Conceptualization of Space
within the Tang Landscape Quatrain

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DEDICATION

For my inspiration, my mother Julie.

For my motivation, my brother Alvin.

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis explores the poet's creation of conceptualized space within the Tang landscape quatrain in the Tang dynasty (618-907) by usage of literary techniques, the focal point being that of temporal and spatial progression to create dynamic and static space. "Space" within the thesis is defined as the "matrix of which forms emerge, medium in which they are related," a mentalization and visualization of breadth, depth, and width created within the artistic medium.

I argue that the concision of Classical Chinese allows the poet to transcend the linguistic limitations imposed by rules of verse to create boundless, semantic space by constructing vivid tableaus of scene and emotion.* In Classical Chinese, there are no verb tenses, no indication of plurality in nouns, and no gender or cases for pronouns. The poet must use language to mold intangible form into tangible existence. The deliberate application of ambiguity is a vital component in the creation of multi-layered dimensions of space within Classical Chinese poetry.

The Tang dynasty is often known as the golden age of Chinese poetry, dominated by the emergence of new innovations and form as poetry writing became more ubiquitous. The breaking *from* traditional rules of verse allowed the poet to uniquely utilize space to further their reflections in their poetry. The thesis examines the poet's creation of spatiality through two lenses of spatiality: creation of *external* space through landscape, and secondly, the creation of *internal* space through mental reflection upon that very landscape. The Tang poet approaches the landscape not only as a place setting, but also as an entire subliminal entity in which he aims to capture with his senses and perceptions to create space in which the reader can visualize. The descriptive poetry of the landscape quatrain is simply not a limitation as a medium of visual communication as Tang poets infuse layers of meaning with the economy of a few characters.

The significance of framing this study within traditional poetic concerns is to understand the intersections of nature, landscape, literary technique, and aesthetic experience. There has been much academic scholarship on the poetry of the High Tang by scholars such as James J. Y. Liu, Stephen Owen, Burton Watson, just to name a few. However, the objective of this thesis is to offer a new perspective through the lens of spatial creation. Quatrains written by famous Tang poets, Li Bai (701-762), Wang Wei (701-761), and Meng Haoran (689-740) are selected to illustrate how the technique of progression is uniquely utilized to create depth and perspective of space.

*Scene (*jǐng* 景) component of "exterior landscape"
Emotion" (*qíng* 情) component of "interior landscape" (Lai, 2017 Lecture)

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INTRODUCTION

野旷天低树，

江清月近人。

How sweeping the wilderness, as the heavens

dip down

to kiss the crest of the trees...

The crystal clarity of the water, how close the moon to man!

-- From Meng Haoran, "Staying Overnight on Jiande River" (Translated by Grace Xu)

Poetry does not exist without conceptualized space, and this very space does not exist without the medium of expression and placement of ideas. Much like how a skilled painter draws upon a canvas to create tangible masterpieces, the poet must use language to mold the intangible form into existence. Whereas paintings and illustrations may be considered as visual poetry, the canvas in which the poet illustrates his personal ideas, feelings, and emotions to the audience is through the creation of *space.* It is through space that the poet can encapsulate aspects from portrayals of his own intimate life to visions of sweeping grandeur, through layers of dimension and meaning. Space, then, is defined as the "matrix of which forms emerge, medium in which they are related," a mentalization and visualization of breadth, depth, and width created within the artistic medium (Sullivan, 14).

The allure of Classical Chinese poetry lies within how expertly the Tang poet manipulates the brevity of Classical Chinese to create multi-layered meaning. The poetic rules of verse serve as limitations, yet the poet shapes the language to form limitless or limited space, constraining the scope to a private inner chamber or expanding it to include sweeping cinematics

of mountains and water. As James Hightower notes of the language, "conciseness and concentration were achieved by reliance on connotation and allusion…with the greatest economy of words [is] used to express emotion, describe a scene or recall an event by selecting the essential segment or aspect of the subject" (Hightower, 69). This thesis topic offers a new perspective on the creation of conceptualized space within the Tang landscape quatrain by usage of literary techniques, the focal point being that of temporal and spatial progression. The significance of framing this study within traditional poetic concerns is to understand the intersections of nature, landscape, literary technique, and aesthetic experience. A close examination and analysis of these quatrains demonstrates how the poet utilized the concision of Classical Chinese to construct vivid tableaus of scene and emotion.

The Tang dynasty (618-907) is often known as the golden age of Chinese poetry, dominated by the emergence of new innovations and form as poetry writing became more ubiquitous. To clarify, the Tang dynasty is often separated into four distinct periods, the Early Tang (618-713), High Tang (713-766), Mid Tang (766-835), and Late Tang (835-907). However, it is the High Tang that is "generally conceded to be the most brilliant era in Tang poetry," in which renowned poets such as Li Bai 李白 (701-762), Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), Wang Wei 王维 (701-761), and Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689-740) excelled in the innovation of conventions, melding both space, time, and emotion seamlessly (Watson, 110). More impressively is how the poet excelled in conceptualizing space, embracing new aesthetics, and expanding literary content, given the poetic rules that were refined during that time. The breaking from traditional rules of verse allowed the poet to uniquely utilize space to further his reflections in poetry.

