

For the Triratna and for Samyak-sambodhi*
The 'Quasi-poetry' of Tianran Hanshi

Corey Lee Bell**

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* This study was supported by The Republic of China (Taiwan) Department of Foreign Affairs through the Taiwan Fellowship program.

** Researcher at Woosong Language Institute (WLI), Woosong University. Email: coreybell@woosong.org

요약문

본 논문은 청초(淸初)의 천연합시(天然函昚)의 ‘사시(似詩)’설의 내용을 다루면서 천연합시의 ‘사시’설과 당시 총림의 주류 ‘시선(詩禪)’설과의 관계를 논하고 대조하여 보았고 그와 동시에 ‘사시(似詩)’설이 당시 중국 남부, 특히 광둥지역의 총림시학과 작시의 풍격에 끼친 영향을 다루어보았다.

본 논문은 우선 명말청초 몇몇 시에 능하였던 고승들의 세속시인들과의 관계와 그러한 교류 속에서 ‘시선동일론(詩禪同一論)’을 주장한 현상을 연구하였다.

제2장에서는 천연합시(天然函昚)의 일생과 고승으로서의 생애를 소개하고 그의 ‘사시(似詩)’개념의 내용을 설명하였다. 그리고 이 과정에서 분석의 초점을 천연합시의 ‘사시(似詩)’설이 당시 주류적 경향을 보이던 ‘시선동일론(詩禪同一論)’과 현저하게 다른 차이점과 ‘사시(似詩)’설이 암암리에 ‘시선동일론(詩禪同一論)’을 비판한 부분에 두었다.

제3장에서는 천연합시가 그의 ‘사시(似詩)’설의 원칙을 실천한 작품들을 분석하였는데, 실례로 천연합시의 속가 제자인 사추(謝楸)에게 화답한 시를 분석해보았다. 그리고 이어서 이 ‘사시(似詩)’설이 해운시파와 중국 남부의 기타 불교계 시파에 끼친 영향을 논하였다. 마지막으로 천연합시의 ‘사시(似詩)’개념의 구현과 당시 세속시인과 승려들 간의 교류관계 그리고 그러한 교류관계에 미친 영향을 다루어 보았으며, 천연합시의 ‘사시(似詩)’관점이 청대에서의 형성과 발전 그리고 쇠퇴의 주요원인을 다루어보았다.

주제어 :

천연합시(天然函昚), 명·청의불교, 사시(似詩), 명의 유신, 시성(詩禪), 불교의문학관, 중국의시론

I. Introduction¹⁾

Throughout much of the history of Chinese Buddhism, literate Buddhist monks tended to composed both Buddhist poetic forms used for religious instruction - jisong (偈頌) - and non-Buddhist poems (shige 詩歌) inspired by literary and/or ecclesiastic goals. A distinctive characteristic of Chinese Buddhism was the development of the notion that the latter could in some circumstances also have religious value for Buddhist practitioners, and as such could also serve as a tool for religious instruction. The notion that non-Buddhist forms of mainstream Chinese poetry and enlightenment share a special relationship - a concept often symbolized by Yan Yu's嚴羽 famous phrase "Chan as a metaphor for poetry" 以禪喻詩, and which was linked in monastic circles with the eminent monk Huihong Juefan's 惠洪覺範 "literary Chan" 文字禪 - was a prominent theme in late imperial era mainstream poetics and Buddhist poetics in particular.²⁾ The Taiwanese scholar Liao

1) Special thanks must go to C. H. Liao of Academia Sinica's Department of Chinese Literature and Philosophy for his kind assistance. Important resources for my research were also provided by the Australian National University's Centre for China in the World (special thanks to its Director, Benjamin Penny), the staff at this university's Menzies Library, and staff members from the National Library of Australia. Lewis Mayo of Melbourne University's Asia Institute offered many suggestions which enabled me to vastly improve the quality of my translations. Lastly, warm thanks must go to Kyunpook National University's An Chansoon, who provided valuable advice and assistance which were instrumental to the completion of this article.

Zhaoheng has recently argued that the most vibrant discussions on this theme, both within and between Buddhist and literary circles, occurred in the period spanning the late Ming and the early Qing dynasties.³⁾ As pointed out by Liao, a notable development in this period was a growing conviction among some writers that non-Buddhist poetry and Chan not only shared common properties, but that could even be radically identified with each other.⁴⁾ This view has been attributed by some to the early Qing literary theorist Wang Shizhen's 王士禎 (1634-1711) well known statement that "Chan and poetry are as one" 詩禪一致.⁵⁾ However, it arguably had its strongest expression in the writings on poetry of Buddhist monks in that era. Perhaps the most famous expression of this theory of radical identification in monastic circles was that of the late Ming eminent monk Hanshan Deqing 山德清 (1546-1623),

2) The Taiwanese scholar Liao Zhaoheng [Liao Chao-heng] 肇亨(2008) states that "from the Song dynasty to the early Qing, in the field of traditional Chinese poetics, [the relationship between Chan and poetry as advanced] in [Yan Yu's concept of] "poetry as a metaphor for Chan," or [in the statement] "poetry and Chan are the same" [which was advanced by Wang Shizhen], was throughout [this period] one of the most important subjects of the entire poetics tradition" (6). For Liao's views of Yan Yu's influence on late imperial poetics, see pages 68-73, 75-78, 89-92, and 92-104. Some of the most important English language works which address this theme are Richard J. Lynn (c1987), 383-384, (1983), 157-184, and (1983), 317-340. For a thorough discussion on the influence of Huihong Juefan's 'literary Chan' on late Ming / early Qing monastic poetics see Liao Chao-heng 廖肇亨(2008), 105-151.

3) For a detailed discussion on this theme see Liao Chao-heng 廖肇亨(2008), 6-104. See especially 28-30.

4) *ibid.*

5) For a thorough discussion on this point see Richard J. Lynn(1975), 217-269.

who proclaimed that “poetry is genuine Chan” 詩乃真禪.⁶⁾ Views similar to those expressed by Hanshan were particularly prevalent in the writings of monks who often interacted with gentry authors and who were themselves prolific writers of poetry, and in the writings on monastic poetry of some of the lay devotees with whom they interacted.⁷⁾

Against the backdrop of this development in Buddhist poetics, some monks advanced alternative and less well known views on the relationship between Chan and poetry. One distinctive and relatively influential concept that was to emerge in this period was that of “quasi-poetry” 似詩, which was developed by the founder of what came to be known as the Haiyun school of poetry 海雲詩派, Tianran Hanshi 天然函晷 (1608-1685). In stark contrast to the view that poetry, qua a pure literary endeavor, can be radically identified with Buddhist enlightenment, “quasi poetry” advanced a model of “poems that are not [purely] poems” 詩非詩, or “gātha (i.e., Buddhist poems) that are not gātha” 偈非偈.⁸⁾ In other words, “quasi poetry” promoted the view that monastic poetry should be formed through a process of negotiation between literary (poetry) and spiritual (i.e., Chan/ gātha) aims, in contrast to the then prevalent view that high achievement in one (i.e., poetry) expressed advancement in the other (i.e., Chan). Tianran’s concept not only provided a more pragmatic view on how

6) “Zashuo” 說 (Miscellaneous Disquisitions), Hanshan laoren mengyou ji 『憨山老人夢遊集』 (Dream Travels Collection of the Venerable Hanshan), fascicle 13: (CBETA, X73, no. 1456, p. 547, c8-9).

7) I provide evidence of these examples later in this article. For a thorough discussion on this see Liao Chaoheng 廖肇亨(2008).

8) XTSJ, 11.

monastic writers should approach the relationship between Chan and poetry, but also challenged conventional nexuses of intertextuality, and hierarchies of textual authority – particularly those of the type that were prevalent in gentry-clerical literary interactions at that time. In a period where this mode of literary interlocution was prolific and viewed as vital for ecclesiastic success, Tianran’s model had a definite influence on poetics and poetic practices both within his order, as well as, more arguably, among Buddhist monasteries in the Lingnan region.⁹⁾

This article discusses various layers of meaning associated with Tianran’s “quasi poetry”, this concept’s connection to prevalent contemporaneous ideas about the relationship between Chan and poetry, and its influence and application in Buddhist poetics and monastic literary practices in and beyond Tianran’s Haiyun order – especially the modes and mores of gentry-clerical literary interlocution. After introducing Tianran and his Haiyun order, I will analyse his “Author’s Preface to Quasi Poems” 似詩自序, focusing on the core tenets of literary composition associated with Tianran’s quasi poetry model. This discussion will pay particular attention to the core differences between this concept and Hanshan’s articulation of the principle that Chan can be radically identified with poetry. The next section analyzes examples of poems that reflect Tianran’s tenets of “quasi poetry”, focusing on a plum blossom shadow-genre response poem that Tianran wrote for a gentry disciple called Xie Jiu 謝 . The last section presents observations about the role and influence of Tianran’s concept

9) I address this point in the last section of this article, and in the afterword.

of quasi poetry in and beyond the Haiyun order – the former focusing mainly on its application in literary exchange between eminent monks and their gentry associates. In a short afterword I will explore ways that this models' may have reshaped the modes and meanings of gentry-clerical literary engagement / interlocutions in and beyond Tianran's order – particularly in relation to the theme of interpretative authority. This will address, in particular, factors which may explain the growth and later decline of this unique approach to bringing together Chan and poetry in southern Chinese Buddhism.

II. Towards a Radical Identification of Poetry with Chan

Indian Buddhists used poetry to inspire devotion, and to serve as a mnemonic tool, well before the religion spread to China. It was in China, however, that Buddhist devotees, and others familiar with this religion's doctrines, began to widely discuss the relationship between Buddhist enlightenment and non-overtly Buddhist or 'secular' poetic forms. A distinctive development in China was the notion that certain aesthetic qualities could imbue poems with religious value. This idea was arguably elucidated, in an incipient form, in the Eastern Jin monk Huiyuan's 慧遠 (334-416) "Nianfo sanmei shi xu" 念佛三昧詩序 (Preface to the Poems on the of Samādhi of Reciting the Buddha's Name),¹⁰ and manifest in a nascent

incarnation in the “Buddhist principle” 佛理 poems of Huiyuan and his contemporary Zhi Daolin 支道林 (314-366). It was seen to have reached its apex in the “mountain residence” 山居 poems of celebrated Tang era “golden age” poet-monks such as Jiaoran 皎然, Guanxiu 貫休 (823-912), and Qiji 齊己 (863-937), and in the works of a number of Song monastic poets, such as Qisong 契嵩 (1007-1072), and Daoqian 道潛 (1043-?) (and later, the Yuan poet-monk Shiwu Qinghong 石屋清珙 (1272-1352). A common feature of these genres was a focus on the theme of reclusion and the aesthetics of secluded (in particular mountainous) settings. A general trend in this development was a shift from poems which juxtaposed Buddhist teachings / terminologies and depictions of bucolic scenes (i.e., “Buddhist principle” poems), to poems – such as those composed by Tang-Song authors – whose aesthetic qualities (and quality) increasingly converged with those of gentry authors, and that increasingly became bereft of direct doctrinal proclamations and distinctly Buddhist features. By the Song, reclusion genres such as “dwelling in the mountain” poems were not only a prevalent institution in the monastery – monks also became far less reticent about asserting their religious identity, despite the scarcity of direct references to Buddhist terms/concepts in many of these writings. As noted by Christopher Byrne, in his well-constructed dissertation “Poetics of Silence: Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091-1157) and the Practice of Poetry in Song Dynasty Chan Yulu,” by the Song dynasty (960-1127), “In Chan yulu [i.e., recorded sayings collections], poems on

