甘棄日 During travel one is resigned to wasting days;
 江上苦傷春 sailing on the river, I nonetheless suffer
 from spring sorrow.
 流水翻催淚 Flowing water in turn makes tears fall,
 寒灰更伴人 cold ashes ever keep my company.
 丹心終不改 This cinnabar heart will never change,
 白髮為誰新 yet for whom do these new white hairs grow?

The poem is built around the “cold ashes,” which not only refers to the absence of cooking in observation of the Cold Food Festival but also evokes the Han Anguo story. While willows are growing anew in the original poem, the only thing that grows anew is the poet’s white hair—an image corresponding to the color of the cold ashes, and enlivening the by-now familiar juxtaposition of cinnabar heart and white hair in exile poems. Though separated and writing in isolation, these court poets and former *Sanjiao zhuying* compilers who used to “compose poetry and gather at parties” manage to carry on.

Later on Song Zhiwen arrived at the very same Duanzhou post-station where Zhang Yue met with Gao Jin, and saw poems inscribed on its wall by several of his fellow exiles. We know this thanks to the long descriptive title of his own piece inspired by the earlier poems: “Reaching the Duanzhou Post-station, I Saw Poems on the Wall by Du Shenyan the Fifth, Shen Quanqi the Third, Yan Chaoyin the Fifth, and Wang Wujing the Second, and I Am Moved to Compose This” 至端州驛見杜五審言沈三仝期閤五朝隱王二無競題壁慨然成詠.⁴⁵ Those earlier poems are no longer extant except for the one by Shen Quanqi, “Matching from Afar the Poem by Assistant Du Shenyan on Crossing the Range” 遙同杜員外審言過嶺.⁴⁶

45 QTS 51.626. SQQSZW, 2.433.

46 QTS 96.1043. SQQSZW, 1.85. Owen’s translation with modifications, *The Poetry of the Early Tang*, 355. The poem is included in the eighth-century anthology *Guoxiu ji* 國秀集, with slight alteration in the title: “Matching from Afar the Poem on Passing through the Yu Range by Du the Fifth” 遙同杜五過庾嶺. See Rui Tingzhang 芮挺章, comp. *Guoxiu ji*, in Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, Chen Shangjun 陳尚君, and Xu Jun 徐俊, ed. *Tangren xuan Tangshi xinbian zengding ben* 唐人選唐詩新編增訂本 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 292; hereafter G.XJ. Also in Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) et al., comp. *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 139.1477; hereafter W.Y.H. Some scholars believe that two seven-syllable-line quatrains by Yan Chaoyin, recovered from a Dunhuang manuscript copy, were also inscribed on the wall of the Duanzhou post-station. See Wang Zhongmin 王重民, Sun Wang 孫望, and Tong Yangnian 童養年, ed. *Quan Tang shi waibian* 全唐詩外編 (Taipei: Muduo, 1983), 10–11.

- 天長地闊嶺頭分 Sky is infinite, earth is vast: divided by the peaks of
the Five Ranges,
去國離家見白雲 leaving both state and family behind, we see the
white clouds.⁴⁷
洛浦肝腸無處說 Where to speak of the pang the heart feels for the
bank of the Luo?⁴⁸
崇山瘴癘不堪聞 I cannot bear to hear of the plague and pestilence of
the Chong Mountain.⁴⁹
南浮漲海人何處 Floating on the Expansive Sea to the south, where is
the man?⁵⁰
北望衡陽雁幾群 Gazing north toward Hengyang, I wonder how many
flocks of geese?⁵¹
兩地春光萬餘里 Spring's light in two places, ten thousand miles
apart,⁵²
何時重謁聖明君 when shall we pay respects to our sage lord again?

The poem is permeated with an acute sense of disconnection across a vast space. Every couplet is marked by severance and blockage: separation from lord and state, family and friends; the distance between center and periphery, north and south, the civilized world and the barbarian land, the Chong Mountain and the Luo River; the breakdown of communication. Even what should have been shared across the vast space, namely spring's light, is *rhetorically* separated into two places. The image of clouds in the opening couplet is associated with rootless wandering in early poetry, but white clouds also evoke

47 離家 reads 憂家 in *GXJ*.

48 肝腸無處說 reads 風光何所似 in *QTS* and the Ming edition on which *SQQSZW* is based. I follow *GXJ* and *WYYH* here.

49 崇山 reads 青山 in the Qing manuscript referenced by *SQQSZW*. Here Chongshan is probably right, since it is related to an allusion of banished minister that Shen Quanqi uses in another poem, so Chongshan's association with exile is strong in Shen's usage. Mount Chong as a proper name also forms a better parallel with the Luo River in the preceding line.

50 The Expansive Sea, Zhanghai, is another name for the South Sea.

51 Hengyang has a mountain peak believed to be where the wild geese stop their journey south, marking the southern reaches of the empire. See James Robson's discussion in *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (Nanyue 南嶽) in Medieval China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Asia Center, 2009), 123–24. Hence the image not only says the poet has gone further than the geese, but also indicates the place beyond which is the outside of the empire.

52 I follow *WYYH* in adopting 春光, which reads 春風 in *GXJ*.

the *Zhuangzi* statement: “One rides the white clouds and arrives at the land of gods.”⁵³ The poet’s lack of access to the land of gods—the imperial realm—is echoed in the question posed in the last line, “When shall we see the sage lord again?”, and brings the poem to a full circle.

Song Zhiwen in a way “rewrites” Shen Quanqi’s poem, and throws the motif of separation across vast space into sharp relief by focusing on a new geopolitical understanding that only comes with relocation from center to periphery.⁵⁴

逐臣北地承嚴譴	The exiled ministers from the northland received severe punishment;
謂到南中每相見	we assumed that in the south we could always see each other.
豈意南中岐路多	Who would have thought that in the south the crossroads would be so many?
千里萬里分鄉縣	A thousand miles, ten thousand miles: we are separated in different towns and counties. ⁵⁵
雲搖雨散各翻飛	Clouds quiver, rain scatter—each flies dispersing; ⁵⁶
海闊天長音信稀	the oceans vast, the sky long—letters are rare.
處處山川同瘴癘	Everywhere the mountains and rivers share the malarial fog,
自憐能得幾人歸	and I worry about how many of us will ever be able to return.

This piece is usually read as a single poem with a change of rhyme in the middle.⁵⁷ The poet’s mood shifts from optimism (“We will see each other again in the south”), to surprise (“The south is big and we are dispersed all over the place”), to further disappointment (“We do not even get letters often”), and

53 “乘彼白雲，至於帝鄉。” *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, comp. Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (1844–1896) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 5.421.

54 Owen’s translation with modifications, *The Poetry of the Early Tang*, 378. Like Shen Quanqi’s poem, Song’s poem is also included in *GXJ* (289) and *WYYH* (297.1516). The title reads “At Duanzhou Post-station I Send This to Du Shenyan and Wang Wujing the Second” 端州驛寄杜審言王二無競 in *WYYH*.

55 *QTS* reads 千山萬水分鄉縣 (“A thousand mountains and ten thousand streams divide our posts”) and gives “qianli wanli” as a variant. I follow *GXJ* and *WYYH*.

56 *Fanfei* reads *fenfei* 分飛 (“fly separate ways”) in *GXJ*.

57 Another possibility is to read the poem as two quatrains. That would fit in with Yan Chaoyin’s two seven-syllable-line quatrains mentioned above (if Yan’s quatrains were indeed written on the wall at the Duanzhou post-station).

finally to a moment of realization and self-pity ("We may all die here in this awful place!"). Most notably, as pointed out earlier in this article, when the poet imagines the empire from the capital, the south seems to be all just one region, but now he recognizes its vastness and diversity. The only thing he still shares (*tong*) with his friends is, ironically, not spring's light as in Shen Quanqi's poem, but the malarial disease that could kill them all.

In Song Zhiwen's and Shen Quanqi's poems, the greatest pathos of the exiled minister is not so much the hardship of travel as the dispersal of a close-knit court community. Writing, especially at the post-stations, helps them maintain a sense of that community. The communal character of exile poems is also reflected in the fact that the poets seem to have deliberately reused some images and motifs and created echoes of one another's works. The third couplet of Song Zhiwen's poem to Cui Rong, "Looking to the North Pole Star, I pine for our bright lord; / by the Southern Deep I serve as an exiled officer" 北極懷明主, 南溟作逐臣, bears a striking similarity to the opening couplet in Zhang Yue's poem to Gao Jin: "Under the North Pole Star we took leave of the bright age, / in the Southern Deep lodge the exiled ministers" 北極辭明代, 南溟宅放臣. The pairing of the North Pole Star and the Southern Deep, with the latter image associated with the exiled minister or a traveler away from the capital city, is not seen in earlier poetry, but now becomes habitual in poems composed in the provinces.⁵⁸ This is not only the source of inspiration but also the undertext for the immortal closing lines from the poem "Staying Over at the White Sand Post-station" 宿白沙驛, written by none other than Du Shenyang's grandson, Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), who was deeply indebted to the poetry of the court poets of his grandfather's generation:

隨波無限月 Following the waves of infinite moonlight,
 的的近南溟 clearly, sparkly, I near the Southern Deep.⁵⁹

In this image of the Southern Deep, the mythical Peng Bird is ever present, a figure of grandeur with the potential for continuous transformation, but it is always haunted by its dark side: the falcon that falls, overcome by the miasma,

58 See Song Zhiwen, "Ascending the Terrace of Yue King" 登粵王臺, *QTS* 53.651; Liu Yunji 劉允濟 (fl. 684–704), "Passing by Mount Lu I Gazed Back at Jiangzhou, Longed for the Luo River, and Composed This Poem" 經廬岳回望江州想洛川有作, *QTS* 63.744–45; Sun Ti 孫逖 (696–761), "Going Down to the Jingkou Dike and Traveling by Night" 下京口埭夜行, *QTS* 118.1193; Li Bai 李白 (701–761), "Presented to Chamberlain Song Zhi of Liyang" 贈溧陽宋少府陟, *QTS* 169.1746.

59 *QTS* 233.2567.

into a stream in mid-flight and dies—a legacy bequeathed by the turn-of-the-century court poets.