The Chinese regard poetry, calligraphy, and painting as the Three Perfections, perfect mediums of expression and individuality for the scholar-official. Sullivan writes: "Painting was

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regarded as 'silent poetry,' *Wushengshi,* and thought of as a way of releasing feelings that need not, or sometimes could not, be put in words" (Sullivan, 35). Poetry, however, was regarded as the "highest medium from which to conduct the Dao, repository of human virtue" (Lai, 2017 Lecture).

Thus, it is no wonder that landscape is often the subject of both Chinese landscape painting and Chinese landscape poetry. Landscape and the natural world hold an intimate, irrevocable place within the Chinese cultural memory, particularly the "the most majestic and complete manifestation [of]…the realm of rivers and mountains" (Hinton, xi). Edward Casey defines landscape as the composition of "particular objects of animate and inanimate entities, of discrete shapes and colors of distinctive configurations of many kinds…something that while being experienced as a single whole, is nevertheless not reducible to the sum of its parts (a totalization)" (Casey, 6). Similarly, this definition can be applied to the landscape found within the paintings and poetry of the Tang dynasty.

For clarification, landscape poetry in the Chinese tradition is semantically divided into two compounds of external environment: "mountains and water" (*shān shuǐ* 山水) and "field and garden" (*tián yuán* 田园). Within this thesis, the categorizations of "mountains and water" and "field and garden" poetry do not refer to specific landmarks within nature; rather, "the terms are synecdochal metaphors: the most memorable features of 'nature' are used to represent all of 'nature.'…emblematic of all the diverse and unspecified elements in nature" (Eoyang, 107). Therefore, the Tang poet approaches the landscape not only as a place setting, but also as an entire subliminal entity. Through his ability to create space that the audience can visualize, the poet is able to capture reality by conveying his senses and perceptions of the world around him.

These fundamental elements give important context to understanding the three main questions this thesis aims to explore, analyze, and answer. Firstly, how is semantic space defined, particularly within the realm of Classical Chinese poetry? Secondly, how does the Tang poet create that very sense of space, given the rules of verse for the regulated quatrain? Thirdly, what characteristics of space does the poet aim to innovate? The goal of the thesis is to elucidate the poet's creation of spatiality and the audience's conceptualization of that very space.

OVERVIEW OF CLASSICAL CHINESE

For all intents and purposes within this thesis, Classical Chinese refers specifically to "the written form of Old Chinese, the language of the period from the end of Spring and Autumn period down to the end of the Han dynasty" (Norman, 83). Much like how Latin is virtually incomprehensible to the modern English speaker, such is the case for Classical Chinese to the Modern Standard Chinese speaker. Both Latin and Classical Chinese are literary, written languages, evolved to distinguish themselves from the vernacular, or spoken language.

James. J. Y. Liu has argued that Classical Chinese is congruous with poetry writing, as the language brings both flexibility and versatility through its grammatical structure, which allows for the poet's deliberate application of ambiguity and diverse meanings for him to pick and choose from (Liu, 39). Compared to modern, vernacular Chinese, Classical Chinese is known for its compactness and precision in its language, along with the usage of ellipsis. Historically, the language originated in China and was used "as the standard medium of written expression long after the spoken language had evolved a rather different vocabulary and syntax" (Watson, 3).

There are several key concepts to note regarding Classical Chinese, particularly for understanding the *why* and *how* of the poetic craft, in addition to the poet's expressive use of the language. An important point of clarification is that Chinese is composed of characters that may be considered an individual word, or form parts of words as a unit or compound. Each character is monosyllabic, which contributes greatly to the appreciation of prosody in Classical Chinese through its tonal meter: "a patterned alternation of words of different tone, or pitch," as opposed to rhythmic meter in Western poetry analysis (Liu and Lo, xiv). Tones not only played an essential part in the rules of poetry, but also more importantly aided in the euphony and auditory experience of the audience to "help create the emotional atmosphere the poet was after" (Watson, 5). The four tones in Modern Standard Chinese (MSC) do not directly correspond to the four codified tonal patterns of the Tang dynasty. The four Tang tones, classified under "level tones" (*píng shēng* 平声) and "deflected tones" (*zè shēng* 仄声) categories, are shown by the chart below:

Level Tones (*píng shēng* 平声)	Level (*píng* 平)	MSC first and second tones
Deflected Tones (*zè shēng* 仄声)	Rising (*shǎng* 上)	MSC third tone
	Falling (*qù* 去)	MSC fourth tone
	Entering (*rù* 入)	No longer exists except in dialects such as Cantonese

Table 1. Table of Classical and Modern Chinese Tones

The entering tone no longer exists in Modern Standard Chinese but has been absorbed into each of the modern tones (Norman, 54). Tonal patterns are a useful tool when discussing Tang versification, as the formation of eight and four-line poems in "modern style poetry" were developed in consideration of tonal patterns.