10) This preface was written for the preface of the Buddhist lay disciple Wan Qizhi . For a brief discussion on it, see Sun Changwu 昌武(2006), 66.

reclusion retain a distinctive status, as specific Buddhist terms and images are not required for the verse to fulfill the conventions of jìsong [偈頌 i.e., Buddhist religious poems],”¹¹⁾ on account that “Chan masters wholly appropriate[d] the reclusive mode as true to the fundamentals of Chan.”¹²⁾

In secular literary circles also, Buddhist ideas and poetics began to come closer together from the 4th century onwards, as the religion’s growing influence on Chinese poets “gradually extended to the field of poetics and poetic criticism.”¹³⁾ According to Richard John Lynn, a qualitative and quantitative transformation in this trend occurred during the Song dynasty that was marked by the prevalence of the “custom of discussing poetry in terms of Chan.”¹⁴⁾ This custom was often applied to historical-literary judgement, and the processes or stages of developing proficiency in the art of poetic composition. Because the latter involved the cultivation of a visceral or intuitive form of genius rather than scholastic skills, exponents increasingly invoked comparisons between mastery of the art and “enlightenment” as it is understood in the Chan tradition. The most well known and explicit advocate of this model was that of the celebrated theorist Yan Yu 嚴羽 (ca. 1195 - ca. 1245) - who famously asserted that “profound realization” (miaowu) 妙悟 was the fundamental concern of the poetic enterprise, and linked this idea (and his model of sequential training / historical-literary judgement) with the concept of “Chan as a metaphor for poetry” 以禪喻詩.¹⁵⁾ The respected

11) Byrne(2015), 186.

12) Ibid, 221.

13) See Jingqing Yang(2007), 172.

14) Lynn(c1987), 447-466.

Taiwanese scholar Liao Chao-heng has argued that in the period from the Song to the early Qing, this debate on the relationship between Chan and poetry – one based largely on the reinterpretation and extension of Yan Yu’s notion of “Chan as a metaphor for poetry” – was not merely “a question that could not be avoided by poeticists,” but was “continually one of the most important subjects of the entire tradition of poetics.”¹⁶⁾ By the early Qing the question of the relationship between Chan and poetry was one of the most heated controversies in poetics.¹⁷⁾ It also arguably gained its most radical interpretation at this time – the notion of a radical identification of poetry with Chan; a notion which some associated with Wang Shizhen’s 王士禎 (1634–1711) statement (albeit a statement subject to a number of readings and qualifications) that “Chan and poetry are as one – the same and without difference” 詩禪一致，等無差別。¹⁸⁾

Buddhist writers from the Tang to the mid-Ming dynasty were generally less interested in theoretical discussions on this theme than gentry literati. However, in the backdrop of the peak in interest on the relationship between poetry and Chan during the 16th/17th centuries, a remarkable renaissance in monastic poetry occurred,¹⁹⁾ and was accompanied with a

15) For an authority discussion on this see *ibid*, 401–409, and Lynn (1983b). See also Jingqing Yang(2007), 189–192.

16) See footnote no. 2.

17) This point is addressed by Liao Chaoheng 肇亨(2008). See esp. pages 6, 68–104.

18) For a thorough discussion on Wang’s interpretation of “yi chan yu shi,” and the new approach to the relationship between Chan and poetry which he developed on its foundation, see Richard John Lynn(1975).

notable growth in monastic-authored writings on poetics.²⁰⁾

19) The scale of the trend of composing poetry in Buddhist monasteries in the late Ming-early Qing period has been discussed by Liao Chaoheng 肇亨(2008), 23, 31-32. In reference to the Qing, Jiang Qingbo's 江慶柏 (1997) work titled "Qing dai shiseng bieji de diancang ji jiansuo" 清代詩僧別集的典藏及檢索「(On the Archiving, Search and Retrieval of the Personal Collections of Qing Dynasty Poet-monks) calculates that there are approximately 210 extant collections of literary works by Qing dynasty monks (most of which contain poetry), at least two thirds of which are estimated to have been composed in the early Qing period (15-17). Many of these literary collections featured a substantial volume of poetry or were exclusively poetry collections. Among the better known examples of literary works of this type (including some late Ming works) are the Xueshan cao 『雪山草』 (Snow Mountain Draft) of Xueshan Fagao 雪山法果; the Sanfeng [Han]zang Zang chanshi shanju shi 『三峰藏禪師山居詩』 (Mountain Residence Poems of Chan Master Sanfeng), by Hanyue Fazang 漢月法藏 (1573-1635), the Qianshan shi ji 『千山詩集』 (The Poetry Collection of Qianshan) of Qianshan Hanke 千山函可 (1611-1659), and Shilian Dashan's 石灘大汕(1633-1702?) Liliu tang ji 『離六堂集』 (Liliu Hall Collection). In addition to these, a sizeable volume of poetry was included in "recorded sayings" collections. For instance, the Tianran Hanshi chanshi yulu 『天然函旻禪詩語錄』 (Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Tianran Hanshi) contained - in an appendix - two collections: "Tianran heshang meihua shi" 『天然和尚梅花詩』 (The Plum Blossom Poems of the Monk Tianran), and "Danxia Tian laoren xueshi" 『丹霞天老人雪詩』 (Snow Poems of the Venerable Tian[ran] of Danxia". A number of such texts, such as the Yushan heshang yulu 『兩山和尚語錄』 (Recorded Sayings of the Monk Yushan), featured a combination of secular-style "shi" 詩 poems and more conventional Buddhist gāthā or "ji" 偈, with both types of poem being placed together in one sub-section (titled with the older term shiji 詩偈, which can also simply mean gāthā). Poetry is also found in the Boshan Suru Han chanshi yulu 『博山粟如瀚禪師語錄』 (Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Boshan Suru Han), as well as the Zhufeng Min chanshi yulu 『竺峰敏禪師語錄』 (Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Zhufeng Min), and several other works.

20) A thorough analysis of this trend has been undertaken by Liao

The former, which arguably arose from what Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (1574–1624) has identified as a “marrying” of the Buddhist clergy and local gentry elites,²¹⁾ involved an explosion in the volume of “reciprocal courtesy” 應酬 genres directed to gentry associates/donors, while the latter included what Liao Zhaocheng has called “cultural discourses” which sought to bridge gaps between gentry and Buddhist values, and which in so doing drew liberally from the developments in late imperial era mainstream debates on the relationship between poetry and Chan.²²⁾ As these poetic compositions became increasingly “secular” and increasingly less like the kinds of poems associated with monastic writers (i.e., mountain residence poems 山居詩),²³⁾ and as monastic poetists sought to highlight

Chaoheng 肇亨(2008), who refers to the writings on poetry of more than 20 monks - many of whom are recognizable figures. The writings of some monks have also been addressed by Corey Lee Bell in his PhD dissertation (2016).

- 21) See Liao Chaoheng 廖肇亨(2008), 32. Liao similarly asserts that the new trend of theorising in poetry was part of a wider ‘social movement.’
- 22) These definition, emergence and evolution of these “cultural discourses” (wenhua lunshi) constitute the core theme of Liao Chaoheng’s 廖肇亨 2008 work (title: “Mingmo Qingchu fojiao wenhua lunshu de chengxian yu kaizhan” - wenhua lunshu = ‘cultural discourses’).
- 23) The idea that Hanshan’s “Army Poems” were composed for therapeutic reasons has been advanced by Wu Huangchang [Wu Hwang-chang] 吳晃昌 (2010), 236. According to Wu “the bitter experience of joining the army in Lingnan was what initially prompted his composition [of “Army Poems”]. These sad and bitter feelings had to be spat out in poetry” (232). A discussion on the secular poetry of Tianran’s disciple Jinshi Dangui can be found in the Cantonese historian Xian Yuqing’s 冼玉清 1973 work: “Tan Dangui heshang” 談澹和尚歸 (Discussion on the Mong Dangui), 446.

the value of their religious knowledge as a credential for commenting on poetry, several eminent clerics began to strongly support the proposition that Chan and poetry can be radically identified with each other. Among these were eminent religious leaders: Dandang Puhe 擔當普荷 (1593-1673), for instance, said that “feng [that is, the art of poetry] is Chan” 風卽禪,²⁴ Jifei Ruyi 卽非如一(1616-1671) asserted that “poetry is the Chan of the written word” 詩卽文字之禪,²⁵ and the so-called “Ming loyalist” monk Juelang Daosheng 覺浪道盛 (1592-1659) stated that “Chan and poetry are one” 詩禪一也 - a statement he said was directly inspired by the eminent late Ming monk Hanshan Deqing’s declaration that “poetry is genuine Chan” 詩乃眞禪也.²⁶

While a growing consensus emerged among monastic writers

Arguably the most recognisable figure for composing poems that appear to offend Buddhist proscriptions against emotional indulgence was Tianran’s dharma brother Qianshan Hanke 千山函可 (1611-1659). An excellent work on Hanke which emphasizes his struggles as an exiled “loyalist” poet after the fall of the Ming has been written by Lawrence C. H. Yim (2006), 149-198.

24) Yu Jiahua 余嘉華, Yang Kaida 楊開達 (coll., eds.)(2003), 175. For a brief discussion, see Liao Chaoheng 肇亨(2008), 20-21.

25) (Jifei chanshi quan lu) 『卽非禪師全錄』 (Complete Records of Chan Master Jifei), fascicle 25 (in Jiaxing Tripitaka, volume 37), 736. The early Qing “loyalist” monk and poet/artist Shilian Dashan 石謙大汕 (1633-1702) similarly stated: “[when] talking about poetry in the context of [a discussion which takes as its theme] poetry, you can address poetry and discuss Chan. [If you try to] discuss Chan separately from poetry, you cannot talk about poetry” 在詩言詩，便可卽詩言禪；離詩言禪，不可以言詩。 See his Haiwai jishi 『海外紀事』 (Record of Events from Beyond the Seas), in Wan Yi 萬毅 et al. (eds.) (2007), 381.

26) “Zashuo,” Mengyou ji, fascicle 39: (CBETA, X73, no. 1456, p. 745, c16).

that poetry can be radically identified with Chan, one eminent early Qing monk diverged from, and arguably dissented with, this view, and proposed his own alternative way of understanding how the relationship between Chan and poetry should be approached by Buddhist writers. This monk was the leader of what was perhaps the largest congregation of poet-monks not only in his time, but in China's history – the Caodong monk and founder of the so-called “Haiyun poetry school” 海雲詩派 Tianran Hanshi 天然函昞 (1608–1685).