Verse Forms

In a poem Song Zhiwen wrote in his second, and last, exile, a couplet reads: “Rain color shakes up the vermillion crags, / the sound of streams clamors in the azure haze” 雨色搖丹嶂，泉聲聒翠微。⁶⁰ It recycles a couplet from a poem he wrote when he accompanied Empress Wu on her journey to Mount Song to perform the Fengshan Ceremony:

白羽搖丹壑 The commander's white-feathered banner shakes up the
colorful ravine;
天營逼翠微 the Heavenly Camp Constellation presses against the
azure haze.⁶¹

The Heavenly Camp Constellation, which is another name for the Purple Tenuity Constellation, represents the monarch and her entourage; the white feathers are a synecdoche for the arrows carried by the imperial guards. While the earlier couplet describes how the imperial presence is writ large in the natural landscape, in the later couplet it is the rain's color and the raucous sound of the stream that make a visual and aural impact on a landscape. The point here, however, is that although the external conditions impose a change on the actors in nature, in both the “court poem” and the “exile poem” the poet sees the same pattern of stillness becoming animated into lively scenes.⁶² The poet's craft and focus of attention remain the same regardless of where he is.

60 “Entering Qingyuan Gorge Early in the Morning” 早入清遠峽. *QTS* 53.654. *SQQSZW*, 2.572. Also known as 下桂江龍目灘二首其二 (*WYYH* 290.1480).

61 “Answering Imperial Command” 松山嶺應制. *QTS* 52.633. *SQQSZW*, 2.389. *WYYH* 167.802 has “Ode to Mount Song” 松山頌 and the second line reads 天宮通翠微.

62 This resonates with the excellent point made in an article by Madeline K. Spring, “T'ang Landscapes of Exile,” that the landscape description in some of the Mid-Tang writer Han Yu's 韓愈 (768–824) exile poems do not seem to be substantially different from that in his or some other Tang poet's non-exile-poems. *Journal of American Oriental Society* 117 (1997): 316–17. Spring's article is an important reminder to stick close to the textual evidence at hand rather than being trapped in the simple-minded argument of a certain strand of biographical criticism, although I disagree with her readings of some of Han Yu's poems. Since Han Yu's poetry is not part of this article's focus, I merely wish to point out a methodological concern: landscape representation should be considered in the context of the topic and mood of a poem as a holistic whole, not just in and of itself.

Many exile poems discussed in the preceding sections are *wuyan lüshi* 五言律詩: poems written in eight five-syllable lines with two parallel couplets in the middle. This is the most practiced verse form at court gatherings.⁶³ The second most frequently practiced verse form at court, according to Jia Jinhua's statistics, is *qiyán lüshi* 七言律詩, that is, poems of eight seven-syllable lines with two middle parallel couplets.⁶⁴ Shen Quanqi's poem cited in the preceding section is a good example. A court poet may find himself in a tropical jungle, but this does not prevent him from applying his courtly craft to its representation. In the famous poet Song Zhiwen's case, this is manifested not only in his continued use of verse forms that first became prevalent at court, but also in his choice of a particular verse form that won himself wide acclaim on a courtly occasion.

In a famous incident that occurred on a court outing to Longmen (Dragon Gate) near Luoyang in or around 698,⁶⁵ Empress Wu commissioned poetry from attending courtiers and put up a brocade robe as a reward for whoever finished first. One courtier won the brocade robe; but when Song Zhiwen's piece was done, the empress decided that it was superior, so she stripped the winner of his robe and gave it to Song Zhiwen instead.⁶⁶ Song Zhiwen's poem, still extant, is a fast-paced joyous paean to the glory of the empress's reign; it begins with four stately five-syllable lines, and then transitions seamlessly into exuberant seven-syllable lines, thirty-eight in all.⁶⁷ In 709, on his way to Yuezhou (in Zhejiang), the destination of his exile, the disgraced courtier wrote a poem whose verse form is exactly a repeat performance of the opening stanzas of the Dragon Gate poem. This is "First Spending the Night at the Mouth of the Huai" 初宿淮口:⁶⁸

孤舟汴河水
去國情無已

A lone boat, on the water of the Bian:
I leave the capital behind, my feelings are endless.

63 According to Jia Jinhua 賈晉華, 171 out of 369 poems included in the *Jinglong wenguan ji* are regulated poems in eight five-syllable lines. See Jia, *Tangdai jihui zongji yu shirenqun yanjiu* 唐詩集會總集與詩人群研究 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2001), 66. Song Zhiwen and Shen Quanqi were both active participants in the court compositions of the Jinglong era (707–710).

64 Poems in this category take up almost 20% of the total number of poems recorded in *Jinglong wenguan ji*.

65 See discussion of this dating in *sqqszw*, 2.789.

66 *JTS* 190B.5025. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) et al., comp. *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975; hereafter *XTS*), 202.5750.

67 Translated in Owen, *The Poetry of the Early Tang*, 304–6.

68 *QTS* 51.628. *sqqszw*, 2.494. Huaikou (the mouth of the Huai) is in Jiangsu, the point where the Grand Canal enters the Huai River.

晚泊投楚鄉	In the evening I moor in the land of Chu,
明月清淮裏	a bright moon reflected in the clear Huai.
汴河東瀉路窮茲	The Bian River flows eastward, the road comes to an end here;
洛陽西顧日增悲	I look west at Luoyang, my grief increases with each passing day.
夜聞楚歌思欲斷	At night, as I listen to Chu songs, my heart is about to break, ⁶⁹
況值淮南木落時	let alone at a time when leaves fall south of the Huai. ⁷⁰

Like the Dragon Gate poem, this poem begins with five-syllable lines and then transitions into seven-syllable lines, creating a split in the middle. Placed in contrast, the five-syllable meter takes on a feeling of somberness and restraint. Remarkably, each line of the first half of the poem explicitly or implicitly contains a place name, and each name finds its echo in the corresponding line of the second half of the poem. That is, the Bian River in l. 1 is repeated in l. 5; the capital in l. 2, Luoyang, is explicitly identified in l. 6; the Chu in l. 3 returns in l. 7; and finally, the Huai in l. 4 recurs in l. 8. Each time the place name reappears, it is elaborated and given a stronger emotional force. The Bian River that carries the lone boat is next represented as a road coming to an end, a figure of hopelessness; Luoyang appears in the poet's backward gaze, and his feelings are intensified with each passing day; the land of Chu surrounds the poet with the despair-inducing songs; and finally, the Huai River is now expanded to the entire region south of the Huai, where trees shed their leaves and signal autumn, the season of withering and falling that fills the banished minister's heart with sorrow as in the "Nine Changes" from the *Lyrics of Chu*. The recurrence of the place name in the second half of the poem is no simple repetition; instead, it is a refrain that picks up intensity as it surges forth. The use of the seven-syllable line lends itself perfectly to the verbal amplification and emotional intensification in the course of the poem, and the effect resembles that of the Dragon Gate poem: a slow and stately beginning is built into a crescendo by the change in meter.

69 This is a reference to the story of how Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 BCE), King of Chu, heard Chu songs sung by the Han army surrounding his troops and, thinking that the Han had conquered all of Chu territories, lost his will to fight.

70 The Western Han work *Huainanzi* states that one knows a year is ending upon seeing a single leaf fall (見一葉落而知歲之將暮). *Huainanzi* 淮南子, ed. Liu Wendian 劉文典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 16.550.

Another poem that exemplifies this technique is Song Zhiwen's swan song. Banished further south in 710, he spent the spring of 712 in Guizhou (in Guangxi), and wrote "Guizhou: On the Third Day of the Third Month" 桂州三月三日 to commemorate the Lustration Festival.⁷¹

- 4 代業京華裏 My family legacy is in the magnificent capital;
遠投魑魅鄉 now I am cast far away to the land of ogres.
登高望不極 Climbing high, I gaze into the farthest distance:
雲海四茫茫 the sea of clouds stretches endlessly on four sides.
- 8 伊昔承休盼 In the past I received my lord's fond regard,
曾為人所羨 I was once the object of everyone's envy.
兩朝賜顏色 Through two successive reigns I was granted
 honor and glory,⁷²
二紀陪歡宴 for more than two decades I accompanied
 merry banquets.
- 昆明御宿侍龍媒 I attended the Dragon Steeds at the Kunming Pond
 and in the Yusu Palace;
伊闕天泉復幾回 how many times was I present at Yi's Watchtowers
 and the Heavenly Pool?⁷³
西夏黃河水心劍 From the Yellow River of the Western Xia
 emerged the Sword of Water's Heart;
12 東周清洛羽觴杯 in the limpid Luo of the Eastern Zhou,
 feather-decorated goblets were passed around.⁷⁴
苑中落花掃還合 The fallen flowers in the park were swept away
 but then gathered again,
河畔垂楊撥不開 the hanging willow branches by the canal,
 so thick that they could not be parted with hands.

71 QTS 51.628–29. *SQSZW*, 2.560.

72 That is, Empress Wu and Emperor Zhongzong.

73 The Kunming Pool and Yusu Palace were in Chang'an; Yi's Watchtowers and Heaven Pool were in Luoyang.

74 The legendary sword is recorded in Wu Jun's 吳均 (469–520) *Xu Qixie ji* 續齊諧記: King Zhao of Qin held a banquet by the Yellow River on the Shangsi Festival; a bronze figure emerged from the river and presented him with the Sword of the Water's Heart, saying, "My lord shall rule over Western Xia." In *Han Wei liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan* 漢魏六朝筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1999), 1007.

- 千春萬壽多行樂 For a thousand springs and ten thousand years,
so much pleasure,
16 柏梁和歌攀耆作 on Cypress Beam Terrace I chanted the matching
song to the sagely composition.⁷⁵
- 賜金分帛奉恩輝 The gifts of gold and silk were bestowed on me,
I was bathed in imperial grace;
風舉雲搖入紫微 uplifted by wind, swayed by clouds,
I entered the Palace of Purple Tenuity.
晨趨北闕鳴珂至 At dawn I hurried to the northern gate-tower,
my horse's jade bells a-ringing;
20 夜出南宮把燭歸 at night I left the south palace,
going home with a candle in hand.
- 載筆儒林多歲月 Carrying my brush in the grove of scholars,
I thus passed many months and years;
襜被文昌佐吳越 packing my luggage in the Secretariat,
I was sent to assist Wu and Yue.
- 越中山海高且深 The mountains of Yue were tall, and its sea was deep;
24 興來無處不登臨 when mood struck, there was not a place I failed to
visit.
永和九年刺海郡 In the ninth year of the Yonghe era, I oversaw the sea-
side commandery;
暮春三月醉山陰 in the last month of spring, I got drunk at Shanyin.⁷⁶
愚謂嬉遊長似昔 Foolishly I thought that my enjoyment would last
forever;
28 不言流寓歎成今 who knew that I would drift in a foreign land till this
day?
- 始安繁華舊風俗 Prosperous and splendid,
Shi'an observes the old custom,

75 The Cypress Beam Terrace was where Han Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) performed linked verse with his minister. This refers to the writing of poems matching the imperial compositions.