Additionally, in Classical Chinese, there are no verb tenses, no indication of plurality or number in nouns, and no gender or cases for pronouns. Classical Chinese contains "full words…[that] include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs" (Watson, 12). Nouns may be interpreted as singular or plural unless given a numerical context, and verbs do not indicate past, present, or future tense. Furthermore, Classical Chinese also contains "empty words" that consist of particles such as connectives and end of sentence markers that are often left out in poetry, as their omission does not detract from original meaning.

Because grammatical particles are often omitted in poetry, and nouns, verbs, and pronouns have limits on specificity, quantity, and temporal markers, it is no wonder the grammatical austerity of Classical Chinese marks it as a language of economy. However, in contrast to its compactness, Classical Chinese still allows the poet for a wide range of expression in its ambiguity, conveying "ideas and emotions with vividness, economy, grace, and power. Grouping elements in spatial patterns and temporal rhythms, the poet created integrated structures of meaning that, though unified, presented a kaleidoscopic series of impressions" (Smith, 314-315).

Liu writes on the issue of ambiguity, "Chinese is a better language for writing poetry" (Liu, 8). Perhaps in its lack of precision, Classical Chinese's application to poetry renders a certain advantage in poetic expression, expanding the modes of interpretation beyond classic literary devices for analysis. It is the *poet* that utilizes characteristics of the language to enhance the timeless universality of their works, as opposed to generalizing Classical Chinese as the *language* that is supposedly more "poetic."

The simplicity of the Classical Chinese structure belies the poet's skill in exploiting the language to create vivid imagery, esoteric symbolism, and abstraction with purpose. Moreover, it

is also up to the judgement and discrepancy of the audience to interpret the syntactically compact, yet semantically dense compositions of poetry. Thus, in order to appreciate the intricacies of the poetic craft and the aesthetic experience, the audience must decipher the codes of convention, tradition, and memory. This deliberate application of ambiguity to the language is a vital component of the creation of multi-layered dimensions of space within Classical Chinese poetry.

Western literary criticism of poetic structure represents a striking contrast from that of the Chinese. In *Reading Poetry,* Fred B. Millet states that Western poetry that utilizes description as its main element is usually quite brief and few and far between: "In such poems the poet is concerned with presenting a scene in words, with conveying all the sensory richness of his subject without depending upon the interest of event or character. If there are relatively few purely descriptive poems of very high quality, the reasons are perhaps that the medium of words is less efficient than the medium of painting in the communication of visual experience…" (Millet, Hoffman, and Clark, 11).

There are several points to consider in response to the statement regarding descriptive poetry. Firstly, for most part, this criticism pertains to Western poetry and poetics, where narrative elements, no matter how incremental, are almost always required to bring together the poem and engage the audience. Secondly, one can argue that given the nature of Classical Chinese and its application in lyric poetry, it is not as restricted by the potential monotony of descriptive poetry as described in *Reading Poetry,* where the "basic aesthetic attitude…wherein suggestion is prized over exposition, 'less' over 'more'" (Wang, 191).

In fact, there are a multitude of poems that fall under descriptive poetry that are of *high quality*, relaying what may seem like just descriptive imagery on the surface level, but tie the piece together through narrative implications by the poet's deft grasp of the language. The thesis

argument concerns itself with the ability of the Tang poet to transcend the barrier that separates the mediums of painting and poetry. The poet does this by weaving in underlying meaning through his poetic craft, particularly given the strict rules and brevity of structure in the poetic form discussed in the thesis. Classical Chinese is just as efficient, if not even better at times, as a medium of communication of visual experience through the poet's conceptualization of spatiality.

The Geneva School of literary criticism posits an author's "inner mental space [as] an initial void from which consciousness emerges to plot the characteristic architecture of its experience" (Preminger, 454). The thesis examines the poet's creation of spatiality through two lenses of spatiality: creation of *external* space through landscape, and secondly, the creation of *internal* space through mental reflection upon that very landscape. In particular, it is through the poet's examination of his external surroundings that he can reflect upon it, evocative of his own experience and mental representation of his perceptions through his acute senses.

The Geneva School's interpretation of spatiality can be likened to the Chinese concept of *poetry articulating intention*, intent being "that which one's mind is fixed on, grows out of an interior response to some particular event or experience of the world" (Owen 2013, 72). Owen is correct to point out the notion that poetry bespeaks the intent of the poet as the center of Classical Chinese poetry, and this concept is also shared by the Geneva School of literary criticism. The poet's conceptualization of space is largely under-appreciated and often goes without notice; however, it still remains as a viable source of analysis, as the reflections within the poem come from the duality of the spatiality created. The poet's communion with his respective space is multidimensional. Their mutually affinity renders a presentation of the poetic world within Classical Chinese poetry.