III. Tianran Hanshi and the Haiyun Order²⁷⁾

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- 27) Over the last 20 years, over 55 articles, books or book chapters discussing Tianran's life, literature, religious thoughts and Buddhist order have been published – they are far too voluminous to be listed here. Many important recent works are contained in two extensive conference proceedings: Yang Quan 楊權 (ed.)(2010) *Tianran zhi guang – jinnian Hanshi-chanshi yanchen sibai zhounian xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 『天然之光-紀念函昞禪師誕辰四百周年學術研討會論文集』 (The Light of Tianran – Proceedings from the Academic Conference in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Birth of Chan Master Hanshi) and Zhong Dong 鍾東 (ed.) (2006) *Bei zhi chuan xiang: Haiyuni yu Biechuansi lishi wenhua yantaohui lunwenji* 『悲智傳響:海雲寺與別傳寺歷史文化研討會論文集』 (The Transmission of the Sounds of Compassion and Wisdom: Proceedings from the Conference on the History and Culture of Haiyun temple and Biechuan Temple). A relatively recent overview of research on Tianran can be found in Zhang Hong 張紅 and Zhang Ling 張玲 “Jinnian lai Tianran Hanshi chanshi yanjiu zongshu” 近年來天然函昞禪師研究綜述」 (A Summary of Recent Research on Chan Master Tianran Hanshi) (Tianran zhi guang: 340–358). A more recent work on Tianran – a work whose theme is Tianran in his capacity as a calligrapher, yet which extends far beyond this scope – is Yang Quan's 楊權 (2012) *Guangdong lidai shujia yanjiu congshu: Tianran*

Named Zeng Qixin 曾起莘 at birth, Tianran²⁸⁾ was born into a prominent local family in Panyu 番禺 county in Lingnan. Groomed to become an official from a young age, he received a thorough classical education, and achieved the rank of juren (Provincial Graduate) in his 25th year. However, Tianran failed the imperial examination the next year, and soon after joined the Buddhist order. He received his tonsure under the tutelage of the renowned Caodong monk Changqing Daodu 長慶道獨

Hanshi 『廣東歷代書家研究叢書·天然函昆』 (Series on Dynastic Era Guangzhou Calligraphers: Tianran Hanshi).

- 28) A number of primary sources contain historical information about Tianran's life and exploits – they are too numerous to list here. Early summary accounts include the “Ben shi Tianran-shi heshang xingzhuang” 本師天然昆和尚行狀 (Biographical Obituary of My Teacher, Venerable Tianran Shi), which was composed by Tianran's disciple Leshuo Jinbian 樂說今辯 (1637–1695) (see the Lushan Tianran chanshi yulu 『廬山天然禪師語錄』 (The Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Tianran of Mount Lu) (hereafter referred to as Yulu), fascicle 12: (CBETA, J38, no. B406, p. 198)). Perhaps the most important contemporary source is Tianran's chronological biography – Tianran heshang nianpu 『天然和尚年譜』, which was composed by the Republican-era scholar Wang Zongyan 汪宗衍, and which has recently been revised, collated, annotated and edited by Li Fubiao 李福標 and Qiu Jiang 仇江 (Rpt. 2007). Other important early contemporary works include Chen Botao 陳伯陶 (Rpt. 1985) Shengchao Yuedong yimin lu 『勝朝 東遺民錄』 (Records of Yuedong Loyalists of the Defeated Dynasty), Vol. 070: “Yiyi lei” (「遺逸類」), 070–431 – 070–450), and the distinguished historian Xian Yuqing's 洗玉清 (1895–1965) Guangdong shidao zhushu kao 『廣東釋道著述考』 (Study on the Writings of Guangdong Buddhist Monks) (completed in 1961, published in 1995 in the Xian Yuqing wenji 『洗玉清文集』 (The Xian Yuqing collection). An abundance of historical data can also be drawn from Tianran's literary anthology, the posthumously printed XTSJ. This collection is particularly important as it contains many poems – some of them dated – that recount events in Tianran's life.

(1600-1661). Tianran became the abbot of the famous Guangxiao temple 光孝寺 (also known as Helin 荷林) merely two years after his ordination, and soon set about expanding his order beyond the Guangzhou region. In the backdrop of a tumultuous period of social upheaval and dynastic transition, Tianran enjoyed enormous ecclesiastic success - he attracting the patronage of a congregation of social elites that was rare in both its size and pedigree,²⁹⁾ and extended his leadership to congregations in a number of well-known southern Chinese monasteries including Huashou 華首, Haichuang 海幢, Biechuan 別傳 and Haiyun 海雲.³⁰⁾ By the time of Tianran's death he had

29) One reason for this is that Tianran's order was a popular destination for former officials that were loyal to the Ming and that entered the monastery to avoid serving the Manchu Qing. Rao Zongyi 饒宗 , in his preface to Jiang Boqin's 姜伯勤 (1999) *Shilian Dashan yu Aomen Chan shi* 『石濂大汕與澳門禪史』(Shilian Dashan and Chan Buddhist History in Macau) (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe), states that "loyalists from the declining years of the Ming escaped into the empty gate - talented and prominent types inclined as one to take refuge in Buddhism... the order of Juelang [Daosheng] of the Tianjie Monastery of Jinling and the order of the monk Tianran of the Haiyun Monastery of Panyu were the greatest strongholds." (1). Chen Botao 陳伯陶(Rpt. 1985) has extensively discussed the composition of Tianran and his order, and revealed that from around the time of the reign of the Shunzhi emperor (1643-1661) to the start of the succeeding Kangxi period, several thousand loyalists entered Tianran's order (070-430 - 070-450). Chen's work on Tianran contains a veritable "who's who" of the most eminent and well-known loyalists and literary figures of southern China, as well as some from northern China, including Qu Dajun 屈大君, Cheng Keze 程可則, Jin Bao 金堡, Wang Bangji 王邦畿, Chen Gongyin 陳恭尹, Yuan Pengnian 袁彭年, Li Suiqiu 黎遂球, Wang Yinghua 王應華, and many others. For a more recent overview see Yang Quan 楊權(2006), 307-317.

30) A relatively comprehensive list of the monasteries associated with Tianran's Haiyun order and the leading monks associated with each

established one of the most extensive Chan Buddhist orders of his time, and his impact on the revival of Lingnan Buddhism was compared to that of one of the “four great eminent monks of the late Ming” 明末四大和尚, Hanshan Deqing.³¹⁾ While Tianran left behind a considerable quantity of religious writings

of them is found in Zhang Hong 張紅 and Qiu Jiang 仇江 “Caodong zong Panyu Leifeng Tianran heshang faxi chu gao” 曹洞宗潘 雷峰天然和尚法系初稿」(A Preliminary Draft on the Caodong School Dharma Lineage of the Leifeng [Monastery’s] Tianran of Panyu), 6–53) (see, especially: 6–24). This text lists 15 temples. Short biographical information on Tianran and a number of his disciples have also been compiled by Li Junming 李君明 and Nie Wenli 聶文莉(2010), 110–134. More detailed information on eminent monks in Tianran’s order (including three generations of his disciples), especially those associated with Biechuan temple, has been compiled by Qiu Jiang 仇江 (2006), 16–30.

- 31) The “Ben shi Tianran-shi heshang xingzhuang” states “In the past in our Yue [Lingnan], faith in the orthodox school was rare. Since the Master began to guide people to strive towards enlightenment, the gentry officials paying ritual obeisance to him as disciples and enquiring about the dao have numbered no fewer than several thousand” 吾粵向來罕信宗乘，自師提持向上，縉紳縫掖執弟子禮問道不下數千人 (Yulu fascicle 12: (CBETA, J38, no. B406, p. 198, c11–13)). Tang Laihe states that ‘several thousand’ 數千 lay disciples and monks personally paid obeisance to him (TRYL, fascicle 12: (CBETA, J38, no. B406, p. 199, b12–13)). Several later Qing sources also emphasise the size of Tianran’s order. The early 19th-century official Zhang Weiping 張維屏 (1780–1859), for instance, stated in a panegyric inspired by a painting of Tianran (“Tianran heshang xiang zan” 「天然和尚像贊」) that his “disciples were the most numerous (see XTSJ), np. A recent scholarly work that outlines the scale of the religious influence of Tianran’s Haiyun order on early Qing Lingnan society (as well as its cultural and “political” influence) is Zhang Yan’s 張燕 (2010) ambitious “Yi Tianran wei hexin de sengtuan yu Lingnan wenhua de guanxi” 「以天然為核心的僧團與嶺南文化的關係」 (The relationship between the Monastic Community with Tianran at its Centre and Lingnan Culture) (98–109).

that display his competence in Buddhist scholarship,³²⁾ his best-known legacy is his poetry.³³⁾ The vast majority of his poems are contained in the posthumously printed 20-fascicle anthology of his writings, the Xiatang shiji 『 堂詩集』 (The Blind Hall Poetry Collection).

Tianran was celebrated as a personage that had the twin virtues of an accomplished man of letters and an ecclesiastically successful Buddhist cleric. Yet what was truly rare was the way that he combined these two endeavors. Tianran's order contained an extraordinary number of active poets, to the extent that some Chinese scholars have claimed that it perhaps contained the largest assembly of poet-monks in China's history.³⁴⁾ A rarity for monks, he is also credited

32) His religious writings include the posthumously compiled yulu and several sutra commentaries that were included in the Jiaying Canon (the most substantial being his Lengqie jin xin yin 『 楞伽經心印』 (Mind Seal of the Lankāvatāra-sūtra) in 8 fascicles and his 10-fascicle Shou Lengyan zhizhi 『 首楞嚴直指』 (Direct Pointing at the Śūraṅgama).

33) Many works have appraised (and cited appraisals of) the poetry of Tianran. Aside from Li and Qiu's introduction to XTSJ, these include Li Fubiao's 李福標(2004) "Lun Xiatang shi" 論 堂詩 (On the Poems of the Blind Hall) (Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu 『 中國文學研究』, No. 4: 60-64), Liang Shouzhong's 梁守中 (2006) "Hanshi yu Xiatang shi ji" 「函昱與『 瞎堂詩集』」 (Hanshi and the Blind Hall Poetry Collection) and Qu Longlin 璩龍林 (2010) "Xiatang shifeng qiantan - jian yu Qianshan shi bijiao" 「『 瞎堂』詩風淺探——兼與『 千山』詩比較」 (A Cursory Study of the Poetic Style of the Blind Hall - Featuring a Comparison with the Poems of the Qianshan).

34) See Tan Zhaowen 覃召文 (1996), 141 - see also page 34. The veracity of this claim is hard to determine. Because much of the literature produced by Tianran's Haiyun order was the subject of prohibition around 1775, the exact number of poets belonging to the order cannot be accurately determined.

with founding a new school of poetry - the so-called Haiyun school 海雲詩派.³⁵⁾ The most representative work of this school is the still-extant Haiyun Chanzaos 『海雲禪藻』 (The Refined Chan-Literature of the Haiyun) - a collection which contains 1010 poems which were composed by a total of 128 monastic and lay authors associated with Tianran's order, and which records the existence of a number of personal poetry collections.³⁶⁾ In view of the prominence of poetry in Tianran's order, and the nature of the poems produced, some scholars (both Qing dynasty and modern writers) have proposed that poetry played an instrumental role in the ecclesiastic success of the Haiyun order.³⁷⁾

35) The first scholar to bring attention to this school was Chen Yongzheng 陳永正 (1999), who mentioned it in a well circulated unpublished work later to be called "Lingnan shipai luelun" 嶺南詩派略論 (A Brief Discussion on the Poetry Schools of Lingnan) (Lingnan wenshi 『嶺南文史』 (3), 14). A summary of research on this school can be found in the online report "Xian Yuqing dui Lingnan fojiao wenxian yanjiu de gongxian - yi dui Haiyun xi wenxian de zhulu kaoshi wei lie" 「玉清對嶺南佛教文獻研究的貢獻——以對海雲係文獻的著錄考釋為例」 (Xian Yuqing's Contribution to the Study of Lingnan Buddhist Literature - Focusing on Her Bibliographical Studies on Haiyun Literature). A more recent study on this school is Chen Siwei's 陳思維 (2017) "Fojia yinyuan, simiao kongjian, wenji kanke yu Haiyun shipai de xingcheng" 「佛家因緣、寺廟空間、文集刊刻与海云詩派的形成」 (Buddhist Causal Conditions, the Space of Monasteries, the Printing of Literary Collections and the Formation of the Haiyun School of Poetry).