76 “Yonghe jiunian” 永和九年 and “muchun sanyue” 暮春三月 are phrases from Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303–361) preface to the famous collection of poems written at the Lanting gathering on the Lustration Festival in Shanyin (Shaoxing, Zhejiang), where Song Zhiwen was magistrate from 709 to 710.

- 帳飲傾城沸江曲 the entire city has come out
for boisterous drinking parties at river's bend.
主人絲管清且悲 The host's strings and pan-pipes
play a clear and sad tune;
32 客子肝腸斷還續 this traveler-guest's heart is shattered,
and then put back together again.
荔浦蘅皋萬里餘 More than ten thousand miles away,
this cove of climbing fig, the marsh of asarum,
洛陽音信絕能疏 news and messages from Luoyang are the most sparse
of all.
故園今日應愁思 But today of all days
my hometown should think on me in sorrow:
36 曲水何能更祓除 when will I ever again perform the lustration rite
by the winding pool?
逐伴誰憐合浦葉 I want to follow my companions—
which of them pities this leaf from Hepu?⁷⁷
思歸豈食桂江魚 I yearn to go home—how can I bear
eating the fish from the Gui River?
不求漢使金囊贈 I do not seek the bag of gold
presented to the Han emissary,
40 願得佳人錦字書 I wish only to obtain a letter from the fair lady,
embroidered on brocade.⁷⁸

In this poem, the prelude in five-syllable lines lasts four couplets, doubling the length of the Huai poem discussed above. The main body of the poem is also much longer, spanning thirty-two lines or sixteen couplets. Nevertheless, we see the same structure with the same formal components: the poet begins with a controlled statement of where he is and was; then, when he turns to reminiscing, he unleashes a flood of memory of his glorious days and, in the last twelve lines, gives a painful reflection on his present-day situation. The juxtaposition

77 According to an old story, a large leaf from a fir tree at Hepu reportedly flew into Luoyang in 111 CE during the reign of Han Emperor An (r. 107–125). Ji Han 嵇含 (263–306), *Nanfang caomu zhuang* 南方草木狀, in *Han Wei liuchao biji xiaoshuo daguan*, 262.

78 The Han emissary refers to Lu Jia 陸賈 (d. 170 BCE), who on his diplomatic mission received a bag of gold and other gifts from an admiring King of Nanyue. Sima Qian, *Shi ji* 97.2698. The fair lady's letter embroidered in brocade refers to the palindromic composition created by Su Hui 蘇蕙 (fl. late 4th c.) and sent to her husband in exile who was separated from her. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648) et al., comp. *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 96.2523.

of the five-syllable and seven-syllable meters is used effectively to mimic the trajectory of the poet's thought and emotion, much in the same way as a musical piece that starts slowly and increases its tempo until it reaches a crescendo. If the Dragon Gate poem, which won the poet much fame and glory, is built up from the stately opening to an enraptured, accelerated tribute to the empress and ends on a high note, then the Guizhou poem, featuring emotions from the opposite end of the spectrum, is its reversed mirror image. The last couplet is obliquely directed at an audience in the capital: the poet is saying that he does not care much about his local host's admiration for his talent; rather, he only yearns for the fond regard from the "fair lady" back home.

A Petitionary Genre

The "fair lady" mentioned at the end of Song Zhiwen's poem may refer to his former patron, Princess Taiping 太平公主 (665–713), Empress Wu's beloved daughter, Emperors Zhongzong and Ruizong's 睿宗 (r. 710–712) sister. After Song Zhiwen was recalled from his first southern exile in 706, he foolishly switched his attention to the new powers that be, namely Zhongzong's wife Empress Wei (d. 710) and their favorite daughter Princess Anle 安樂公主 (685–710), which greatly irritated Princess Taiping. In 709, accused by Princess Taiping of taking a bribe, he was banished to Yuezhou. The next summer, Zhongzong died suddenly; soon after, Empress Wei and Princess Anle were killed in a coup supported by Princess Taiping, who put her brother Ruizong on the throne and subsequently dominated the court until her own downfall in 713. Due to his involvement with Empress Wei and Princess Anle, Song Zhiwen was exiled further south, where he wrote the above poem to pitifully beg for the grace from the fair lady from afar.⁷⁹

In classical Chinese tradition, poetry is supposed to speak of what is on one's mind (*yanzhi* 言志). Poems written in exile may certainly do that, but if we place too much emphasis on the expressive function of these poems, we might overlook the diverse *uses* to which a poetic text is subjected, often quite self-consciously by its author. Many of the poems by banished courtier poets at the turn of the eighth century were, as demonstrated earlier in this article, written with an acute awareness of a large readership, especially the elite readership in the capital. This does not necessarily conflict with their expressive function, but

79 XTS 202.5750. Also see his chronology in *SQSZW*, 2.797, 2.805.

it does add another important dimension to our understanding of the way in which this poetry worked. That is, poems written in exile embody a peculiar self-representational mode of proclaiming innocence and professing loyalty and inscribe the poet in the position of constant desire and supplication. In these poems, the poet often treads carefully, attempting to strike a delicate balance between longing and resentment, sorrow and complaint, acknowledgement of guilt and declaration of virtue. The poet in exile acts as a humble petitioner, and his poems constitute a *petitionary genre* whatever the outcome may be, and as will be shown below, there is plenty of evidence demonstrating that one's action and writings in disgrace might have a real impact on one's fate.

The first order of business for a petitioner is to profess his desire: to receive pardon and return to the capital. As said earlier, the turn-of-the-eighth-century exile poems are marked by centripetalism, one of whose common manifestations is the use of the capital as the reference point and the measure of the poet's experience. The opening couplet of Song Zhiwen's poem, "Autumn Day in Shi'an" 始安秋日, is representative in this regard: "Guilin's scenery is different: / its autumn is similar to spring in Luoyang" 桂林風景異, 秋似洛陽春.⁸⁰ Whether it is "different" *yí* or "similar" *sì*, the implicit standard for comparison remains the capital Luoyang. While the courtiers from the north find the tropical climate of the far south alien and disorienting,⁸¹ even more troubling is the absence of empire time signaled by the annual calendar issued by the court in a new year. This is the topic of Shen Quanqi's poem, "Cold Food beyond the Range" 嶺表寒食.⁸² The title has a note, presumably appended by the author, "The local people in Huanzhou do not make cold food [on the Cold Food Festival]" 驩州風土不作寒食.

嶺外無寒食 Beyond the Range there is no Cold Food;⁸³
 春來不見錫 spring arrives, with no malt sugar candy in sight.⁸⁴
 洛陽新甲子 Luoyang has a new calendar:
 何日是清明 which day is the Clear and Bright Day?⁸⁵

80 QTS 53.651. *SQSZW*, 2.564.

81 See, for instance, "Lodging in Annan" 旅寓安南 by Du Shenyan. QTS 62.734. Translated and discussed in Owen, *Poetry of the Early Tang*, pp. 335–36.

82 QTS 96.1038. *SQSZW*, 1.98–99. QTS gives the title as, "Encountering the Cold Food Festival beyond the Range" 嶺表逢寒食.

83 "無寒食" reads 遲寒食 in WYTH (157.742), and 逢寒食 in *SQSZW* (based on a Ming edition).

84 A snack eaten during the Cold Food Festival.

85 Qingming, lit. Clear and Bright, refers to the Qingming Festival or the Tomb-sweeping Day, usually a day or two after the Cold Food Festival.

花柳爭朝發 Flowers and willows vie to burst forth;
 軒車滿路迎 coaches fill streets greeting one another.
 帝鄉遙可念 The land of the gods, so distant, is much missed;
 腸斷報親情 my heart breaks responding to the affection of my kin.

In contrast with the scene of thronging and prospering in the capital, the space beyond the Range is demarcated by negation and lack: *no* Cold Food, *no* malt sugar candy, *no* sense of calendrical time. The return of the spring marks nature's cycle, but without the new calendar issued by the court in Luoyang, days pass in formlessness and befuddlement, devoid of "Clarity and Light."

In this context, the exile treats his nature outings as a distraction from misery, as Shen Quanqi states: "How could I merely want to explore strange and remarkable sights? / It is just to soften my desire for return" 豈徒探怪異, 聊欲緩歸心.⁸⁶ More often than not, he uses his appreciation of the beauty of the southern landscape as a setup for his true desire as well as a foil for the depth of his suffering. This is encapsulated in this couplet by Song Zhiwen: "Although the far south has its delights, / my yearning for the north is more intense each day" 南中雖可悅, 北思日悠哉.⁸⁷ That is, only when the far south offers pleasurable sights does the poet's ultimate rejection of them out of longing for the capital carry more weight. The poem "Entering Qingyuan Gorge Early in the Morning," from which we cite a couplet earlier, relates the charms of the southern scenery only to undermine them at the end:

傳聞峽山好 I heard people say the gorge in the mountains is pretty;
 旭日棹前沂 at sunrise I set a boat on the front stream.
 雨色搖丹嶂 Rain color shakes up the vermillion crags,
 4 泉聲聒翠微 the sound of streams clamors in azure haze.
 兩巖天作帶 Between the facing cliffs, the sky makes a girdle;
 萬壑樹披衣 over ten thousand ravines, trees throw on a robe.
 秋菊迎霜序 Autumn chrysanthemums greet the season of frost;
 8 春藤礙日輝 spring creepers block sunlight.
 翳潭花似織 Concealing the pool, flowers are like embroidery;
 緣嶺竹成圍 growing along the peaks, bamboos form a circle of
 defense.

86 From "From Mount Chong to Yuechang" 從崇山向越常. *QTS* 97.1053. *SQQSZW*, 1.120.

87 Song Zhiwen, "Setting Out Early from Shixing's River Mouth, I Composed This Poem upon Arriving at Xushi Village" 早發始興江口至虛氏村作. 虛氏 reads 靈長 in *WWYH*. *QTS* 53.652. *SQQSZW*, 2.431–32.