LITERARY HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The thesis mainly focuses upon formal Tang innovations that elevated the poetic form and it is crucial to understand the historical evolution of poetry from the earliest poetry forms to truly appreciate the stylistic developments and refinements during the Tang dynasty. China's poetic traditions stretch back to three thousand years, its origins rooted in the *Classic of Poetry (Shī jīng* 诗经*)* in the 600 B.C. Considered to be the oldest anthology of Chinese poetry, the collection was composed of mainly four-syllabic verse forms including "folk songs and ballads; festive songs sung at court banquets; and temple hymns performed to the accompaniment of music and dance" (Liu and Lo, i). Throughout its long lineage, poetry had differentiated into various genres including the *shī* 诗 (lyric form, broad term for poetry), the *cí* 词 ("poetry written in the lyric meter") form, the *qǔ* 曲 ("poetry written to existing music") form. This thesis focuses upon the lyric *shī* genre, particularly the regulated quatrain (*jué jù* 绝句).

In the early Han dynasty (206 B.C - A.D. 220) a new verse form known as *gǔ shī* 古诗 (old Han style verse) emerged. *Gǔ shī* had no restrictions on the line length and no fixed tonal pattern; however, poems were written in lines with five or seven characters. Rhymes were employed at the end of even numbered lines and usually had one consistent rhyme throughout. Additionally, *shī* poems were marked by literary techniques such as verbal parallelism and end-stopped rhymes. The rise of *gǔ shī* differentiated from other forms such as rhapsodies *(fù* 府) and folk songs (*yuè fù* 乐府) as it inspired "poets to use it as a vehicle for deep reflection and introspection" (Wang, 192).

One of the earliest and foremost collections of pentasyllabic poems written in the *gǔ shī* verse form was the anonymous collection of the Nineteen Old Poems" (*gǔ shī shí jiǔ shǒu* 古诗

十九首) of the Han dynasty. This collection influenced the poetic medium through its focus on "subjectivity and emotion, focusing primarily on problems of death and separation" (Wang, 193). The pentasyllabic verse form served as the foundational basis for future innovations within Classical Chinese poetry. Consider the following lines from the *gǔ shī,* "Green, Green, the Grass on the Riverbank" (*qīng qīng hé pàn cǎo* 青青河畔草) within the collection, as it exemplifies the usage of *shī* as the beginnings of a serious form for literary expression beyond the *Shī jīng*.

<u>Green, Green, the Grass on the Riverbank</u>

1   Green green, river bank grasses,

2   thick thick, willows in the garden;

3   plump plump, that lady upstairs,

4   bright bright, before the window;

5   lovely lovely, her red face-powder;

6   slim slim, she puts out a white hand... (Trans. Burton Watson) (Watson, 23)

qīng qīng hé pàn cǎo

<u>青青河畔</u>

1 qīng qīng hé pàn cǎo

  青青河畔草，   green • green • river • bank • grass

2 yù yù yuán zhōng liǔ

  郁郁园中柳。   dense • dense • courtyard • in • willow

3 yíng yíng lóu shàng nǚ

盈盈楼上女，   plump • plump • floor • upper • woman

4 jiǎo jiǎo dāng chuāng yǒu

皎皎当窗牖。   bright • bright • at • window • lattice

5 é é hóng fěn zhuāng

娥娥红粉妆,   lovely • lovely • vermillion • powder • makeup

6 xiān xiān chū sù shǒu

纤纤出素手。   delicate • delicate • reach out • white • hand

(Faurot, 10)

The excerpt from the poem follows a simplistic trajectory in which the audience follows the movement from the scenery of the landscape to the long-suffering wife pining away in her loneliness for her husband. The most obvious technique to note is the reduplication of the adjectives in the poem. The reduplicative binomes of the first six lines are boldly repeated to emphasize the parallelism between the images: Green Green (*qīng qīng* 青青)/ Dense Dense (*yù yù* 郁郁)/ Plump Plump (*yíng yíng* 盈盈)/ Bright Bright (*jiǎo jiǎo* 皎皎)/ Lovely Lovely (*é é* 娥娥)/ Slender Slender (*xiān xiān* 纤纤).

However, the repetition of adjectives, simple parallelism, and end rhymes on the even numbered lines display a rather static quality as the progression of the poem pans from scene to scene with little variation in both syntax and prosody. Due to the repetitive adjectives and parallelism, the rhyme scheme falls upon the same parts within each line, compounding the risk of monotony that comes with such literary techniques. In comparison to the High Tang quatrains in the next pages, one will observe that both content and lyrical style have drastically changed

from poems such as the "Nineteen Old Poems." Poetry evolved from generalized, anonymous grievances to personal, emotive, and reflective introspections that shaped Tang poetry.