36) For an excellent collated and edited version, with informative annotations and supplementary materials, see Xu Zuolin 徐作霖, Huang Li 黃蠡 (ed.), Huang Guosheng 黃國聲 (ed) (Rpt. 2004) Haiyun chanzaos ji - fu Haiyun wenxian ji lue 『海雲禪藻集 附海雲文獻輯略』 (The Refined Chan-literature of the Haiyun: With an Appended Edited Outline of Haiyun's Literature).

37) I discuss this point in detail in the last two sections of this article.

Tianran's extant writings on poetry, which are in the form of prefaces to poetry collections, and which appear in his recorded sayings collection (i.e., a religious genre), all focus on the relationship between secular poetry and Buddhist values. They are not greatly dissimilar to the writings of his monastic contemporaries. However, while Tianran like his contemporaries generally supported the notion that secular poems can have religious value, he cautioned that literary and soteriological goals are not always compatible. While the ideas presented across these writings on poetry addressed various themes and contained inconsistencies, some core ideas - in particular, those concerning the relationship between religious and aesthetic value, and the perils of magniloquence - are common to all of them. Arguably the most succinct and systematic discourse on how these principles informed Tianran's unorthodox ideals on the relationship between poetry and enlightenment can be found in Tianran's preface to his Sishi 似詩 (Quasi poetry) collection - the preface that introduced the concept of "quasi poetry". This preface was deemed to be sufficiently important that it was placed at the beginning of his Xiatang shiji.

IV. Tianran's "Quasi Poetry"

Tianran's preface to his non-extant Sishi was chosen to

serve as the preface for Tianran's posthumously published *Xiatang shiji* by his attendant and scribe Xuemu Jinqiu 雪木今毬 (1642–1701), who appended a note to this preface which stated: “The meaning of [the poems] this venerable elder recited and sung throughout his life is [contained] in entirety within this [preface]. If the reader ruminates and searches within it, not only can he be enlightened [as to the meaning of] this venerable elder's poems, but the person that the venerable elder was can also be obtained” 老人生平吟詠之意盡於是，讀者玩索之，不唯老人之詩可悟，即老人之人亦可得。³⁸⁾ From this we can see that in the view of Tianran's disciples, the *Sishi* preface captured the essence of Tianran's philosophy of poetry, and the values that made him an ecclesiastically prominent monastic leader. The *Sishi* preface is as follows:

Shuozuo Houzi requested my poems be given to the printer, then asked [me to give the collection] a name. The name is *Quasi Poems*. Why is it called *Quasi Poems*? Monks do not [write secular] poems (shi 詩), [however] *gāthā* are indeed poems, and therefore are also called poems. However the *gāthā* [I write] are not [strictly] *gāthā*, the poems neither [strictly] poetry, therefore [one can] only say “quasi.”

Houzi asked this, and in addition said: ‘since your *gāthā* are unable to be understood [by most people], you reluctantly use poems to teach people, due to them being accessible to people. How are they “accessible”? The sentiments are accessible and the settings (*jing* 景) are accessible. Sadness, happiness, togetherness and separation are the same sentiments as [those of] the people; grass, wood, birds and beasts [make up] the

38) XTSJ, 12.

same setting as that [shared] with the people. That which is the same as [those things] people [are familiar with] is easily absorbed [by them]. Being absorbed it is thence intimate. Being intimate one hence has faith. Having faith one gradually transforms without being aware of it.”

Ah! This is the theory of Houzi. However I think Houzi is only aware that my poetry is accessible, yet doesn't know that my “what-is-not-poetry” are also in all cases accessible! “The accessible” is that which is the same throughout the world, however there are differences therein. In light of this, the world enjoys being near to something on account of this ‘sameness.’ Yet where there is difference, what the world regards as [a source of] joy [may bring] one individual special joy. The “not-poems” of mine are [written] to give joy to [all] under heaven, and to bring special joy to a particular individual. [However, even over a period that spans] more than ten thousand generations, could one come across [such a fortuitous circumstance] for even a brief moment?

In the past when Ch’an-master Nan lived at Gui Zong temple, he travelled to Qianshang. [When he] was about to return, a gentleman surnamed Liu accompanied him far from the town, and wishing [him] well said: “For my benefit [I] ask the old master for a gāthā, so as to [plant] fields of merit (fu 福) for my sons and grandsons from generation to generation.” The next year, Nan posted him a gāthā saying:

“[From] Qianshang [this] monk returned to Luyue temple,
The first thing [I] said was a devotee requested a gāthā,
Holding my brush, I reveal to you the inner meaning;
In recent days in the autumn forest the fallen leaves were

many.”

Forty years later Yunyan was the abbot of Guizong. The [number of] dharma seats [i.e., the size of the order] was greater than before. Mr Liu’s son, carrying this gāthā, provided a banquet for the monks [and] narrated this event. Yunyan called an impromptu dharma-hall assembly and produced a gāthā that said:

“In the past when our patriarch master was the abbot of Jinlun, [He] had composed a gāthā to bind a pure-[spiritual] bond with a gentleman.

[Now] as I abbot Jinlun I also have a gāthā,

As before I should leave it for the successive generations to pass down.”

Ah! Would Houzi call this a gāthā? A poem? Thus that which is not abstruse and un-comprehensible, and that has neither been passed down from ancient times to the present, I dare not view as [necessarily being] a “poem” [i.e., something other than a gāthā]. Yet who would have known what common people regard as “accessible” is actually profound, that which is regarded as profound is actually “accessible?” I hope the world does not insist on seeing things in [black and] white and in their ignorance end up contenting themselves [only] in what they find “enjoyable.” It is but a poem.³⁹⁾

39) 說作吼子乞余詩付梓人，已而乞名 名曰『似詩』。『似詩』者，何謂也？夫道人無詩，偈即是詩，故亦曰詩。然偈不是偈，詩又不是詩，故但曰『似』。吼子請焉，更爲語曰：子以予偈不可讀，姑取詩以示人，爲其近人也。何近乎？情近也，境近也，悲歡合離與人同情，草木鳥獸與人同境。同人者善入，入則親，親則信，信則漸易而不覺。噫！此吼子之說也，然予以爲吼子之知予詩者惟近，

Tianran primarily uses this preface to explain and promote his concept, or rubric, of “quasi poetry” (sishi). In essence, as such, it presents an attempt to outline the principles of poetic composition that guided the production / compilation of the Quasi Poetry collection. In this outline, Tianran emphasises that quasi-poems are “quasi” because they are not strictly shi poems, in the sense of being the product of a pure literary endeavour faithful to the guidelines and precedents of orthodox Chinese literary institutions. Nor can they be regarded as Buddhist gāthā, or religious forms traditionally used by Buddhist instructors to impart Buddhist doctrine. Rather, “quasi” poetic writings retain elements of the characteristics and prerogatives of both these secular and religious traditions, without being faithful to the strictures of either. In doing so they can serve literary and spiritual aims concurrently - i.e., they should be capable of inspiring both mundane happiness (as literature) and a ‘special [supra-mundane] joy’ concurrently.

To clarify this tenet, Tianran refutes the perspective on poetry attributed to him by his eminent disciple Jinhou Shuozuo 今吼說作 (1618-1688).⁴⁰ Jinhou intimated that Tianran’s poetic

而不知予之不是詩者亦惟近 近者，天下之所同也，而有異焉。然則天下之所為樂近者，為其同也。而有異則天下之所謂樂，一人尤樂。余之不是詩，是以樂與天下，而以尤樂待一人。萬世而下，其旦莫[暮]遇之邪[耶]？

昔南禪師住歸宗時，至虔上將還，有劉君遠送郊外，祝曰：『為我求老師一偈，為子孫世世福田。』明年，南以偈寄之曰：『虔上僧歸盧嶽寺，首言居士乞伽陀。接毫示汝個中意，近日秋林落葉多。』後四十年雲庵復住歸宗，法席盛於前，劉君之子 此偈來飯僧，敘其事。雲庵上堂，有偈曰：『先師昔住金輪日，有偈君家結淨緣。我住金輪還有偈，卻應留與子孫傳。』

噫!吼子謂是偈耶?詩耶?固非艱深不可曉，而古今傳誦，不敢日之為詩，則安知夫人之所謂近者而即遠，所謂遠者而即近耶?吾願天下勿以堅白之味，終而自安於所樂，是不但一詩也。天然道人書。

compositions were solely motivated by religious aims, and on this basis stated that Tianran found it necessary to resort to using more conventional poetic forms, even though their soteriological potency may be inferior to more “profound” (i.e., “unable to be read”) Buddhist gāthā. Tianran did this, according to Jinhou, because conventional Chinese poems (shi) are more familiar or accessible to a non-monastic audience. Houzi concludes that using more accessible poetic forms to convey Buddhist teachings can facilitate reader “absorption” and “intimacy” with the text, that this in turn strengthens the reader’s “faith” in its content and purports, and that on account of this, such poems can prompt spiritual transformation. Tianran in reply claims that Houzi does not understand his “non-poems” – i.e., his quasi-poems. Tianran infers that while his “non-poems” (quasi poems) are also partially inspired by religious goals, none are written in the abstruse manner often associated with traditional gāthā. The key point Tianran appears to infer here is that quasi poems can have different layers of meaning, and that their deeper spiritual meaning may not be widely appreciated by readers – a concept explained by the analogy that the evocative response to a single object (or an author/his writings) can vary depending on the degree to which this object is intimate to the subject. Hence quasi poems which appear on the surface to be accessible (quasi poems as poems) can be profound in a religious sense (quasi poems as

40) Shuozuo is the courtesy name of Wang Bangji 王邦畿 (dharma name Jinhong 今吼). He was an accomplished poet and is known as one of the “Lingnan Seven” 嶺南七子. He is the author of the 14 fascicled *Erming ji* 『耳鳴集』 (The Collection of Cries that Resonate within the Ear), which is still extant.

gāthā), and while this profound religious meaning may not be recognised by those who are content to enjoy his quasi poems as poems (i.e., as literature), it may be awoken to by a person which has a special connection with the author / his dharma.