- 寂曆環沙浦 All is quiet and empty, as our boat rings the sandy isle;
 12 蔥蘢轉石圻 verdant and lush, as we turn around the rocky banks.
 露餘江未熱 Last dews remain, the river is not yet hot;
 風落瘴初稀 as wind subsides, the miasma vapor still sparse.
 猿飲排虛上 Gibbons take a drink and ascend into emptiness;
 16 禽驚掠水飛 a bird is startled, flying low over the water.
 榜童夷唱合 The oarsmen sing a Yi song in harmony;
 樵女越吟歸 woodcutting girls go home chanting in Yue dialect.
 良候斯為美 This hour is a fine hour indeed,
 20 邊愁自有違 but the sorrow of the borderland deviates.
 誰言望鄉國 Who would know that, when I gaze afar on my homeland,
 流涕失芳菲 my tears flow, and I lose sight of the fragrant scenery?

The landscape representation is complex: the poet's marvel at the pristine beauty of the place (ll. 5–6) soon gives way to a sense of seasonal disorientation (ll. 7–8), claustrophobia (ll. 9–10), and finally the feeling of loneliness, even desolation (ll. 11–12). The next couplet positions the poem precariously on the verge of all the unpleasantness of the strange tropical climate—the humid heat as the day wears on, and the pestilential vapors that come with it. While gibbons, birds, and the “barbarian” locals singing in a language incomprehensible to the poet are at home here, the poet alone feels out of place. In the last couplet, his backward gaze and his tears cause him to lose sight of the scene in front of his eyes.

In a petitionary poem, the poet's body is often foregrounded in a pitiful state—aging, aching, or itching and bleeding from insect bites—to highlight his degradation and humility. A memorable stanza from one of Zhang Yue's Yuezhou poems states:

- 重欷視欲醉 I sigh repeatedly, my vision is blurred as if drunk;
 憎滿氣如噎 dazed, sick at heart, my breath is choked.
 器留魚鱉腥 Eating utensils reek of the stench of fish and turtles;
 衣點蚊虻血 my robes are dotted with bloody spots from mosquitos
 and horseflies.⁸⁸

A poem Song Zhiwen wrote on his way to Qinzhou, “Setting Out from Tengzhou” 發藤州, offers a poignant contrast between a remarkably anthro-

88 From “Composed in Yuezhou” 岳州作. *QTS* 86.932. *Zhang Yue ji*, vol. 2, 390.

pomorphous nature thriving in its full glory and the failing human form of the poet disconnected from the nourishing court community:⁸⁹

- 朝夕苦遄征 From morning to dusk I ache from rushed travel,
孤魂長自驚 this lonely soul is often rattled for no reason.
泛舟依雁渚 Sailing in a boat along the isle of wild geese;
4 投館聽猿鳴 staying at a post-station, I listen to gibbons cry.
石髮緣溪蔓 Rock-hair spreads along the stream,⁹⁰
林衣掃地輕 the forest's robes, brushing the ground, flutter lightly.
雲峰刻不似 No sculpting could imitate these cloudy peaks;
8 苔蘚畫難成 paintings are unable to capture these mosses and lichens.
露裊千花氣 Dews are saturated with the fragrance of a thousand
flowers;
泉和萬籟聲 the stream harmonizes with ten thousand sounds of
nature.
攀幽紅處歇 Climbing the secluded heights, I take a break amongst the
reds;
12 躋險綠中行 trekking through steep terrain, I march on amidst the
green.
戀切芝蘭砌 My fond attachment to the angelica and eupatorium stairs
is ever acute;
悲纏松柏塋 my grief is twined around the graves where pines and
cypresses grow.
丹心江北死 The cinnabar heart has died north of the River,
16 白髮嶺南生 white hair keeps growing south of the Range.
魑魅天邊國 Ogres and goblins: this land at heaven's edge;
窮愁海外情 desperate and sorrowful: the feelings beyond the seas.⁹¹
勞歌意無限 I sing in toil, my feelings boundless;
20 今日為誰明 for whom does the sun shine today?

Nature is anthropomorphic, possessing a fairytale charm that transcends artifice and craftsmanship (ll. 5–8). But as the poet advances, different kinds of plants, either metaphorical or envisioned, i.e., the fragrant plants growing by the stairs, which indicate fine young men in the family, or the pines and cypresses planted by his ancestral graves, eclipse those in front of his eyes. As

89 QTS 53.652. *SQ QSZW*, 2.555–56.

90 Rock-hair is a mossy plant that grows on rocks in water. The forest's robe refers to the foliage.

91 海外情 reads 海上城 in QTS and *SQ QSZW*. I follow WYH 290.1479.

the poet's dejection begins to take over, the red of flowers bleeds into the poet's dead "cinnabar heart," and the green foliage, including the rock-hair, is replaced by the sterile "white hair" in the familiar pairing. The courtier's body is reduced to a thing that only generates white hair but becomes lifeless inside, mechanically trudging on to the destination of his exile.

A petitionary poem is ultimately marked by its profession of innocence and loyalty as well as the elaboration of the poet's wretchedness, of which Song Zhiwen's "Setting Out Early from the Great Yu Range" 早發大庾嶺 is exemplary:⁹²

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| | 晨躋大庾險 | In the morning I climb the perilous Great Yu Range, |
| | 驛鞍馳復息 | the postal horse gallops, then rests. |
| | 霧露晝未開 | The fog does not dissipate even during daytime, |
| 4 | 浩途不可測 | this long road is beyond measure. |
| | 嶸起華夷界 | Towering over the boundary between civilization and barbarians, |
| | 信為造化力 | the mountain truly demonstrates the power of Creation. |
| | 歇鞍問徒旅 | Dismounting from my saddles, I ask the travelers on the road: |
| 8 | 鄉關在西北 | their hometown is in the northwest. |
| | 出門怨別家 | Going out the door, we begrudge taking leave of our family; |
| | 登嶺恨辭國 | ascending the Range, we regret departing from the capital. |
| | 自惟勸忠孝 | Reflecting on myself, I live by loyalty and filial piety, |
| 12 | 斯罪懵所得 | I do not understand how I came to be convicted. |
| | 皇明頗照洗 | The Sagely Lord was of the mind to spare me, |
| | 廷議日紛惑 | but court discussions were varied and confused. |
| | 兄弟遠淪居 | My brothers all dwell faraway; |
| 16 | 妻子成異域 | my wife and children are separated from me. |
| | 羽翮傷已毀 | I grieve how these wings are irrevocably damaged; |
| | 童幼憐未識 | I pity the young for not knowing their father yet. |
| | 躊躕戀北顧 | Lingering, I fondly look back to the north; |
| 20 | 亭午晞霽色 | at noon, the sky clears up and is filled with light. |
| | 春暖陰梅花 | Spring warms the plum blossoms on the northern side of the Range, |
| | 瘴回陽鳥翼 | the wild geese are turned back by pestilential vapors. |
| | 含沙緣澗聚 | Sand-spitters gather along the ravine, |
| 24 | 吻草依林植 | poisonous creepers grow all over the forest. |

92 QTS 51.623. SQQSZW, 2.429–30.

- 適蠻悲疾首 Going to the Mon land, I suffer from a head-splitting grief;
 懷輦淚沾臆 I yearn for Gong, tears soaking my breast.
 感謝鵷鷺朝 Moved, I say this to the court lined with talented men:
 28 勤修魑魅職 I will diligently fulfill my duty in the land of ogres.
 生還倘非遠 If my homecoming is not too distant,
 誓擬酬恩德 I vow to repay the mercy and grace.

In this poem, the poet proclaims his innocence and virtue, yet takes care not to assign blame to the emperor, stating, as graciously as possible, that it was the “court discussions” that led to his downfall. While he represents himself as a pitiful figure separated from his family, he never attacks those who are responsible for his deplorable state. Instead, he vows to continue serving the state diligently and repay the mercy shown him if he gets to return home alive in the foreseeable future. The poem is a memorial to the throne and a public statement.

Shen Quanqi has a long autobiographical poem, “Answering the Ogre: Written in Replacement of a Letter to Send to My Family” 答魑魅代書寄家人,⁹³ written in the form of question-and-answer between an ogre—since he is exiled to the land of ogres—and his shadow, representing himself. It contains a fascinating account of the poet’s financial circumstances. Considering the fact that Shen’s exile was a result of double offenses, namely his association with the Zhang brothers *and* the earlier allegation against him of taking a bribe while he was in charge of civil service examinations, the insertion of this stanza in a poem ostensibly addressed to his family could be read as a response to the bribery charge:

- 家本傳清白 I have a family legacy of purity and incorruptibility,
 官移重掛床 in transferring offices I only value “hanging the couch.”⁹⁴
 上京無薄產 In the capital I do not even have a meager estate,
 故里絕窮莊 nor do I own any barren land in my hometown.
 碧玉先時費 The cost of Green Jade was paid off in the old days;⁹⁵
 蒼頭此自將 this Black Head slave is providing for himself.

93 QTS 97.1051–52. SQQSZW, 1.108–117.

94 “Hanging the couch” is a reference to the well-known story about Chen Fan’s 陳蕃 (d. 168) respectful treatment of Xu Zhi 徐穉 (97–168): when Chen Fan was a magistrate, he did not receive guests except for Xu Zhi; he would set up a couch only for Xu Zhi and hang it up as soon as Xu left. *Hou Han shu* 53.1746.

95 “Green Jade” is a conventional name of a maid/concubine from a lower-class family in the Southern Dynasties songs.

興言歎家口 Alas, I sigh about the members of my family—
何處待贏糧 where can they count on surplus grain?

...

Of course, the poet could protest his innocence to his own family, but knowing how the writings of an exiled poet, especially one as highly regarded as Shen Quanqi,⁹⁶ easily went into circulation, we would be naive to assume that these lines were only intended for the private ears of the poet's family without consideration of a public audience.