Before delving into the codification of verse forms during the Tang dynasty, one must also follow the transformation of poetic content as it shifted from decadent, ornate "armchair" experiences that was in fashion at court to a revival of "returning to antiquity." Poets looked to the past for inspiration in style as "past writers and styles provided diverse, usable models for contemporary writers" (Lewis, 247). Tao Qian 陶潛 (365-427), also known as Tao Yuanming 陶渊明, of the late Eastern Jin and early Song dynasty was perhaps one of the most celebrated poets of the literary past.

Tao left a lasting legacy on Chinese poetry and was highly influential to the golden canon of the High Tang poets as the gentleman-farmer, originator of the subgenre "field and garden" poetry. Tao's legacy is prevalent throughout the works of the High Tang poets, which is especially seen through his concise, simplistic language, distilled to reveal deeper meaning and insight. Tao introduced ideas of rustic simplicity, bucolic leisure, and drinking wine alone. A scholar-official who retired to the countryside to become a farmer, he wrote of his firsthand accounts of rural farming, literal sweat and toil, and complex desire for simplicity. Tao's austere yet meaningful poems served as inspiration for later Tang dynasty poets. They embraced the unembellished idea of seclusion and solitude, simplicity and the truth. By melding individual emotion with the natural imagery surrounding him, his influence on the High Tang literati is undeniable by "provid(ing) the model for a poetry that could be more than a gesture of social conformity" (Owen 2013, 7). As a paragon of reclusion, Tao and his poetry embodied the cyclical pattern of the Dao with a "plain spoken voice that embodied a deep wisdom: rather than

straining for dramatic effect…[it] was a relaxed language that moved with ease and spontaneity, so was the language of dwelling as an organic part of that wilderness cosmology" (Hinton, xii).

POETIC FORMS OF THE TANG DYNASTY

In order to explore the creation of space, understanding formal innovations of the Classical Chinese poetic forms during the High Tang is imperative. By refining tonal parallelism and creating new verse forms, poets of the prolific era oftentimes excelled at extending the boundaries of these innovations by refining and reinventing some of the strict rules that were originally put into place throughout literary memory. These innovations manifested themselves in the emergence of two important verse forms of the New Style (*jìn tǐ* 近体) poetry: the regulated verse (*lǜ shī* 律诗) and the regulated quatrain (*jué jù* 绝句). Regulated verse was thought to be the ideal lyrical form for poetic expression as the Tang poet developed "a penetrating, expressive voice suited to the compactness of the new format…fully internalizing their perceptions of the natural world" (Chinese Poetry, 194).

Regulated Verse (*lǜ shī* 律诗)	Regulated Quatrain (*jué jù* 绝句)
1. Eight lines	1. Four lines, half of a *lǜ shī*
2. 5/6/7 characters per line	1. 5/6/7 characters per line
3. Verbal parallelism: "second and third couplets must be semantically and syntactically parallel" (Faurot, 31)	2. No strict verbal parallelism
4. Tonal parallelism, rhymes must be used at the end of lines 1 (optional),2, 4, 6, 8 of level tones	3. Tonal parallelism, rhymes must be used at end of lines 1 (optional), 2, 4 of level tones
5. Fixed tone pattern	4. Fixed tone pattern like regulated verse

Table 2. Table of Tang Poetic Forms; Regulated Verse and Regulated Quatrain

Poems written in regulated verse are comprised of eight lines, consisting of five-character or seven-character lines. Tonal parallelism and verbal parallelism are strictly observed, in which all rhymes must be the same rhyme and in the same level tone, "used at the end of the 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th lines" (Liu, 26). Couplets are required to have the "second line of a couplet represent[s] a mirror image of the first line…two middle couplets must observe strict verbal parallelism… forbid[s] repetition of any word within the couplet" (Watson, 112). In contrast, the rules of the regulated quatrain are considerably more lax and concise. The quatrain is constrained to only four lines, each line also consisting of five-character, seven-character, or occasionally six-character lines. Rhymes occur in the 1st, 2nd, and 4th lines with the rhyme in Line 1 optional; however, all rhymes are still expected to all be in the level tone. What differentiates the regulated verse from the regulated quatrain beyond stanza length is that "tonal parallelism [was] required but not strict verbal parallelism" (Watson, 112).

Every single line of the quatrain has a purpose, with thought given to every single character in each line. Whereas poetic forms such as *gǔ shī* poetry and folk songs could potentially fall into the trap of monotonous repetition with minor variation, no character is repeated unless the Tang poet *intended* for it to be in the quatrain for a specific reason. The exception exists when the poet uses repetition to emphasize the poet's point or highlight a certain alliterative or onomatopoeic effect.

Most notably, poets began utilizing the quatrain to tell a story in installments, offering a tableau frozen in a scenic snapshot of the landscape in time. Hongchu Fu writes that "brevity and implicitness are perhaps the soul of poetry, for a poem will lose its *raison d'etre* if it expresses itself in a straight-forward manner of prose" (Fu, 14). The brief, descriptive poetry not only communicates the visual and visceral experience with ease, but with choice detail.