This connection between dual meaning, intimacy with the author / his dharma, and the different degrees of (mundane and spiritual) “joy” that can be derived from an ostensibly ‘secular,’ monastic composed poem / “non-poem” is demonstrated by Tianran in the later part of this preface by a passage from the Chan canon. The passage in question is lifted almost verbatim from Juefan Huihong’s 覺範慧洪 (1071–1128) *Linjian lu* 『林間錄』 (Record of [Training] in the Forest).⁴¹⁾ In this passage, Chan master Huanglong Huinan 黃龍慧南 (1002–1069) composes a gāthā in response to a request from an assumedly wealthy lay disciple surnamed Liu. This poem is ostensibly composed to testify to the special relationship formed between Huinan’s order and Mr. Liu’s family, and to bring spiritual “merit” to Mr. Liu’s descendents (i.e., bestow a special benefit or ‘special joy’ to this one person, Mr. Liu). However, if viewed as a gong’an / zen kōan (as this passage is presented in the *Linjian*), Huinan’s reply, which is composed in a simple and not overtly Buddhist poem, can also be interpreted to have an implicit religious or “inner (i.e., esoteric) meaning.”

We may first consider the line “In recent days in the autumn forest the fallen leaves were many.” Applying kōan hermeneutics, or a Chan reading, it could arguably be read as a critique of this disciple’s desire to secure the prosperity and perpetuation of his family line, rather than pursue the

41) Fascicle 2 (CBETA, X87, no. 1624, p. 268, c16–24).

abandonment the pleasures of the mundane world / saṃsāra (which is the ultimate aim of Buddhist practice). In Buddhism the metaphor of “fields of merit” (futián 福田, or gongdetian 功德田) implies that doing good deeds (such as donating to temples etc.) plants karmic ‘seeds’ which will bring good fortune when they ripen in the future. However, just as fruit/leaves will inevitably fall in abundance in autumn, so must the “fruits” of merit (or “leaves”) inevitably expire/be exhausted. This corresponds to the conventional Buddhist teaching that future suffering cannot be avoided through the cultivation of merit alone, but can only be attained by abandoning ones attachment to the saṃsāric realm and striving for nirvana (i.e., the cessation of cyclic existence).

In the second part of this passage, it is seen that when the son of Mr. Liu brings this poem back to Guizong to testify to the bond between Huinan’s order and his family, the new abbot, Yunyan Zhenjing 雲菴真淨 (1025-1102), writes a poem which appears to affirm this bond. But it contains another “layer” – a layer which reveals Yanyun’s comprehension of the “inner meaning” of Huinan’s earlier gāthā. In this poem, “Jinlun” likely refers explicitly to “Jinlun peak,” beside which Yanyun’s Guizong temple was located. However, the same two character compound 金輪 also literally means “metal (or “earth”) element” – one of the four (or alternatively three) elements that make up the corporeal world in Buddhist metaphysics, and the element often regarded as the essential constituent, or material basis, of the corporeal world. Given the character for the verbal-noun “to abbot” 住 also means “to live” or “reside,” and that the character translated “as before” is more typically a disjunctive, this poem could alternatively

be rendered (roughly) as follows:

“In the past when our patriarch lived in the corporeal world,
 [He] composed a gāthā to bind a pure [i.e., spiritual and not
 instrumental] bond with a gentleman.
 [Now] as I live in the corporeal world I also have a gāthā,
 Yet still I must leave it for successive generations to pass
 down.”

The poem thus rendered appears to express lamentations that while Huinan / the author wish to promote emancipation from the “world of the elements” (i.e., *samsāra*), the Liu family, in spite of the bestowal of Huinan’s gāthā, choose to deepen their worldly attachments by their pursuit of worldly “merit/fortune.” This message is accentuated by the contrast between the “flourishing” Liu sought for his family line, and that of the Buddhist order at Guizong, whose “dharma descendants” are trying to escape the cycle of rebirth. Hence it appears that Yanyun feels compelled (i.e., “yet still I must...”) to pass down yet another poem for the benefit of the Liu family’s later descendants.

Yet at the same time there is ambiguity as to who the intended audience of these two poems were. This returns us to the division of “special joy” and “joy”. The poem is called a gāthā – a word often used interchangeably with poetry in monastic literature, but which has exclusively religious connotations in the first paragraph of this preface. In the case of Huinan’s gāthā, it was directed to Mr. Liu (i.e., it gave him a “special” joy, compared to other readers), and was also recited to Huinan’s monks immediately upon his return to the temple. Moreover, it appears that the “inner meaning” of this

gāthā/kōan was ultimately comprehended by (i.e., “transmitted to”) the individual to whom Huinan’s dharma was transmitted – his successor Yunyan. Yunyan also reads his poem to his disciples via “an [impromptu] dharma-hall assembly” (上堂 – literally “ascend the hall”) – which normally denotes an impromptu or scheduled assembly for the purpose of religious instruction. Hence we are led to ask the question – is the “special happiness” attained by the Liu family descendants (poetry as literature qua a tool of reciprocal courtesy), or Huinan’s own “dharma” descendant Yunyan?

From this we can surmise that while Tianran’s quasi poems may have contained poems addressed to (i.e., which brought ‘special joy’ to) certain people with an intimate connection with the author, such as gentry patrons. However, his other hope was that they may bring spiritual “joy” to those that appreciate their “inner” meaning – that others may be “enlightened [as to the meaning of] this venerable elder’s poems” and as a result “obtain” “the person that the venerable elder was” – i.e., accomplish a “meeting of minds” / a “mind-to-mind transmission” with Tianran. Quasi poems thus are capable of serving literary and spiritual goals concomitantly – the former appreciated by Mr Liu, and the latter acknowledged by Yunyan. To appreciate them fully, one should not merely view them as poems (as did Mr. Liu and his descendants) or religious teachings (as did Jinhou).

V. Quasi Poems vs “[True] Poetry is True Chan”

As mentioned above, Tianran's concept of quasi poetry arose in the backdrop of a period when the concept of a radical identification between poetry and Chan had gained considerable currency in monastic debates on poetry-Chan. It is notable also that Juefan, whose Linjian is cited in this work, and who famously coined the expression "literary Chan" (wenzi chan - or "Chan of the written word") 文字禪, was held as a key symbol of this tenet (i.e., that poetry can be identified with Chan).⁴²⁾ On this front, Tianran's quasi poetry model appears aligned with this trend. However, there were fundamental differences between how quasi poetry articulated the relationship between Chan/Buddhist enlightenment and poetry, and how this was articulated by many of Tianran's peers. The contrast is most stark between Tianran's rubric and the influential model advanced by one of the key figures responsible for the revival of monastic poetry in the late Ming, Hanshan Deqing.

Hanshan, whose poetry achieved some renown in his era, famously claimed that "poetry is true Chan." Another Caodong monk who like Tianran achieved great fame in loyalist circles - Tianran's dharma cousin Juelang Daosheng 覺浪道盛 (1592-1659) - stated that Hanshan's approach to poetry inspired his theory that "poetry and Chan are one" 詩禪一也.⁴³⁾ In the

42) See Liao Zhaoheng 肇亨(2008), 18. According to Liao, "After the Song's Huihong Juefan advanced the notion of "literary Chan," it could be said that the issue of engagement between Chan and poetry came to be completely concentrated in discussions concerning "literary Chan"." (10). A discussion of how Juefan and his model of "literary Chan" came to be widely valorised in the monasteries of the late-Ming / early Qing era, can be found on 36-46.

43) See Daosheng's Tianjie Juelang [Dao]sheng chanshi quanlu 『天界覺浪

passage in which he explained the meaning of “poetry is true Chan,” Hanshan drew attention to the revered Eastern Jin poet-recluse Tao Yuanming’s 陶淵明 (365–427) lines “There Is true meaning in this, I want to analyse it but have already forgotten the words” 此中有真意，欲辨已忘言 – lines which appear to have spiritual/religious connotations. Yet rather than praising them, Hanshan stated “To treat these words as being poetry is like an unlettered child reading the [elementary pedagogical phrase] ‘shangdaren, Qiuyiji” 此等語句把作詩看，猶乎蒙童讀 上大人、丘乙己也。 In other words, the attempt to bring spiritual meaning (i.e., Chan) into this poem adversely affected its literary quality. In comparison, Hanshan felt that an exemplar of the principle of “poetry is true Chan” were the poems of the eminent Tang poet Li Bai 李白 (701–762). Hanshan felt that Li Bai was able “to achieve enlightened understanding without knowing Chan” 不知禪而能道耳 through his poetry. Hanshan compared Li Bai’s poems favorably to that of someone that famously “knew Chan” – the so-called “Buddha of poetry” 詩佛 Wang Wei 王維 (699–759).⁴⁴ Hanshan similarly criticised Wang Wei’s poems for containing “many Buddhist terms” 多佛語, stating this was “nothing other than a Chan of written words” 特文字禪耳 – something which assumedly violated the Chan principle of “a special transmission outside of the scriptures that is not established upon words” 教外別傳、不立文字. As Hanshan noted, “this does

盛禪師全錄』 (Complete Records of Chan Master Juelang [Dao]sheng of Tianjie [Temple]), fascicle 19: (CBETA, J34, no. B311, p. 701, b1-29).

44) For a thorough and authoritative discussion on Wang Wei’s status as a “Buddhist” poet during the late Ming/early Qing, see Jingqing Yang’s (2007) *The Chan Interpretations of Wang Wei’s Poetry*.

not compare with Tao Yuanming and Li Bai who advanced beyond words” 非若陶李，造乎文字之外。⁴⁵⁾

Hence for Hanshan, only “true” poetry is “true” Chan. By comparison, for Tianran, quasi poems must be neither “true” poems, nor “true” Chan (in the sense of purely being gāthā). And whereas Hanshan’s model implies that for poetry to be true Chan there must be absolutely no compromise between spiritual and literary content, Tianran’s model obligated a negotiation of literary and religious aims.

This contrast may have been incidental. However, it should be noted that it was similarly articulated in another text which directly compared Wang Wei and Li Bai as people that “knew” and “did not know” Chan respectively – Tianran’s “Hou Ruohai xu” 侯若孩詩序 (Preface to the “Poetry of Hou Ruohai”). In this preface Tianran compared himself with Wang Wei, and compared Hou Rouhai with Li Bai. He said that like Li Bai, Hou’s poems’ “sentiments go beyond literary phrases… fully [manifesting] a purport that transcends language” 情過乎辭…殊有言外之旨。⁴⁶⁾ He further said that while the poems of both Hou and Li are “wondrous” 妙 (wondrous/marvellous enlightenment 妙悟 being the core quality associated with Yan Yu’s “Chan as a metaphor for poetry”), he noted that “[This wondrousness] comes entirely from the heavens, yet [Li] is without the ability to⁴⁷⁾ [consciously] utilise the heavens. 卽太白亦不自知其所以妙；

45) The entire brief passage is found in the “Za shuo” section of Hanshan’s Mengyou ji, fascicle 39: (CBETA, X73, no. 1456, p. 745, c16–22).

46) TRYL, fascicle 12 : (CBETA, J38, no. B406, p. 192, c18–19).