An exiled courtier writes poetry not necessarily for literary fame, but for a different sort of reputation and exoneration. This is the case not only with famous poets like Song Zhiwen and Shen Quanqi but also with poets who are less known today. Cui Shi 崔湜 (671–713) and Zheng Yin 鄭愔 (d. 710), both influential ministers who were deeply entangled in power struggles at the Tang court, were accused of taking bribes while being in charge of recruitment; Cui was banished to Jiangzhou while Zheng to Jizhou (both in modern Jiangxi). Cui Shi, a good-looking man who was involved with several powerful “fair ladies” in court, received intervention from Zhongzong's consort Shangguan Wan'er 上官婉兒 (664–710) and Princess Anle; he was subsequently reappointed to Xiangzhou (in Hubei), which was half the distance to the capital compared to Jiangzhou. Zheng Yin, a plain-looking fellow, was reassigned to Jiangzhou instead.⁹⁷ Cui Shi wrote a long poem entitled, “In the Second Year of Jinglong, I Was Demoted from Grand Chancellor to Supernumerary Adjutant of Jiangzhou and Soon Afterward Was Reappointed as Governor of Xiangzhou Governor; I [Write This to] Articulate My Intent on My Way to Xiangyang on A Spring Day” 景龍二年，余自門下平章事削階授江州員外司馬，尋拜襄州刺史，春日赴襄陽途中言志。⁹⁸ The poem begins with self-identification: “I am originally a native of Yan and Zhao, / by nature I am honest and straight to a fault” 余本燕趙人，秉心愚且直。He goes on to describe his downfall in these terms: “Boisterous were the men by the roadside, / who slandered me endlessly. / Above they moved our Sagacious Lord to suspicion, / below they caused the humiliation of a great minister. / But I was not even slightly implicated, / holding myself

96 Zhang Yue, the “grand master of literature” 大手筆 commonly acknowledged by contemporaries (*XTS* 125.4402), made a well-known remark: “The poetry of elder brother Shen the Third is No. 1—one just got to give it to him” 沈三兄詩，直須還他第一。Liu Su 劉鋹 (fl. 740s), *Sui Tang jiahua* 隋唐嘉話, collated by Cheng Yizhong 程毅中 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 39.

97 *QTS* 74.2622–633, *ZZTJ* 209.6635.

98 *QTS* 54.661.

above blame, like the jade jar containing ice” 嗷嗷路傍子，納謗紛無已，上動明主疑，下貽大臣恥。毫髮顧無累，冰壺邈自持。He depicts the change of his exile location and the lessening of punishment as vindication of his honor and ends the poem with a melancholy narration of his departure from the capital. Zheng Yin's poem on his way to Jiangzhou, “Demoted, I Arrived at Guangcheng Post-station in Ruzhou” 貶降至汝州廣城驛, likewise contains a stanza proclaiming his blamelessness, describing himself as a precious jewel being discarded for no good reason: “I was about to balance the plum flavor in the cauldron, / and would not even adjust my cap in the apricot garden. / This Chu jade never has a single blemish, / but suddenly Sui's pearl was shot away as a pellet” 將調梅鉉實，不正李園冠，荆玉終無玷，隨珠忽已彈.⁹⁹ At the end of the poem, he expresses longing for appreciative friends, alluding to his potential for repayment if he is redeemed: “Going on and on, I long for those who truly know me: / how can I ever repay you for that one meal” 去去懷知己，何由報一餐？

Apart from their cathartic function, was writing these petitionary poems, especially when not being required by social occasions and obligations, useful in any pragmatic sense? While we may not know for sure, it is safe to say that not writing them would certainly *not* have helped their authors. Liu Su's 劉肅 (fl. early 9th c.) *New Tales of the Great Tang* (*Da Tang xinyu* 大唐新語) records an instructive anecdote about Su Weidao 蘇味道 (648–705) and Zhang Xi 張錫 (ca. 630s–ca. 711). In 701, they were detained at the Court of Judicial Review for some offense. Since they were both chancellors and their offence was thought to be light, they were treated with deference and provided well by officers in charge. The two men reacted to adversity very differently, and their behaviors led to different consequences:

Su Weidao did not dare accept the [officers'] generosity, refused to ride a horse, went over on foot, slept on the floor, and kept a simple vegetarian diet. Zhang Xi, on the contrary, rode his horse to the site of detainment, stayed in the lodging reserved for the Official Elite, looked his normal self, ate and drank inside enclosing screens, the same as usual. When Zetian heard, she pardoned Weidao and exiled Xi to Lingnan.¹⁰⁰

99 QTS 106.1108–109. Balancing the plum flavor refers to cooking, which is used as a metaphor for a prime minister governing the state. Adjusting one's cap under an apricot tree might make people think one is stealing the apricots, and not doing so is to be cautious about damaging one's reputation. The Chu jade is a precious jade with no blemish. “Sui's pearl” is a priceless pearl, and to use it as a pellet is a waste.

100 *Da Tang xinyu*, collated by Xu Denan 許德楠 and Li Dingxia 李鼎霞 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 8.124.

味道終不敢當，不乘馬，步至繫所，席地而臥，蔬食而已。錫乘馬至寺，舍二品院，氣色自若，帷屏飲膳，無忝平居。則天聞之，原味道而放錫於嶺南。

How one behaved in disgrace clearly mattered.

Meanwhile, Zheng Chuhui 鄭處誨 (*jinshi* 834) records an anecdote about Zhang Yue's use of his poems during his years of exile at Yuezhou 岳州 (in Hunan). In 716, he wrote a set of poems about five deceased Tang ministers ("Wujun yong" 五君詠) and enclosed them in a letter to Su Ting 蘇頌 (670–727), who at the time was Emperor Xuanzong's trusted advisor.¹⁰¹ He allegedly instructed the messenger: "Be sure to deliver the letter on the 'taboo day' and do it toward evening." The "taboo day" was the anniversary date of the death of Su Ting's father Su Gui 蘇瓌 (639–710),¹⁰² who had been a good friend to Zhang Yue and was one of the ministers extolled in the poems. The messenger duly did what Zhang Yue said.

It so happened that the weather had been cloudy for dozens of days before. Toward evening the mourners arrived, many of whom had been former colleagues of Zhang Yue and Su Gui. When Ting read the poems, he teared up and was overcome by sadness. The next day he sent a memorial to the throne, stating how loyal and outspoken Zhang Yue was, how he had worked laboriously for the king and was also highly respected by everyone, and how he should not be left languishing in a distant region. The emperor subsequently bestowed a letter inquiring after Zhang Yue. Soon afterward Zhang Yue was promoted to be Administrator at Jingzhou (in Hubei).¹⁰³ From that point, Lu Xiangxian, Wei Sili, Zhang Tinggui and Jia Zeng, who likewise had been in exile for a long time, were all reviewed and deployed again.¹⁰⁴

會積陰累旬，近暮弔客至，多說先公寮舊，頌因覽詩，嗚咽流涕，悲不自勝。翌日乃上封，大陳說忠貞謬，嘗勤勞王室，亦人望所屬，不宜淪滯於遐

101 Chen Zuyan 陳祖言 convincingly dates this event to the winter of 716 and explains why Zhang Yue's biography in *Xin Tang shu* gives a misleading account (XTS 125.4407). See Chen, *Zhang Yue nianpu* 張說年譜 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1984), 41–42.

102 This was the twenty-second day of the eleventh month; it would be December 10 in 716.

103 This took place in early 717. The next year he was called back to court before being made Governor of Youzhou and achieved impressive military feats during his tenure. See *Zhang Yue nianpu*, 44–49.

104 *Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄, collated by Tian Tingzhu 田廷柱 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 2.28.

方。上乃降璽書勞問，俄而遷荊州長史。由是陸象先、韋嗣立、張廷珪、賈曾皆以譴逐歲久，因加甄收。

This anecdote is rich with meanings. “On the Five Gentlemen” was the title of a famous set of poems written by Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (385–456) to commemorate five notable historical personages.¹⁰⁵ In his “Wujun yong,” however, Zhang Yue extols and laments five deceased contemporaries in the “remembering old friends” (*huaijiu* 懷舊) mode of another Southern Dynasties luminary, Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513).¹⁰⁶ The anecdote portrays Zhang Yue as possessing an astute understanding of human psychology, as he pinpointed the perfect time for catching Su Ting at a vulnerable moment as well as on a semi-public occasion when he was receiving mourners, while cloudiness, an act of providence, subtly contributed to the atmosphere of melancholy (and perhaps also serves as a reminder of the need to restore cosmic balance with the *yang* energy of leniency). But the most interesting element of the anecdote is the affect of poetry, seen here as capable of stirring emotion and influencing behavior.

Petitionary poems above all inscribe the poet in the position of desire, which acts as a powerful connector linking the empire’s margins to its center and, in the process of doing so, creates a sense of cohesion. These poems could be about sightseeing, temple visiting, observing a festival, parting from a colleague passing through on his way to the capital or another prefecture, sending off a court emissary, or serving as an epistolary surrogate (*daishu* 代書); they often express the poet’s longing for return and conjoin the place of his exile to the capital in a single poetic text. One of Zhang Yue’s numerous such poems, “Seeing Off Northern Emissaries in the Far South” 南中送北使, dated to 704, proves particularly illuminating in that he not only asks the emissary to convey to the throne his solicitude for the state but also discusses a specific contemporary problem plaguing the court—namely, the aggressive border raids of the qaghan of the Northern Turks, Qapaghan (Mochuo 默啜), who would ask for a marriage alliance and then renege¹⁰⁷—and offers his services.¹⁰⁸

105 Lu Qinli 遼欽立, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩, 1235. Zhang Yue’s foreword to the set states that he is consciously emulating (*ni*) Yan Yanzhi’s poems. WYXH 301.1535. *Zhang Yue ji*, vol. 2, 499.

106 Shen Yue, “Huaijiu shi jiushou” 懷舊詩九首, in Lu Qinli, *Xian Qin* 1653–655.

107 For Qapaghan’s repeated shenanigans, see *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 3: Sui and Tang China 589–906*, Part I, ed. Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), 313–18.

108 QTS 88.972. *Zhang Yue ji*, vol. 1, 291–92.

待罪居重譯 Awaiting punishment, I reside in a region whose language
 requires multiple translations;
 窮愁暮雨秋 in desperate straits, full of sorrow, I face autumn rain at
 dusk.
 山臨鬼門路 The mountains overlook the road through Hell's Gate;¹⁰⁹
 城繞瘴江流 the city walls circle the flow of the miasmic river.