High Tang poets no longer had to include an introduction in their poetry. The regulated quatrain, in four short lines, could express the most pivotal, critical moments without tedious exposition. The art of the quatrain "contain[s] the distilled essence of its subject" as "the limitation of length makes it impossible to achieve effects by accumulating detail" (Hightower, 69). The rules thereby pushed the concision of Classical Chinese to a maximum in a minimal amount of characters. Poets were talented in using the limited space using literary devices such as allusion and word-play to make the most out of what Fu notes to be of utmost importance in expressing poetic emotion: "brevity" and "implicitness."

LINE OF FINESSE

Understanding the line of finesse is imperative in analyzing the regulated quatrain for poetic expression and the creation of spatiality. The regulated quatrain often follows the conventional formula for the verse form "whereby the first line should establish the theme, the second continue it, the third introduce a 'turn,' a new element, and the fourth resolve all into a harmonious whole" (Hightower, 70):

> *Line 1* – establishes theme
>
> *Line 2* – continues theme
>
> *Line 3* – introduces a turn or new emotion or *line of finesse*
>
> *Line 4* – resolution of emotion (Lai, 2017 Lecture)

Line 1 and 2 typically establish the space of *scene*, or "exterior landscape" (Lai, 2017 Lecture). It is Line 3 that introduces the most critical component of the poem: the line of finesse, which facilitates the pivotal transition from the depiction of *scene* (*jǐng* 景), to the expression of *emotion* (*qíng* 情), or "interior landscape" (Lai, 2017 Lecture). The line of finesse is the statement piece that introduces a subtle or significant shift of emotion or perspective – oftentimes indicating *progression* or movement within the poem. This is vital to tracing the poet's creation of spatiality through the literary device of temporal and spatial progression, which will be discussed in detail in Section II.

Perhaps the closest Western literary equivalent for the line of finesse would be the *volta*, or "turn in thought" (Preminger, 1367). The *volta* is used to describe "a sudden change in thought, direction, or emotion near the conclusion of a sonnet…the first section of the sonnet states a premise, asks a question, or suggest a theme. The concluding lines after the *volta* resolve

the problem by suggesting an answer, offering a conclusion, or shifting the thematic concerns in a new direction" (Wheeler). However, what differs the line of finesse from the *volta* is that whereas the *volta* veers towards the dramatic shift, a significant shift in the weight of emotion or direction of intellectual thought, the line of finesse can be as understated or delicate as the poet deems it to be. The spatial shift from the outer perspective of the landscape scene to the inner perspectives of the poet's private thoughts, marks the turn of emotion and then the final resolution of that very emotion at the conclusion of the poem.

In practice, the line of finesse can be as subtle or as significant as the poet deems it to be. For example, Li Bai's quatrain, "Sitting Alone by Jingting Mountain" (*dú zuò jìng tíng shān* 独坐敬亭山) showcases the poet's passive communion with Jingting Mountain following the conventional formula for a regulated quatrain. Owen writes of Li's legacy as China's greatest poet, a title whom he shares with the prolific poet Du Fu: "Li Po left this one great legacy to future poets: an interest in personal and poetic identity. Mere excellence was no longer sufficient; the poet and to be both excellent and unique" (Owen 2013, 109). Li is known for his ease of expression, carefree whimsicality, seemingly divine ability to embody his unique personality in poetry. His poetic power is likened to the quality of a river: "its gushing energy, its tumbling fall, or its majestic flow" (Luo and Li, 551). Li's spontaneity, however, was carefully crafted to demonstrate the effortless creativity for which he was known. This style, which for the most part, was unrivaled in Chinese literary memory. Even with the conventional quatrain of "Sitting Alone by Jingting Mountain," Li Bai's creative genius is undeniable, particularly with his command of the line of finesse:

<u>Sitting Alone by Jingting Moutain</u>

1 The flocks of birds have flown high and away,

2 A solitary cloud goes off calmly alone.

3 We look at each other and never get bored –

4 Just me and Jingting Mountain. (Trans. Stephen Owen) (Lai, 2017 Lecture)

dú zuò jìng tíng shān

<u>独坐敬亭山</u>

1 zhòng niǎo gāo fēi jǐn

众鸟高飞尽，   flock • bird • high • fly • disappear

2 gū yún dú qù xián

孤云独去闲。   alone • cloud • solitary • leave • idle

3 xiāng kàn liǎng bù yàn

相看两不厌，   mutual/towards • watch • pair • not • dislike

4 zhī yǒu jìng tíng shān

只有敬亭山。   Only • have • Jing • ting • Mountain

(*Quan Tang Shi,* vol. 6, 1858*)*

Jingting Mountain, located in present-day Anhui province in the northern region of Xuancheng City, was beloved many poets and painters. At first glance, Li's quatrain begins with the poet's passive observation of the natural environment as he travels to Jingting Mountain alone. He watches as the flocks of birds fly out of his line of sight and reflects upon the solitary cloud that drifts away. Line 1 and 2 traditionally establish the visual scene; however, Li makes a point to establish the *absence* of all components of the landscape, particularly with ending Line 1

and 2 with the diminishing verbs "disappear" (*jǐn* 尽) and "leave idly" (*qù xián* 去闲). The absence of the birds and clouds within the spatial landscape leaves only the poet and Jingting mountain within the tableau.