47) The character is missing in the extant manuscript. I have added the

全乎天而不■用天也。 In comparison Tianran raises the example of Wang Wei’s “Zhongnan bieye” 終南別業 (Villa [by Mount] Zhongnan) – a poem with relatively overt religious connotations, and which Tianran credited with having the capacity to “give rise to enlightenment” 可以起悟。 Tianran said that unlike Li, the devout Buddhist Wang Wei likely “knew/understood” the deeper meaning of his poem, and as such was capable of “utilising” his “heavenly inspiration” in the composition process – i.e., he could produce poems whose spiritual value is able to be transmitted to its readers. On this point, Tianran argued that Li Bai – although his poems are superior in their “wondrousness” – should “leave a place for Mojie” 讓摩詰一步地方。⁴⁸⁾

In summary, Tianran was willing to admit that pure literary expressions that are divinely inspired indeed express the “enlightenment” of the author. However, Tianran appeared to be of the opinion that enlightenment so expressed had little spiritual benefit to readers. Moreover, reading into both Tianran’s Sishi preface and his preface to Hou’s collection, “quasi” poems that are neither “[true] poems” or “gātha” (i.e., Chan) not only represented an alternative approach to the view that “true” poetry is in itself “true Chan”, it also privileged the spiritual value of poems composed by those with religious capital (i.e., Buddhists, such as monks). This is because quasi poems privileged the capacity of those who “knew” Chan to “utilize” their enlightenment to compile texts which had

world “can/is able to” 能 which matches the pattern of use found elsewhere in the text.

48) TRYL, fascicle 12: (CBETA, J38, no. B406, p. 192, c8-19).

superior (religious) pedagogical value for their readers. Quasi poetry elevated the pedagogical efficacy and the poetry of Buddhist and in particular Buddhist clerics that was competent in poetry – it did not diminish the religious prerogatives of monastic writers by claiming that Chan could be communicated through all elite poetry, and it implied that “wondrousness” in the use of language should not be the only standard for evaluating poetry qua Chan.

VI. An Example of Quasi Poetry

From the above description we can see that quasi poetry was a model primarily suited to people who knew about or were trained in Chan/Buddhism – in particular, monastic poets. The benefit for the latter is that it provided a model for Buddhist clerics to indulge their interest in literature, yet do so in a way that was congruent with the performance of his/her clerical duties – to produce poems that had a clear connection to China’s indigenous literary traditions, yet which also had spiritual/religious meaning that was decipherable to discerning Buddhist disciples. The difference between this approach and the principle of the radical identification of Chan with poetry is that the former provided a more direct, pragmatic and flexible platform for advancing religious goals.

Many poems contained in Tianran’s Blind Hall arguably fit this description. The Qing official Wang Ting 王庭 (1607–1693), in his preface to Tianran’s Plum Blossoms Poems collection,

stated “The venerable elder’s poems on plum blossoms have always spoken of Chan. How can they be viewed as shi poems? Yet if we are to view them as poems, the compositions of this venerable elder are elevated in character, tasteful, and of polished phraseology” 老人之詠梅未嘗非說禪 豈可以詩觀之耶?然即以詩觀之, 此老人諸作其格高矣、其趣合矣、其詞爲雅馴。⁴⁹⁾ A number of other examples of poems that creatively blend institutionalized literary genres and religious motifs have been reviewed in He Zetang何澤棠and Wu Xiaoman’s吳曉蔓 “Xiatang wugu yu Han-Wei Liang Jin shi” 「『堂』五古與漢魏兩晉詩」 (Blind Hall Five-[word-verse] Ancient Form and Han, Wei, Two Jin [Dynasty] Poems).⁵⁰⁾ He and Wu point to a number of poems which imitate or alter the themes of classic Han Yuefu poems and which add an implicit/explicit religious dimension – such as “Xie lu” 「薤露」 (Scallion Dew), which He and Wu read as an exhortation to go “beyond the phenomenal world,” “Diedie hang” 「蝶碟行」 (Butterfly Verse), which contains a clear Buddhist reference in the line “do not be bound by one’s physical body” 莫以形骸累, as well as poems which adopted the classic titles “Xiangfeng hang” 「相逢行」 (Verse on Meeting) and “Meihua luo” 「梅花落」 (Plum Blossom Falls). Similar examples are given of works mimicking late Han, Wei and early Six Dynasaty poems, including Cai Yong’s 蔡邕 (133–192) “Cuiniao shi” 「翠鳥詩」 (Poem on a Kingfisher), Cao Zhi’s 曹植 (192–232) “Za shi qi shou” 「雜詩七首」 (Seven Miscellaneous Poems), Ying Qu’s 應璩 (190–252) “Baiyi shi” 「百一詩」 (101 poems) etc. Other transparent examples include Tianran’s “Bu yinjiu shi” 「不飲酒詩」 (Poems on Not Drinking Wine), a

49) TRYL, fascicle 12 : (CBETA, J38, no. B406, p. 200, a18–20).

50) In Yang Quan 楊權 (2010), 191–201.

collection which follows the style and structure of Tao Yuanming's "Yinjiu shi" 飲酒詩 "Poems on Drinking Wine".

51) Critiques on the spiritual and psychological harm of excessive drinking - directed by the earlier exponents of drinking poems, Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263), Ji Kang 康 (223-263) and Song Rongzi 宋榮子, can also be found in Tianran's compositions which mimic the drinking-poem classic "Gushi shijiu shou" 「古詩十九首」 (Nineteen Ancient Poems).⁵²⁾

However, in the latter part of Tianran's Quasi Poetry preface (i.e., in the examples of Buddhist poems cited by Tianran) we can see a more "narrow" description of the principle of "quasi poems". This narrow definition involves the practice of injecting religious meaning in a poetic institution that was prevalent in, and in many ways crucial for the success of, elite Buddhist ecclesiastic organisations in ancient China - reciprocal courtesy poems addressed to gentry patrons / supporters. One of Tianran's poems that perhaps best illustrates the tenet of composing texts which had aesthetic value and which would give both "special" joy to an individual (donor), and "special joy" in the alternative sense of conveying a deeper religious message, is Tianran's "Xie Yemen meiying shi, yong yun head yi chou qi yi" 「謝鄴門貽梅影詩，用韻和答以酬其意」 (Xie Yemen Bestowed a Plum Blossom Shadow Poem,

51) In their study on Tianran's ancient-style poems, He Zetang 何澤棠 and Wu Xiaoman 吳曉蔓 (2010) state that "Among his poems in Han, Wei and Jin style ... works in which Tianran mimicked Tao were the most numerous and their attainment was the highest" - (196). A discussion on Tianran's poems that drew their inspiration from Tao Yuanming is contained in 196-201, and is the major theme in Sun Guozhu 孫國柱 (2013).

52) (2010), 192-194, 196, 200-201.

[This is My] Reply Using a Matching Tonal Pattern to Reciprocate his Intentions”). This is arguably an especially fitting example as it was specifically written as a matching complement (唱和) to a poem authored by an obscure lay devotee – called Xie Jiu 謝 – and was bestowed by Tianran to the latter (‘special joy’) in the form of a calligraphy piece called “Xingshu he meiying shi qilü tiaofu” 行書和梅影詩七律條幅 (Running Script Matching Reply to the Poem of Plum Blossom Shadows Seven Character-Lü Wall Scroll). A rough translation of this poem reads as follows:

Beneath the moon, opening the door, bringing a branch,
Precious jade envelops the bed, and one cannot but reflect;
Do not lament that it is hard to reverse the closing of the year
[or years],
Nor be perturbed that this season is upon you;
Only solitary footprints, intending to lodge [you] as a guest,
When has a sweet fragrance ever invoked people’s attention?
When sparse and leaning, it is too premature to direct oneself to
the mountain stream,
[But when the] silver candle forms a curtain shadow, it is often
too late.⁵³⁾

“Plum blossom shadow” poetry is a generic offshoot of the famous “plum blossom” genre, and is itself a popular aesthetic institution in Chinese poetry.⁵⁴⁾ Plum blossom shadows were

53) 月下開門送一枝，滿床珠玉不勝思；
休傷歲暮難爲折，惱亂春秋是此時；
只有孤迹投客意，何曾香氣惹人知
疏斜自向山溪早，銀燭成簾影每遲。
XTSJ, fascicle 15: 173.

54) Tianran’s contemporary Zhang Zong 張 once stated: “The ancients

held to be richly allegorical symbols in part due to their juxtaposition of beauty and non-corporeality (these were combined to symbolize unrequited or unfulfilled affection). Tianran – who was a proficient writer of plum blossom-genre poems – is largely faithful to the allegorical techniques and formal conventions of this genre in this poem (for instance, he follows the conventions of not mentioning “plum blossoms” directly, describing them as ‘sparse and leaning’ 疏斜, and complementing them with “moonlight”, ‘silver candles’ 銀燭, and curtains).

Putting aside these allegorical institutions for a moment, we may first advance a more literal reading of this poem. The first two lines describe a scene in which a branch of plum blossoms have been brought into a house/room, and bright moonlight casts beautiful shadows of their form on the bed, which causes the author to enter into deep contemplation. In the second couplet, the author, moved by an epiphany, consoles the “plum blossoms”, whose ‘season’ has come to pass and whose lifespan is coming to an end. In the third, he pleads to the plum blossom to be content to be the subject of his personal / solitary appreciation, pointing to the fact that when they were on their tree, their fragrance had not been noticed by many people. Finally, the author points out to the plum blossoms their conundrum – remaining in their natural state upon the tree, they are at risk of falling before having ever been appreciated (“tending oneself to the mountain stream is

said: “Plum blossoms are more wondrous than plum blossoms [themselves]” 梅花之影, 妙于梅花. See his “Youmeng ying ba” 『幽夢影』跋 (Colophon to the Shadows of Quiet Dreams), in Zhang Chao 張潮, Xie Zhiti 謝芷 (ann./col.) (2003), 9.

premature”). However, if it is eventually picked from the tree and placed in a house so that their beauty can be amplified and appreciated, it will have already entered into a process of terminal decay.

As mentioned above, this poem was written in reply to a poem composed by Xie Jiu. It was bestowed to Xie as a wall scroll written in Tianran’s highly coveted “running script” calligraphy.⁵⁵⁾ While little is known about Xie Jie, such as his age at the time this poem was composed, the poem appears to attempt to comfort a recipient (represented by the plum blossom) who may have been in the later stages of his career. It does so, through the plum blossom (shadow) analogy, by intimating that while few have appreciated the brilliance/profundity of the subject while in public life / the world of literature (i.e., “When has fragrance ever provoked people’s attention?”), he could draw some comfort from the personal appreciation and admiration of an intimate friend; one well placed to acknowledge the measure of his virtues.

However, this poem arguably invokes another more religious interpretation. We may begin with the line “Only solitary footprints, intending to lodge [you] as a guest.” Buddhism asserts that we both enter and depart life unaccompanied, and that our existence in this corporeal world/body is like that of a “guest” lodging in a hotel. “Fragrance” and ‘shadow” – linked with the desire of the plum blossom for “appreciation” – could be similarly construed as a metaphor for the non-substantiality

55) Tianran’s status as one of the top Lingnan monastic calligraphers of his time, and appraisals of his “running script” calligraphy has been discussed by Chen Yongzheng 陳永正(2004) – see especially 53. See also [Tianran Hanshi](#).

or ego/reputation. In line with this, the line rendered as “When has a sweet fragrance ever invoked people’s attention (zhi 知)?” could also be translated as “When has ones fragrance ever prompted one to know (zhi) [who we really are]”. In other words, if we leave life as we entered it alone and naked, how can we know our true identity through paying attention to ephemeral qualities such as our reputation or image/ego?