 逢君入鄉縣 As I chance upon you who are heading back to my
 homeland,
 傳我念京周 do convey how much I think of Zhou's capital.¹¹⁰

 聞有胡兵急 I heard of the crisis with the Turkish troops,
 深懷漢國羞 deeply I feel the shame on behalf of the Han state.
 和親先是詐 Seeking marriage alliance was merely a ruse,
 款塞果為讎 knocking on the border gates, they turned out to be our
 enemies after all.

 廉頗誠未老 Lian Po truly is not yet too old;
 孫叔且無謀 Sunshu might just prove foolhardy.¹¹¹
 若道馮唐事 But if we speak of how Feng Tang got it done,¹¹²
 皇恩尚可收 the imperial grace might still be received.

109 Hell's Gate Pass 鬼門關 is in Guangxi; it refers to a natural formation of two rocks facing each other. "To the south of it, miasma was especially severe, and those who went rarely came back alive. Thus the saying, 'Hell's Gate: nine of ten never return'" 其南尤多瘴癘, 去者罕得生還. 諺曰: 鬼門關, 十人九不還. *JTS* 41.1743.

110 This is from a *Shi jing* poem, "Falling Stream": "How I lie awake and sigh, thinking of Zhou's capital" 愜我寤嘆, 念彼周京. *Maoshi zhushu* 毛詩注疏, in Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), ed. *Chongkan Song ben Shisanjing zhushu* 重刊宋本十三經注疏 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965), 7.272. The allusion is particularly apt since Empress Wu established her own dynasty, the Zhou.

111 Lian Po (ca. 330S–ca. 240S BCE) was a famous general of the state of Zhao in the Warring States period. After he went into exile, the King of Zhao wanted to employ him again and sent a messenger to test him. Despite his old age, Lian Po showed off his virility to the messenger, who, however, was bribed by a political opponent and lied to the king about Lian Po's physical fitness to serve. Sunshu 孫叔敖 (fl. 590 BCE) was a minister of the state of Chu. He once suggested withdrawing the weary troops in a battle and was mocked for being "foolhardy."

112 Feng Tang (b. ca. 230S BCE) was a Western Han official. He persuaded Han Emperor Wen to pardon a competent general Wei Shang 魏尚 in Han's border conflicts with Xiongnu.

At the end of the poem, Zhang Yue uses a series of allusions to demonstrate his “usability” with a none-too-subtle request to the court emissary to speak to the empress on his behalf, and indeed he was summoned back in the following year. But the most remarkable thing about the poem is how the miasmic far south and the northwestern frontier where the Hu and Han had fought for centuries are seamlessly conjoined. Unwittingly, the exiled courtier acts as a bridge connecting the center and the periphery.

Prison and Utopia

The dispersed courtiers vividly experience the strongest pull exerted by the center only when they are going away from it. At the same time, however, just as the law of physics dictates, there is a reaction for every action. If the preceding sections discuss the centripetal forces in poems from the margins of the empire, which are most clearly brought forth in petitionary poems with the sovereign and the court as the objects of desire, the last section of this article shifts its attention to the inevitably resulting antithesis of such centripetalism. The title of this section is a tribute to Maeda Ai's (1932–1987) inspiring work, “The Utopia of the Prisonhouse: A Reading of *In Darkest Tokyo*” (Gokusha no yūtopia), which traces the superimposition of an imaginary utopian space over the physically confining space of jail from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe to early Meiji (1868–1912) Japan.¹¹³ Although the exiled courtiers of the early-eighth-century China were not literally put in a prisonhouse, they were equally deprived of the freedom of movement. *Jiu Tang shu* records a decree: “Exiled men must not abandon or divorce their wife and concubines or flee and return to their hometown” 流移之人皆不得棄放妻妾及私遁還鄉.¹¹⁴ For them, just as for the European or Japanese writers of a differ-

113 Translated by Seiji M. Lippit and James A. Fujii, in *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*, edited and with an introduction by James A. Fujii (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2004), 21–64.

114 *JTS* 43.1838. The ban of divorce was presumably for the sake of preventing the exiled men from letting their womenfolk off the hook. Rules and regulations are usually set up in response to occurrences in reality, and we do find instances of exiles escaping from their places of banishment. Those who were captured would often suffer capital punishment. Lu Chongdao 盧崇道 (d. 714), the father-in-law of Cui Shi, and his three sons were exiled to Lingnan and fled back to Luoyang; upon discovery, they were all caned to death at Luoyang's Duting Post-station 都亭驛. Many well-known officials were implicated and punished. *JTS* 186b.4853. Another case in which an official fled from the place of his exile but was captured and caused the death and exile of many others was that of Xu Jingzhen

ent time, the “closed and organized space” of utopia, both an escape from state control and an inversion of the site of prison that demonstrates the maximum state control, was not far from mind. In an age of intensified state surveillance, harsh punishments, and dramatic reversals of fortune, the great distance of their location from the center of the empire and an ensuing sense of invisibility to the imperial eye was a source of angst as well as comfort, contributing to the ambivalence of the exiled courtier.¹¹⁵

Song Zhiwen’s “Passing by a Man Settlement” 過蠻洞 presents a perfect picture of prison/utopia:¹¹⁶

越嶺千重合	Yue’s ranges, a thousand layers, fold in;
蠻溪十里斜	the Man creek slants for ten miles.
竹迷樵子徑	A woodcutter’s path is lost amongst bamboos;
萍匝釣人家	water plants surround a fisherman’s home.
林暗交楓葉	The forest is darkened by crisscrossing maple leaves;
園香覆橘花	a garden smells sweet, concealed by tangerine blossoms.
誰憐在荒外	Who shall feel moved that, beyond the wilds,
孤賞足雲霞	for my solitary appreciation, such a plenitude of rosy clouds?

Any human traces are lost (*mi* 迷) in the overgrowth, surrounded (*za* 匝), darkened (*an* 暗), and concealed (*fu* 覆); the settlement is further enfolded by “a thousand layers” of mountains that cut the poet off from the civilized world.

徐敬真 in 689. *JTS* 90.2923; *ZZTJ* 204.6459–460. It should be noted that Song Zhiwen’s biographies in Tang histories claiming he escaped back to Luoyang from Longzhou in 706 and informed the authorities of an assassination plot is mostly likely a case of mistaken identities (i.e., confusing Song Zhiwen with his brother Song Zhixun 宋之遜, who secretly made his way back to Luoyang from a much closer place than Longzhou). See Zhang Zhuo 張鷟 (ca. 660–ca. 730), *Chaoye qianzai* 朝野僉載, annot. Zhao Shouyan 趙守儼 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 162. See the account in *SQGSZW*, 2.797–98.

- 115 Denunciation 告密, anonymous or otherwise, was encouraged and took place on a large scale in Empress Wu’s reign, especially during the early years when her rule was still insecure. See Du You’s 杜佑 (735–812) discussion of this in *Tong dian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 169.4382. In a well-known case, an imperial guard who complained was beheaded, the informant was granted an office of fifth rank, and those who did not inform on the complainer were punished with death by strangling. *ZZTJ* 203.6418. But this practice certainly continued after Empress Wu’s reign. See, for instance, the statute regarding denunciation included in “Statutes of Kaiyuan 7” 開元七年令 in *Tang liudian*, 6.190; also in Niida Noboru 仁井田陞 (1904–1966), *Tang ling shiyi* 唐令拾遺, trans. Li Jin 栗勁 and Wang Zhantong 王占通 (Jilin: Changchun chubanshe, 1989), 711.

- 116 *QTS* 52.639. *SQGSZW*, 2.575.

The dominant tone is one of isolation, claustrophobia, and disorientation, nevertheless mixed with a fascination with the lushness and exuberance of wild nature. There is an unmistakable echo of the *Lyrics of Chu*, with the mention of maple and tangerine in the third couplet,¹¹⁷ and the archetypal persona of exiled Chu poet, Qu Yuan, behind these distinctive “*Chu ci* plants.” Ultimately, however, the early medieval poet Xie Lingyun, who also went through periods of demotion/exile in the south and felt a sense of identification with the *Chu ci* poet, is the one foregrounded here, since the keyword in the last line, *shang*, appreciation, is ever associated with Xie Lingyun’s repeated and innovative usage of this word signifying his longing for an appreciative friend (*shangxin* 賞心), and Xie famously wrote that “a fine hour, a beautiful scene, an appreciative friend, and a pleasing situation” are the four components of happiness hard to bring together.¹¹⁸ Song Zhiwen builds the last couplet on a witty contrast between solitary (*gu* 孤) and plentiful (*zu* 足): the former ironically contributes to the latter—such a plethora of pretty clouds just for one person’s enjoyment, and if nobody shares his appreciation, would he not have even *more* of the clouds as a result?—and is highlighted by it. The question he poses, “Who shall feel moved?” points to a lineage of great literary predecessors (Qu Yuan and Xie Lingyun), but could also be read as a plea to contemporary readers who had the wherewithal to act on his behalf. It also creates a complex response to the scene at hand: the poet both feels appreciative of the beautiful sight and feels the pathos of the loneliness of his appreciation. Surrounded by the Man “bar-

117 In the *Lyrics of Chu*, “Calling the Soul” 招魂 and “Ode to Tangerine” 橘頌 both explicitly connect the plants in question to the southland. For the evocative power of the poetic *feng* tree, see Ping Wang, “Sound of the Maple on the Yangzi River: A Topos of Melancholia in Early to Medieval Chinese Poetic Writing,” *Tang Studies* 26 (2008): 13–38.

118 “天下良辰美景賞心樂事四者難並。” From Xie Lingyun, “Ni Wei taizi Ye zhong ji shi xu” 擬魏太子鄴中集詩序. *Quan Song wen* 33.2616. Noticeably, Xie Lingyun is known for his artful interweaving of textual echoes of earlier texts, especially the *Lyrics of Chu* and the *Classic of Changes* into his landscape poetry. See a concentrated discussion of this issue in Wendy Swartz, Chapter 6, “Reading and Roaming the Landscape,” in *Reading Philosophy, Writing Poetry: Intertextual Modes of Making Meaning in Early Medieval China* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2018): 222–258, esp. 225–46. Xie Lingyun’s engagement with the *Lyrics of Chu* is highlighted in Stephen Owen, “The Librarian in Exile: Xie Lingyun’s Bookish Landscapes,” *Early Medieval China* 10–11.1 (2004): 203–26. Seen in this light, Song Zhiwen’s positioning of himself in the tradition of exiled poets/loyal-but-slandered-ministers is subtle yet unmistakable. A particularly relevant poem here is Xie Lingyun’s “A Newly Constructed Dwelling at Stone Gate, Surrounded by Tall Mountains, Winding Creeks, Stony Rapids, Verdant Woods, and Tall Bamboo” 石門新營所住四面高山迴溪石瀨茂林脩竹, which is likewise marked by a strong sense of isolation and claustrophobia. Lu Qinli 遯欽立, comp. *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 1166.

barians,” darkened by the maple leaves, he is locked in a utopian space peopled by the lyrical personas of fishermen and woodcutters, which is also a solitary prison.