Part of Li's innovative poetic craft is his attention to detail, particularly in the specificity of numbers within his poetry. Against convention during the time, Li focuses on numbering the objects within his poems. In "Sitting Alone by Jingting Mountain," Li uses quite a few choice characters that have numerical connotations. For instance, Line 1 contains *zhòng* 众, translated as "multitude, crowd, or masses" to describe the birds, contrasted with the singular adjectives of "orphaned, solitary" (*gū* 孤) and "alone, singular" (*dú* 独) to depict the cloud in Line 2. Line 3 places emphasis on "pair" (*liǎng* 两), implying two subjects in question, the poet himself and Jingting Mountain. The usage of the character "only" (*zhǐ* 只) continues to place heavy emphasis on the connective bond between the mountain and the observer. With such exact numerical specificity, Li is able to vacate the space of the landscape and precisely illustrate the intimacy of the relationship between man and nature, his bond with Jingting Mountain.

In Li's journey to Jingting Mountain, he seeks both solace and sustenance within the natural scenery. His tranquil contemplation of his surrounding environment sets up the spatial staging in the first two lines to further enhance the shift in tone for Line 3, or the line of finesse. Li introduces a significant turn of emotion with "look at each other" (*xiāng kàn* 相看). Understanding the character *xiāng* 相 is key in decoding the significance of the line of finesse. *Xiāng* 相 can be understood and translated as "mutual" or "reciprocal," however, it can also be directional. Owen translates the original text in Line 3 to include the shared relationship between

Jingting Mountain and Li; however, it can also be interpreted as the poet gazing at the mountain and never tiring of its beauty, or alternatively, the mountain enjoying the company of the poet.

The line of finesse can be interpreted in multiple ways. Li and the mountain are at eye level, enjoying each other's quiet companionship in their *mutual* communion as Jingting Mountain is personified, taking on seemingly human qualities. It can also be interpreted as Li utilizing pathetic fallacy and extending his passive reflection to not only to his relationship with the element of landscape, but perhaps the element of landscape directionally communing with Li. Thus, the usage of *xiāng* 相 aids in furthering the emotion introduced in the line of finesse, consecrating the attachment with Li and Jingting Mountain. Originating from the Confucian *Analects*, clouds are representative of ambition within Classical Chinese poetic convention (Lai, 2017 Lecture). As the lone cloud drifts off leisurely in Line 2, one can interpret Li's ambition disappearing. Perhaps his communion with the nature and Jingting Mountain is marked by a loneliness that is alleviated with the companionship of the landscape. No longer is it solely the poet that is in communion with the scenery, but rather, the audience can conjure up the visual intimacy of a reciprocal affinity between man and nature.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The objective of the thesis is to approach spatial creation through the lens of several distinguished Tang dynasty poets and their techniques in creating new depths of aesthetics and insights. The first part of the study, the introduction, will focus on providing the historical and theoretical framework to understanding the background of Classical Chinese poetry. It also introduces proper terminology used within the thesis to discuss selected poems in context. The second part of the study is an exegesis that places spatial creation in the context of High Tang poets, namely Meng Haoran and Li Bai's works. There are countless approaches to Classical Chinese poetry, but within the scope of this thesis, a few selected poems will be analyzed to interpret temporal and spatial progression and its role in spatial creation. These poems are exemplary in demonstrating key points in poetic composition, from analysis to interpretation. Additionally, the chosen poems will be presented in the original Classical Chinese, accompanying *Pinyin* romanization, word-for-word definitions of every character, along with published English translations, with the exception of one of my own translations.

The thesis draws upon the following primary sources from which the selected poems are cited: *300 Tang Poems* (*Táng shī sān bǎi shǒu* 唐诗三百首), an 18th century anthology of the most famous and familiar poems to the Chinese cultural memory, and *Complete Tang Poems* (*Quán táng shī* 全唐詩), the foremost comprehensive collection of Tang poetry. Additionally, secondary sources providing excellent background information regarding the technicalities, mechanics, and concepts of Classical Chinese poetry greatly aided in summarizing the essential information necessary for analysis. Key sources included James J. Y. Liu's *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, an excellent primer of Classical Chinese poetry that provided in-depth tools of analysis categorized by thematic and conceptual sections. Burton Watson's *Chinese Lyricism: from the*

Second to the Twelfth Century provided the most comprehensive overview of Classical Chinese poetry throughout history, combining it with core topics in each poetic era. Stephen Owen's *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry* delved into the biographies of each poet, tying their personal histories to their body of work, elucidating motivations and influences found within their poetry. Dr. Chiu-Mi Lai's lectures in her course, "Decoding Classical Chinese Poetry" at the University of Texas at Austin introduced many essential elements in Classical poetry with a focus on the insomniac moon, landscape poetry, communion with nature.