This poem features another theme common to the plum blossom genre – the plum blossom’s critical decision on when it should “fall” from the branch. Again, Tianran’s poem is open to another interpretation – these last two lines can be viewed as an exhortative reminder of the danger of delaying “renunciation.” “Directing oneself towards the mountain stream” from a “lofty” branch could be a metaphor for retirement from the platforms of public affairs/the world of art etc. However, it could analogise abandoning the desire for worldly fame/reputation, and entering the spiritual path of self realisation (i.e., the ‘stream’). On this point, rivers and currents are common metaphors in Buddhist literature – ‘stream entrant’ (ruliu 入流; lit. “enter the flow”) is a common designation for the spiritual rank of Śrota-āpanna 須陀洹 – the first and lowest of the four ranks or fruits of the Supermundane Path (ārya-mārga 聖道), while the notion of rivers tending towards the sea is a common analogy in many Mahāyāna texts for the notion that the multitudinous paths/techniques lead to a unitary experience of enlightenment. Hence “sparse and leaning, tending oneself to the mountain stream premature” could be read as a critique of one who delays renunciation in the hope that one may first make one’s mark upon the world (i.e., emit a “fragrance”/be appreciated). However, as Tianran adds, when a

‘silver candle forms a curtain shadow, it is often too late.’ The image / shadow is but an illusory self, and when one identifies oneself with ones ‘shadows’/ego, one is cut off from ones true “roots”, having missed the opportunity to return (via the stream) to the ‘source’ of our eternal Buddha nature (i.e., the sea).

VII. Quasi Poetry and Clerical-Gentry Interactions

The above examples show how Tianran applied the principles outlined in his Sishi preface. It could be argued, moreover, that this approach to poetry contributed to Tianran’s enormous ecclesiastic success in a period marked by political and social upheaval. Certainly, in the obituaries of associates of Tianran, poetry was regarded as an important factor behind Tianran’s remarkable ecclesiastic achievements – Tianran’s eminent disciple Jinshi Dangui 今釋澹歸 (1614-1680), for instance, stated that “Although Leifeng [Tianran Hanshi] taught the dao of the patriarchs, he did not discard poetry – many learned gentlemen that were competent poets came to him” 雷峰雖提持祖道，然不廢詩，士之能詩者多至焉。⁵⁶ Moreover, while Tianran’s order featured many former Ming officials like

56) In his “Wang Shuozuo shi xu” 王說作詩序 (Preface to Wang Shuozuo’s Poetry Collection). See also the introduction to the XTSJ, 5.

Dangui, “even more were people of low cultural pedigree; like Guhui 古檜, Guyu 古昱, Jinqiu 今毬… These people urgently needed to obtain the nourishment of the Chan master’s “dharma-milk”… and poems and songs were a style of composition that is easy to recite, easy to remember, easy to be deeply absorbed into the mind.”⁵⁷⁾

Yet special emphasis needs to be placed on the type of poetry mentioned in Tianran’s Sishi preface – reciprocal courtesy poems (such as his “Xie Yemen meiying shi”). To support a burgeoning order in a time of economic collapse and famine, Tianran needed to gain widespread support from Qing officials, and making use of his capabilities as a poet to deepen rapport with the gentry via reciprocal courtesy constituted an important part of this strategy. As with many other famous Chinese poet-monks, “reciprocal courtesy” poems had a strong presence in Tianran’s Xiatang,⁵⁸⁾ which is abound in correspondence poems (i.e., zeng 贈), reciprocal courtesy poems (i.e., 寄酬) valedictory/obituary poems, poems matching the form of an interlocutor (i.e., 次韻), and poems expressing longing, messages of comfort, supportive advice etc, such as those whose titles feature terms such as ji 寄, jichou 寄酬, chou 酬, zeng 贈, zengda 贈答, shou 壽, feng 奉, fenghe 奉和, shi 示, xishi 示, wei 慰, and huai 懷 etc. Many of these were addressed to Qing officials,⁵⁹⁾ and although it is not always

57) XTSJ, 5.

58) While this is true in an absolute sense, poems of this type are relatively less prominent in the Xiatang than in the works of many of Tianran’s contemporaries (Zhong Dong 鍾東(2006), 151). It should be noted, however, that Tianran entrusted the work of writing reciprocal courtesy poems to several of his eminent disciples. This point is addressed below.

evident whether particular pieces could be regarded as bona fide “poems” or “quasi-poems,” more than a few appear to have religious connotations in the manner of Tianran’s “Xie Yemen meiying shi”.

But perhaps more significantly, Tianran’s “quasi poetry” model seems to have not only made an important contribution to his own ecclesiastic success – it also appears to have been an influential and widely applied model in his Haiyun order. As Tianran’s order attracted a large number of cultural elites from the Ming officialdom – people such as Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630–1696), Cheng Keze 程可則, Jin Bao (金堡 = Dangui), Wang Bangji 王邦畿 (dharma name Jinhou 今吼), and Wang Yinghua 王應華 (1600–1665) – he had at his disposal a large number of highly competent poets who could be drawn upon to write personalized correspondences to potential/established donors.⁶⁰ He even set about training some of the less educated members of his congregation in the art of high-form poetry – an eminent example being Jinqiu.⁶¹ About 60 such monastic

59) Wang Fupeng points out that Tianran’s Xiatang shiji there are 15/16 poems alone referring to his intimate friend Lun Xuanming 倫宣明, and 10 addressed to Lu Shikai 陸世楷 (1625–1690). See Wang Fupeng 王富鵬 (2010), 79–80.

60) Jiang Boqin 姜伯勤(1999). 1. Chen Botao 陳伯陶 (Rpt. 1985) overview of Tianran’s order revealed that from around the time of the reign of the Shunzhi emperor (1643–1661) to the start of the succeeding Kangxi period, several thousand loyalists entered Tianran’s order (in Qingdai zhuanji congkan: 070–430 – 070–450). For a discussion of Tianran’s links with loyalism and loyalists, see Yang Quan 楊權 (2006), 307–317.

61) Jinqiu (born 1642) entered Tianran’s order at Leifeng as a child and receiving the Bhikkhu precepts in early adulthood (1661). Through his education in Tianran’s order, Jin Qiu become proficient in poetry: 60 of his poems are contained in the Haiyun Chanzao – making him the

authors are listed in the Haiyun Chanzao ji 『海雲禪藻集』 (Haiyun Chan Literary Collection), and many of the monastic poems that appear in this collection roughly pertain to the aforementioned reciprocal courtesy genres (ji etc.), and were addressed to or referred to gentry associates of the Haiyun order.

An example of this principle can be found in the poems of one of the most important of these poet-proselytizers – Tianran’s first generation disciple Azi Jinwu 阿字今無 (1633–1681). In a study on Jinwu’s poetry, Mo Shangjia 莫尙 noted that he spent a substantial proportion of his career ‘soliciting donations across the countryside’ and for this purpose needed to have an “abundance of social interactions with gentry official and wealthy families almsgivers.”⁶²⁾ As noted further by Mo, “This type of wide social activity is patently evident in light of Jinwu’s [high number of reciprocal courtesy form] poems,” and in particular “longevity poems 壽詩 and correspondence poems 贈詩.”⁶³⁾ According to Mo, many of these poems had a “heavy Buddhist flavour… that is intimate to, and cannot be separated from, his identity as an eminent monk.”⁶⁴⁾ While words “in the poems and songs of Jinwu that

fifth largest contributor (of a total of 128 authors) behind Jinzhao 今沼, Jinyan 今嚴, Danguì and Tianran – while two of his poems are included in the “Fangwai Shi” 方外釋 (“Buddhist Clerical [Authors]”) section of contemporary scholar Chen Rong’s 陳融 (1876–1956) *Du Lingnanren shi jueju* 『讀嶺南人詩絕句』 (Readings in the Jue Regulate Verse Poems of Lingnan Figures) (Rpt. 1965). A brief introduction to his life and works can be found in the Haiyun Chanzao, 121.

62) Mo Shangjia 莫尙 (2006), 410–411.

63) Ibid.

64) Ibid, 411.

specifically discuss Chan are rare... his Chan-mind and Chan meanings are nonetheless often visible in his poems.”⁶⁵⁾

Similarly, we may note the case of another of Tianran’s most eminent first generation disciples the aforementioned Jinshi Dangui. Lin Zixiong 林子雄 states that within Daosheng’s voluminous *Bianxing tang ji* 『行堂集』 (Collection of the Hall of Pervasive Wanderings), “appreciative and reciprocated works constitute the majority - Dangui most probably used writing as a means or a medium for interacting with people.”⁶⁶⁾ Along these lines, Li Shunchen 李舜臣 notes that around 70% of his poems are of the “courtesy and matching responses 酬答/次韻” types, which he states “clearly reflects the broadness of Dangui’s acquaintances”⁶⁷⁾ - including those addressed to officials holding the title of “General” 將軍 “District Magistrate” 太守, “Commander” 總戎, “Palace Assistant Imperial Clerk/Secretary” 中丞, “Military Governor” 撫軍, and “Proconsul” 方伯. Dangui himself made a self-deprecating comment about his monastic poetry, stating that much of it was composed due to need to solicit “gravy” (i.e., money) 阿堵物 “for the triratna of the ten directions” 爲十方三寶用 (i.e., for his Buddhist order and its religious activities).⁶⁸⁾ However, other members of the Haiyun order gave a more affirmative appraisal of their religiosity - Tianran’s preface to the *Bianxing tang ji* asserts that his poetry has didactic and

65) Ibid, 413.

66) (2010), 87. See also Zhong Dong 鍾東(2006), 153.

67) (2006), 178.

68) See his “*Bianxing tang ji yuanqi*” 行堂集緣起 (Causes and Conditions for the Collection of the Hall of All-Pervading Movement), in *Bianxing tang ji* 『徧行堂集』, (Collection of the Hall of Pervasive Wanderings) (Rpt. 2008), (I), 9.

soteriological value,⁶⁹⁾ while Tianran's eminent disciple Leshuo Jinbian 樂說今辯 (1637-1695), in his preface to Dangui's recorded sayings collections, noted that Dangui's non-Buddhist poems were included in the collection because of their spiritual power. Clearly resonating with the last line of Tianran's Sishu preface, the last line of Jinbian's preface states: "the manifestation and non-manifestation of the tenet of literary elegance is not binary; [one should] avoid being stuck on either side [of this binarism]" 亦欲天下後世了然於文彩已彰未彰之旨, 非有二致, 免滯一隅.⁷⁰⁾

Yet there is also evidence that the spirit of Tianran's quasi poetry reached beyond his extensive Haiyun monastic order. Firstly, the Haiyun Chanzao contains the poems of a large number of well known gentry authors who were associated in some way with the Haiyun order.⁷¹⁾ It has been suggested, moreover, that the Haiyun model had a more substantial influence in monastic poetry in the Lingnan region. The late Qing official and Buddhist devotee He Jialin 何佳林, in his preface to the late Qing Huichang temple monk Baofa's 寶筏 Lianxi shi cun 『蓮西詩存』 (The Lianxi Poetry Anthology), listed many of the most famous Qing dynasty monastic composed literary collections of the Lingnan region. In an appraisal of

69) "Caodong sanshisi shi zhu Lushan Guizong Tianran [Han]-Shi heshang xu" 曹洞三十四世住盧山歸宗天然昱和尚序 (Preface [Composed by] the Thirty-fourth Caodong [Patriarch] and Abbot of the Guizong [Temple] of Lushan The Monk Tianran [Han]shi), *Bianxing tang ji* (I), 2. For a discussion on this see Corey Lee Bell (2016), 169-179.