Shen Quanqi’s “Crossing the Zhenyang Gorge” 度貞陽峽 explicitly brings up the push-pull between center and periphery, state control and desire to escape:

江路繞貞陽	The river road circles around Zhenyang;
雲峰來水長	cloudy peaks grow ever extensive in the water.
藤蘿失昏旦	Amidst creepers and vines, one is lost about twilight or dawn;
崖谷轉炎涼	under the cliffs and in the valleys, heat and cold are reversed.
野戍紅蕉熟	A fortress in the wilderness: red bananas ripen;
山郵綠筍香	at a mountain post-station, green bamboo shoots are fragrant.
祇言武陵去	Methinks that I have gone off to Wuling;
何處辨存亡	how can anyone tell whether I am alive or dead?

With the circling motion, *rao*, the poet’s grasp of reality begins to unravel in the second line, where the dark [reflection of?] cloudy peaks seem to grow more massive by/in water. Vegetation is so dense that it causes temporal disorientation about night and day; seasons, too, become confused in the tropical climate. In this bewildering world, the bright color contrast between red and green, and the alluring smells of ripened bananas and cooked bamboo shoots, lead the poet to signs of human civilization: the fortress and the post-station are markers of empire and political order, where he can find food, a bed for the night, and respite from travel. These sites, being in the wilderness (*ye* 野) and in the mountains (*shan* 山), are liminal spaces on the edges of the empire. In the last couplet, the poet wonders if he could simply pretend that he had, like the Wuling fisherman in Tao Yuanming’s 陶淵明 (365–427) “Account of the Peach Blossom Fount,” disappeared into the utopian space through a hole in the mountains. His musing in the last couplet is highly ambivalent: it could be an attempt to console himself, a desire to elude the imperial control, a sense of bitterness about his situation, or all of the above.

Even Zhang Yue, most of whose poems written in exile are petitionary, is occasionally caught in a whimsical mood. In “Wearing a Linen Headscarf Backward: Presented to Administrator Zhao” 翻著葛巾呈趙尹, he writes:¹¹⁹

119 QTS 87.954–55. *Zhang Yue ji*, 311–12. Administrator Zhao is Zhao Dongxi 趙冬曦 (677–750). The poem was written in 716 when Zhang was in Yuezhou.

昔日接羅倒	In the past the governor wore his turban upside down, ¹²⁰
今我葛巾翻	now I wear my linen headscarf backward.
宿酒何時醒	When will the hangover dissipate?
形骸不復存	This body of mine no longer exists.
忽聞有嘉客	Suddenly I hear a fine guest coming,
躡步出閑門	I throw my slippers on and rush out of the quiet door. ¹²¹
桃花春徑滿	Peach blossoms fill the spring path,
誤識武陵源	causing a mistaken recognition of Wuling.

For a moment, the poet sees himself—still in a stupor from a hangover, wearing his headscarf backward: signs of a life of leisure and informality like that of a recluse—from the eyes of his unexpected guest: that he resides in a utopian space at the Peach Blossom Fount.

Likewise, Song Zhiwen evokes the Peace Blossom Fount in a poem entitled “Staying for the Night at the Mountain Temple of Qingyuan Gorge” 宿清遠峽山寺:¹²²

香岫懸金剎	On a fragrant hill hangs a golden temple,
飛泉界石門	a flying cascade defines a boundary by the stone gate.
空山唯習靜	In an empty mountain one only practices stillness;
中夜寂無喧	all is quiet at midnight, soundless.
說法初聞鳥	Lecturing on the dharma: one hears the first birds;
看心欲定猿	looking into my mind, I desire to calm the monkey. ¹²³
寥寥隔塵事	Isolated, solitary, this separation from dusty affairs—
何異武陵源	how is it different from the water source at Wuling?

As if suspended in mid-air, a golden temple hangs on a hill demarcated by a cascade and the stone gate: the space is wholly closed off to the outside world. The poet stays up all night at the temple until he hears the first birds at dawn break, his inner turmoil indicated by his barely successful efforts to still his monkey-mind. At the end, the poet notably compares the temple to the Peach Blossom Fount. In that his refuge in the temple is temporary, he is indeed no different

120 This refers to Shan Jian 山簡 (253–312), the famous Western Jin governor at Xiangyang who had wild drinking parties and came home wearing his white turban upside down.

121 Xiong Fei glosses *xibu* as “a light gait,” which is inaccurate. Here *xibu* means being in such a rush (to greet the guest) that one does not put one’s shoes on properly.

122 QTS 52.640. SQQSZW, 2.573.

123 That is, the monkey of the mind, a Buddhist metaphor for restless human thoughts, passions, and desires.

from the fisherman who is compelled to leave the utopian community behind and never finds his way back again.

One may contrast this poem with what would be considered as a “court poem” by Song Zhiwen, “Attending Banquet in the Linzhi Hall: Written to Imperial Command” 麟趾殿侍宴應制.¹²⁴ The Linzhi Hall was part of the Shangyang Palace complex in Luoyang, and the monarch who commissioned the poem was Empress Wu Zetian.

北闕層城峻	At the northern tower, the Tiered Wall rises towering; ¹²⁵
西宮復道懸	double passageways to the western palace are suspended mid-air.
乘輿歷萬戶	The imperial coach passes by ten thousand gates;
置酒望三川	setting out wine and gazing afar at the Three Rivers. ¹²⁶
花柳含丹日	Flowers and willows enfold the cinnabar sun;
山河入綺筵	mountains and rivers enter the splendid feast.
欲知陪賞處	If you wish to know where we attend Her Grace—
空外有飛煙	beyond the sky there is soaring mist.

On the surface this poem seems as far from the temple poem as possible. In the first two couplets, we see the empress and her entourage move through the skywalk connecting the palaces and sit down to a feast, the imperial gaze extending to a great distance. The third couplet, in consonance with the feast theme, features a mutuality of nurturing: first, it zooms in to a close-up of flowers and willows, and the poet uses a surprising verb, *han* 含, which literally means holding something in the mouth, to describe how these small, fragile things take in the life-giving warmth of the sun, a symbol of the monarch; then, the sun's nourishment of the plants is offset by mountains and rivers “entering” *ru* 入 the feast, that is, becoming elements of the banquet scene, and at the same time becoming edible delicacies for the imperial appetite. This is a remarkable couplet, superbly conceived and masterfully executed.

The last couplet ingeniously shifts to the perspective from the ground, where one looks up to the lofty height of the heavenly court but only sees cloud and mist: the hiddenness of the court from a mere mortal's sight paradoxically gives visibility to royal power. The poet is himself part of the heavenly court, and there is a palpable satisfaction in imagining himself as being concealed from the earthly view of mere mortals. Although in an obviously different realm, this,

124 QTS 52.632. *SQQSZW*, 2.406.

125 The Tiered Wall is the name of the top of Mount Kunlun where immortals dwell.

126 The Yellow River, the Luo River, and the Yi River around Luoyang.

too, signals a “separation from dusty affairs” as in the mountain temple. Both poems end in a self-envisioned disappearance from the world.

Ultimately, poems written in exile embody the paradox of the center-periphery binary: through their desire for the center in its absence, they draw attention to the ragged edges of the empire, highlighting a medieval Chinese version of prison and utopia. Feeling intense bitterness about being denied what they want, the poets demonstrate, perhaps unwittingly, a friction between institutional power and the yearning for personal freedom.

The last pair of poems highlights one of the points I wish to make in this article: that is, the poems written in exile at the turn of the eighth century *are* court poetry. Rather than defining court poetry as just a period style or as the by-product of a social relation between courtier and sovereign, I wish to begin by redefining “court.” As stated earlier, the court is many things: a physical location, a political institution, and a monarch’s retinue. Norbert Elias calls it “a figuration of individual people,” and I have described it as “a field of dynamic power relations.”¹²⁷ If so, then court poetry should not be regarded only as poems composed on formal occasions in the presence of a monarch within the setting of a royal palace. Instead, its definition should be expanded to reflect the catholic nature of the term *court* itself. Poems written by early eighth-century courtiers at the center and from the margins of the empire deploy the same verse forms, techniques, and skills; and with their passionate yearning and suffering, the poems in exile provide a reversed mirror image of the joyful, confident poems written in the capital: they are truly the two sides of the same coin.¹²⁸ Finally, preserving the sense of belonging to a community and networking with his former court colleagues remains crucial to the courtier wherever he finds himself, whether it is for the sake of venting, commiserating, and/or supplicating. This is the general conceptual framework in which we reexamine and reevaluate poems written by courtiers in exile in the last years of the Early Tang.

The other framework is historical. In other words, it is important to call attention to the unique nature of the court culture at the turn of the eighth

127 Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, tr. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 141. Xiaofei Tian, “Yu Xin’s ‘Memory Palace’: Writing Trauma and Violence in Early Medieval Chinese Aulic Poetry,” in *Memory in Medieval China: Text, Ritual, and Community*, ed. Wendy Swartz and Robert Campany (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 126.

128 For poems brimming with positive emotions of optimism and enthusiasm about state building, see Xiaofei Tian, “Poetry and Access to Power in the Court of Empress Wu Zetian,” in Tian Yuan Tan and Ming Tak Ted Hui, ed. Special Issue on Conceptualizing Chinese Court Literary Cultures, *Nanyang Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 4 (May 2023): 24–30.

century. Sally Mapstone, scholar of Scottish literature, contends that it would be “quite wrong” to suggest that Scottish court life and court literature had the same characters before and after the 1490s.¹²⁹ In the same way, court life and court literature changed dramatically after the 710s: before, the court had remained the center of literary production and innovation that was looked up to by the provinces; after, another center was formed away from the court, with poets writing in conscious reaction against the verse forms and styles practiced at court. This alternative center gained momentum in the subsequent century with the rise of Military Governors, whose headquarters often boasted the finest writers of the age. The turn-of-the-eighth century courtiers were on the brink of the larger cultural shift; they were the last generation of great *court poets* who truly mattered in literary history.