70) See Jinshi Dangui 今釋澹歸 (2008) (I), 7-8.

71) Over 60 authors in this collection were lay disciples. Several others included in this collection served as monks for a short period of time before returning to lay life (such as Jinzhong / Qu Dajun).

their guiding tenets, he noted and noted: “these all take Haiyun as their ancestral lineage and Haichuang as their school; we can trace their source back to these [lineages]” 悉以海雲爲宗，海幢爲派，由源溯流焉 72)

VIII. Afterword

The notion that poetry and Chan were closely related to each other was a prominent theme in late imperial Buddhist monastic literary theory that also served as an important conduit for intellectual engagement between elite monks and local elites / the gentry-literati. Tianran’s quasi poetry not only introduced a relatively well received alternative to the prevailing views of his contemporaries, but also envisioned new ways for monks to use poetry to engage with gentry-literati associates. In this sense it could be argued that the significance of Tianran’s quasi poetry extended beyond literary theory – it arguably also presented a new platform to use religious authority to claim textual authority (and the cultural capital that can be derived from the latter), and to conflate the roles of patron and supplicant in monastic genres long exhorted for an unbecoming sycophancy.

In relation to Tianran’s views on the relationship between Chan and poetry, I have argued that Tianran defied a growing consensus in monastic communities that poetry is to be

72) (Rpt. 2007), 365. The Lianxi shicun was first printed in 1893.

radically identified with Chan. However, this defiance carried important provisos. From Tianran's preface to Hou Rouhai's work, as well as other prefaces, it appears that Tianran was willing to conditionally accept the proposition that poems can express the enlightenment of the author.⁷³⁾ Yet it appears that for Tianran the issue was not so much the veracity of this claim, but the problem that a poem which aims to express the enlightenment of the author may not be of optimal utility for enlightening its readers. A key point Tianran perhaps attempted to communicate here is that poems should be composed in a manner that optimises the capacity of the reader to understand their spiritual message - i.e., that they can be more "accessible to" the author. This may impact on the presentation of a poem, but such a compromise is necessary if a poem is to concomitantly serve literary and religious goals effectively.

Yet Tianran's quasi poetry concept also arguably contributed a new understandings on how traditional monastic forms of poetic exchange could alter the dynamics of textual authority⁷⁴⁾

73) An example is Tianran's "Wuzhong sanzhi shi xu" 『序』 (Preface to the *Poems of the Three Eminent Scholars of Wuzhong*), in which he compared the spiritual value of poems to the capacity of nature to speak of the dharma, and noted that poets and other noble people can attain a state in which they "become of one mind with the *dao* and do not know it of themselves" 高人韻士往往與道冥合而不自知 (TRYL, fascicle 12: (CBETA, J38, no. B406, p. 192, b24-25).). For a discussion on this see Corey Lee Bell(2016), 180-185.

74) Arguably the most succinct and fit-for-purpose articulation of the concept of textual authority in this instance is that of Henry A. Giroux (1990), who defines it as "the power... to legitimate both the value of a particular text and the range of interpretations that can be brought to bear in understanding them" (86). The basis for my assertion that this definition is fitting will be addressed in the following two paragraphs.

- and by extension hierarchies of interpretive power - between monks and clerical authors. This particularly applies to the genre of “reciprocal courtesy” poems - poems in which monks often conveyed their blessings to, or reverence for, gentry devotees who associated with/were patrons of their Buddhist order. As expressed by Daosheng above, it was sometimes the case that poems of this type were condemned for an unbecoming sycophancy or utilitarianism. However, through the concept of quasi poetry, texts that on the surface appear to be written by ‘supplicants’/subjects” to “patrons’/”political masters” could be subject to another interpretation or reading - they could be understood as also being religious texts that conveyed Buddhist teachings from religious instructors (the monastic author) to (perhaps unwitting/unknowing) receivers of religious instruction. In other words, it brought an amorphous quality to the roles of supplicant and patron associated with a genre decried by some (such as Dangui) for placing monks in a demeaning position.

This notion could be applied generally to assert that monasti-authored poems that on the surface appear to be of modest literary quality, and whose composition was perhaps inspired by questionable motives, could be regarded to have greater value on the grounds that they have a religious value that may not be obvious to the less discerning reader. However, it arguably had special significance in the case of Tianran’s Ming “loyalist” affiliated order. As Wang Fupeng 王富鹏 has highlighted, the Haiyun order grew rapidly in a time of widespread economic hardship, and contained a large number of people who had expressed resistance / hostility against the Qing. On account of this Tianran and leading former loyalist

disciples like Dangui had little choice but to “humbly acquiesce to those ministers that had the power to spare or kill, reward or dispossess”⁷⁵⁾ – ministers whose political affiliations, choices or actions Tianran’s loyalist supporters / monks may have strenuously disagreed with. This acquiescence was often reflected in the title and content of poems addressed to these figures – many of which conveyed blessings, longing, etc. Through the concept of quasi poetry, the actual nature of such literary interactions could be contested: the apparent ‘supplicant’ monk could assume the role of the “dharma-master” 法師 to a pitied ‘supplicant’ of religious instruction, or a wrongdoer in need of religious guidance.

Yet quasi poetry advanced other ways to shift the dynamics of textual authority in gentry-clerical exchange. By applying the quasi poetry model to poems that took the forms and titles of traditional classics – as Tianran often did in poems mimicking ancient forms – quasi poems invited the reader to something ostensibly “familiar,” only to subsequently break the links of architextuality, shift the nexus of hyper/hypotext – such as from canonical poetry/poetics to canonical religious texts – and in so-doing preference religious hermeneutics over literary criticism. Such a model could theoretically elevate the poetry and textual authority of monastic poets in spite of their general inferiority – in purely literary terms – to elite gentry-literati poets and their works. In other words, a “quasi poem” that was not an outstanding poem could be claimed to be more than a poem, and monks would have a monopoly on the authority to determine which or whose poems are worthy

75) Wang Fupeng 王富鵬(2010), 71-80.

of this designation.

Quasi poetry declined with the demise of the Haiyun order, which was disbanded in 1775 after Dangui's writings were targeted during the literary inquisition instigated by the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (r. 1735–1796). Yet this was to occur, also, in the backdrop of a strong movement away from Yan Yu's poetics and the involvement of Buddhist concepts in poetics generally – a trend which coincided with, and was intimately related to, the revival of Confucian conservatism and Confucian poetics.⁷⁶⁾ Arguably the biggest problem with quasi poetry was that it emphasized competition / tension between literary and religious aims. In relation to this, the famous Lingnan loyalist / literary figure Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630–1696) – who was once a disciple and later became a critic of Tianran's order⁷⁷⁾ – appeared to mirror Hanshan when he noted poems composed by monks which are not faithful to the mores and motives of Confucian poetics (i.e., the tenets of the Book of Poetry), and which are 'hybridized with religious phrases', are 'detrimental to poetry' and also 'detrimental to Chan.'⁷⁸⁾ Here,

76) For an excellent study on the intellectual history of the decline of Yan Yu's poetics in the late imperial era see Liao Zhaoheng 肇亨(2008), especially 6–10, 68–104. Zhao noted that during the early Qing, "the leading status of Yan Yu's theories started to encounter challenges on every front... one was from those who fundamentally disagreed with [the principle of] "Chan as a metaphor for poetry," especially those who returned to traditional Confucian teachings on poetry" (91–92), and that "from the mid Qing, Buddhist influences on poetics gradually diminished – the ramifications of this extend to this day" (6).

77) For a discussion on Qu Dajun and his relationship with Tianran's order, see Yang Quan 楊權(2008), 110–115.

78) "Many of the ancient Chan masters spoke of Chan through poetry, enabling people to attain Chan outside of [what is explicit stated in]

Tianran's notion that strictly abiding by the tenets of the secular tradition could create restrictions for monastic writers who wish to use poetry to fulfil their religious mission (i.e., the tenet that monastic poets should use 'quasi' poetry) found an counterview in the notion that monastic poetry which is not strictly poetry (as gentry devotees would define it) violated the central tenets of the poetic tradition qua a pure literary endeavor, and in doing so reduced the core elements that aligned Chan and the poetic enterprise.

Arguably the greatest weakness of the quasi poetry model is related to this problem – it placed Chan in competition with poetry, as opposed to identifying or at least emphasizing the compatibility between the two, and by doing so, it appeared to demean the poetic enterprise, and reduce the cultural capital of the monastic poet as a learned / literary figure.

poems. Such is skill in speaking of Chan, and is not in contradiction to the tenet of the Three Hundred [i.e., the Book of Poetry]... The Chan monks of today rarely understand this. Their poems are typically hybridized with religious phrases (神語) – although the words [i.e., their messages] are right, the poetry is wrong; not only is this detrimental to poetry, it is also detrimental to Chan. I previously pointed out the fault in this." 古禪者多以詩言禪，使人得其禪於詩之外，此善於言禪，而與『三百篇』之旨不相悖者也... 今之禪者罕知之，其詩動以神語雜之，語雖是而詩非，微獨累夫詩，且有累夫禪，吾嘗病之. See Shilian Dashan 石濂大汕(Rpt. 2008), 7.

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Abstract

For the Triratna and for Samyak-saṃbodhi

The 'Quasi-poetry' of Tianran Hanshi

Corey Lee Bell

Woosong Univ.

This article discusses the meaning of the eminent early Qing monastic leader Tianran Hanshi's 天然函晷 concept of "quasi poetry" 似詩, its relationship with contemporary debates on the relationship between Chan and poetry, and its impact on poetic ideas and practices in Buddhist monasteries. It will begin by addressing how, in the backdrop of a shift in gentry-monastic relations in the late Ming / early Qing, some monastic writers, such as the renowned late Ming reformer Hanshan Deqing 山德清, articulated a more radical identification of Chan with poetry. I will then briefly introduce Tianran and the core principles he associated with his concept of "quasi poetry", focusing on the ways in which this concept constituted an alternative - and possibly an implicit critique - of the radical identity theory. The third section shows examples of the application of Tianran's "quasi poetry", focusing on a response poem Tianran composed for the lay disciple Xie Jiu 謝揪. This is followed by a discussion on quasi poetry's application and impact in and beyond Tianran's Haiyun school. In a brief afterword I will discuss this how this concept was associated with new modes of literary interaction between gentry and clerical interlocutors, and summarise some of the core reasons for this phenomenon's growth, and eventual

decline, during the Qing dynasty.

Key Words :

Xinxing, San-Jie Jiao, Pufa, Universal Law and Buddha, three level roots, School of the Thrid Stage, Pufa Pufu