Above all, this article argues that early eighth-century poems written in exile contribute to a new way of envisioning the empire as a whole and in its totality. Here it is worthwhile to consider two things: first, the vast territories of the Tang had only seen the peaceful union of north and south less than a century after a prolonged period of antagonism lasting nearly four hundred years, followed by a tumultuous short-lived predecessor dynasty; second, during that long period of strife, most members of the northern elite, except for being on a diplomatic mission to the Southern Dynasties capital Jiankang (modern Nanjing), had never been obliged to travel to the south, not to mention the far south, which nonetheless turned out to be the most popular places of exile in the Tang.¹³⁰ Only when going away from the center, the poets express an intense adhesion to it, and through the poetic texts circulated via the highly developed post-station system, which also manifest a strong diegetic centripetalism in content and form, the empire’s center in the north became more discursively and viscerally connected to its distant margins in the far south than ever before. With this in mind, we may develop a new appreciation of the role played by poetry written during exile in the creation of an imagined community—to borrow Benedict Anderson’s well-known term—and a sense of “Tang ren” 唐人 identity, especially when we take into account the fact that poetry became an ever more privileged, and popular, form of cultural expression since Empress Wu’s examination reform in the 680s.¹³¹

129 Sally Mapstone, “Was there a Court Literature in Fifteenth-Century Scotland?” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 26.1 (1991): 410.

130 See the statistics in Shang Yongliang, *Tang wudai*, 48–49, 51.

131 For Empress Wu’s incorporation of literary compositions in civil service examinations and her general intervention in the literary scene, see Tian, “Poetry and Access to Power,” 9–16.

When Zhang Yue was in Qinzhou, he saw a cowherd coming home carrying green grasses for his cattle on a winter day and was moved to write this poem:¹³²

塞上綿應折	On the northern frontier it must be time for folding wool;
江南草可結	in the southland grasses can be bunched.
欲持梅嶺花	I would like to take the flowers of the Plum Range
遠競榆關雪	to compete with the snow of the Elm Pass.
日月無他照	The sun and moon shine upon all just the same,
山川何頓別	why should mountains and rivers be differentiated?
苟齊兩地心	If the mind could treat the two regions as equal,
天問將安說	where would those “Heavenly Questions” find a place? ¹³³

The Plum Range refers to the Great Yu Range, and Elm Pass is another name for the Shanhai Pass in the northeast. They are conjoined, fittingly, in a parallel couplet, just like the northern frontier and the southland (ll. 1–2), playing counterpart to and complementing each other, and this rhetorical choice embodies in formal terms the message that the poet wishes to convey. Thus, in a conscious move, the exiled courtier who would go on to become the most influential statesman and writer in the first decades of the eighth century declared the cohesion of north and south in a refreshing vision of the state. This sentiment would later find an echo in the famous closure of a rhapsody, “Spring in the Southland” 江南春賦, written by the renowned Fujian writer Wang Qi 王綰 (862 *jinshi*): “Today there is only one spring shared by all under heaven, with no regard for the southland or the north” 今日並為天下春，無江南兮江北。¹³⁴

Cultural changes take place slowly, but toward the end of the ninth century and certainly in the tenth century, we detect a new attitude about the far south, the most popular Tang location of exile. In the last years of the Tang, “the world had already fallen into chaos. Since the land beyond the Range was the farthest away and could provide refuge, the elite of the Central Plains often went there. Many famous Tang ministers who died in exile in the far south had left behind descendants; along with officials who were assigned there and could not return to the north due to the tumult, they would all stay on as itinerants beyond the

132 “On A Winter Day I See A Cowherd Carrying Home Green Grasses” 冬日見牧牛人擔青草歸. *QTS* 86.936. *Zhang Yue ji*, 2.452.

133 “Heavenly Questions” (or “Questions Addressed to Heaven”) is a piece in the *Chu ci* 楚辭; it was believed to be written by the Chu minister Quan Yuan during exile to vent grievance and frustration about his banishment. Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155), comp. *Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 3.85.

134 *QTW* 770.8024. The closure is cited as a celebrated line in Huang Pu’s 黃璞 (891 *jinshi*) biography of Wang Qi. *QTW* 817.8603.

Range” 是時天下已亂，中朝士人以嶺外最遠，可以避地，多遊焉。唐世名臣謫死南方者往往有子孫，或當時仕宦遭亂不得還者，皆客嶺表。¹³⁵ This surely seems to be an ironic actualization of the utopian Peach Blossom Fount portrayed by early Tang banished courtiers. But the far south was more than just a sanctuary. Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (916–991), the statesman and writer who served the Southern Tang and then Northern Song, wrote in his *Records of Investigating the Spirits* (*Jishen lu* 稽神錄):

Wang Zan (d. 905) was a famous gentleman of the Central Plains. There was a Yang Qu of Hongnong who had been to the other side of the Range and seen the landscape of Yangshuo and Lipu [both in Guilin, Guangxi]. He fell in love with it and talked about it endlessly. Qu socialized with Zan and, as he was received cordially in time, he blurted out, “Has your honor ever seen the landscape of Yangshuo and Lipu?” Zan said, “I have never hit people and broken their lips and teeth; how could I ever get to see it?” Thereupon they laughed heartily. This means that nobody would go to the land beyond the Range unless they were exiled there.¹³⁶

王贊中朝名士，有弘農楊蘧者，曾至嶺外，見楊朔荔浦山水，心常愛之，談不容口。蘧嘗出入贊門下，稍接從容，不覺形于言曰：“侍郎曾見楊朔荔浦山水乎？”贊曰：“未曾打人唇綻齒落，安得見耶？”因大笑。此言嶺外之地，非貶不去。

Yang Qu’s appreciation of the landscape of Guangxi is noteworthy, even though his question was clearly considered a little rash, uttered, as it was, in a moment of enthusiasm when he “forgot himself.” It is equally noteworthy that the reason for Wang Zan’s wry response is spelled out at the end, a sign that the author did not expect all readers to understand the subtext on their own: it was something that Wang Zan and Yang Qu, growing up in the late Tang, knew very well, but was not necessarily transparent to the generation from mid-tenth century.¹³⁷ In another version of the story from Sun Guangxian’s 孫光憲 (d. 968) *Trivial Words from the Northern Meng* 北夢瑣言, we are told that soon afterward, when Yang

135 Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), comp. *Xin wudai shi* 新五代史 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1980), 65.810.

136 Preserved in Li Fang et al., comp. *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 500.4106.

137 In a preface, now lost, Xu Xuan claims that he compiled the entries in *Jishen lu* between 935 and 955. See *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1933), 142.2954.

Qu had a chance, he specifically requested an office in the region of Yangshuo and Lipu, and took his entire family to the south (俄而選求彼邑, 挈家南去), on which Sun Guangxian comments approvingly: “He was quite a high-minded gentleman among prefects and magistrates” 亦州縣官中一高士也.¹³⁸ This is a far cry from Song Zhiwen’s perception of the far south: “Everywhere the mountains and rivers share the malarial fog, / and I worry about how many of us will ever be able to return” 處處山川同瘴癘, 自憐能得幾人歸. Instead of the dark, distant margins of the empire, the far south became a desirable place of dwelling whose mountains and rivers are incorporated into the cultural map, and one who possessed the capacity to appreciate them was considered a man of noble disposition. Song Zhiwen and his peers did not know how their poems would play an important part in the process of this illumination.

Abstract

The turn of the eighth century witnessed, for the first time in Chinese history, a concentration of poems written by exiled courtiers. In an era when mobility was limited by curfews, passes, and vehicular technologies, banishment to faraway places, accomplished by a decreed use of exclusionary post-station horses, ironically became a sanctioned and expedited means of traversing new territories. Through the poetic texts circulated via the highly developed post-station system, the empire’s center in the north became more connected to its distant margins than ever before. This article argues that these poems, characterized by centripetalism and constituting a petitionary genre, contributed to a new way of envisioning the empire as a whole and in its totality, and if we define “court” as a field of dynamic power relations, then these poems *are* court poetry, whose definition must be expanded to reflect the catholic nature of the term “court” itself.

Résumé

Au tournant du huitième siècle, on assiste, pour la première fois dans l’histoire de la Chine, à un foisonnement de poèmes écrits par des courtisans exilés. À une époque où la mobilité était limitée par des couvre-feux, des laissez-passer et les technologies de transport, le bannissement vers des lieux éloignés, réalisé obligatoirement par les chevaux de poste, est ironiquement devenu un moyen autorisé et accéléré de traverser de

138 *Beimeng suoyan*, collated by Lin Aiyuan 林艾園 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1981), 5-34.

nouveaux territoires. Grâce aux textes poétiques circulant via le système hautement développé des stations postales, le centre de l'empire, au nord, est devenu plus que jamais connecté à ses marges éloignées. Cet article soutient que ces poèmes, caractérisés par leur caractère centripète et constituant un genre de pétition au trône, ont contribué à une nouvelle façon d'envisager l'empire comme un tout. Si nous définissons la «cour» comme un champ de relations de pouvoir dynamiques, alors ces poèmes sont de la poésie de cour, dont la définition doit être élargie pour refléter la nature englobante du terme «cour» lui-même.

提要

公元七、八世紀之交，我們看到中國歷史上首次集中出現的一批由流貶朝臣創作的詩歌。在一個行動受到宵禁、關卡、以及車輛技術限制的時代，借由特別批准使用的驛站馬匹而完成的流貶非常具有諷刺意味地成了見識帝國邊遠之地的至為快捷而且獲得官方首肯的方式。通過高度發達的驛站系統而流佈的詩歌文本，位於北方的帝國中心與其遙遠邊疆之間的聯結也變得前所未有的緊密。本文提出，這種詩歌以向心主義為特征，而且構成了一種請願文體，提供了一種新的想象帝國的方式，也就是說，將帝國視為一個整體，對之作出全方位的構想。本文還提出，如果我們將「宮廷」定義為一個充滿動態的權力關係場域，那麼這些寫於貶謫期間的詩歌就確乎也是「宮廷詩」，事實上「宮廷詩」的定義必須加以擴展，以反映「宮廷」一詞本身的寬泛性。

Keywords

Early Tang literature – court poetry – post-station – exile – centripetalism – petitionary genre – empire – identity