Additional scholarship, opinions, and analysis by literary critics are used to provide background and context and cross referenced in the thesis, but critical analysis and new observations regarding key elements of the poetry in regard to *space* will be originally analyzed. Important sources, just to name a few, include *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations*, *Sunflower Splendor, Studies in Chinese Poetry and Poetics Vol. 1,* James Hightower's *Studies in Chinese Poetry* were vital in providing an extensive selection of introductions, English translations, and Western scholarship on Classical Chinese poetry.

SECTION II: REPRESENTING SPACE THROUGH LANDSCAPE

Section II is dedicated to examining the High Tang poet's conceptualization of spatiality through the creation of external landscape. Given the intimate relationship between landscape and Chinese poetry, the thesis also addresses the topic of representing space through landscape.

Edward Casey raises an interesting consideration for the problem of capturing landscape in his discussion: "…representing landscape can be seen as a quandary of containment. How is the artist to contain something as overflowing as landscape within the very particular confines of a painting?" (Casey, 6). If the painting is to be considered a visual poem, then the painting's borders stop at the edges of the canvas, along with the negative space within the artwork. It is impossible to entirely capture the scene before the painter's eyes. When compared capturing the landscape within the constraints of Classical Chinese, the poet must exercise the dexterity of his words to the utmost potential. Given the strict rules of the regulated quatrain, the poet must additionally rely upon the memory and allusions that his chosen language evokes. If following the conventional formula within the first two lines of the poem, he is better able to create a lasting impression of the landscape scene under focus.

Perhaps, the more significant question to pose is whether landscape even needs to be "contained" within the medium. Rather, the point to put forth is less about recording the entirety of the scene but more about the poet's representation of the landscape through his own lens of integral experience. The subtle nuances of the view, the shifts in gaze, and the changes in his progression throughout the poem is what makes the space the poet has created definitively his very own. Each poet has a different approach to communion with the landscape whether in affinity or observation, as his view of "nature [is] filtered through lenses of subjectivity and

objectivity of varying opaqueness and lucidity" (Eoyang, 108). With the poet's own interpretation and composition of the domain of the natural world, comes the authenticity of his reflections upon the landscape. The poet is able suggest and enhance a certain tone and mood through the use of literary devices such as imagery and metaphor, specifically the application of devices such as such pathetic fallacy.

One of the biggest components of landscape poetry, given both "mountains and water" and "field and garden" poetry, is the poet's representation of the landscape space. From untamed wilderness to a bucolic scene, nature is an omnipresent, unyielding, eternal presence that is neither malicious nor benevolent toward mankind. Nature will continue to exist in the face of the transient, ephemeral affairs of man (Liu, 49). The Tang poet never seems to stray far from nature, seeking inspiration and solace within it as he "internalizes it in his mind and makes it his symbolic, metaphoric language, or becomes part of it, by abnegating the self and adopting a state of 'no-mind'" (Eoyang, 108). The poet aims to recreate the experience of being in nature within the landscape, whether it be concrete or "armchair." In the Chinese case, the poet places more importance of achieving harmony with nature through *yin* and *yang*, complementary dualities that define the workings of the universe.

To explain briefly, *yin* is essentially female essence, whereas *yang* is male essence, but the *yin-yang* relationship extends further beyond, from active to passive, to the sun and moon, to shaded and sunny sides within the Chinese tradition. The *yin-yang* interaction is part of the cosmic universe that produces the "so- called five agents – qualities associated with wood (flourishing), fire (heat), earth (stability), metal (sharpness of durability), and water (coolness)… These agents…manifest in the material force *qi* of which all things, animate and inanimate, were constituted" (Smith, 211). Preservation of the harmony of the *yin-yang balance* is of utmost

importance as *yin* and *yang* exist in a dynamic field of interaction, mutually interdependent connections that are never in isolation. One can then begin to have a sense of understanding of the Chinese view of nature from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic. It is self-generating, composed of interacting elements in a constant flux within the cosmos, consistent with the *yin-yang* juxtaposition of cosmological forces that bring forth the rhythm of nature.

Harkening back to the aforementioned Three Perfections of poetry, calligraphy, and painting, all three artistic mediums are holistically connected as a "tribunal, artistic response to the cosmos of the Dao (the Way)," embodying the vitality of *qì* 氣, or vigor, that the scholar infuses within his artistic products (Lai, 2017 Lecture). Furthermore, the graphic nature of Chinese characters adds to the inherent connection with landscape painting, intermingling the audience's conceptualization of spatiality as the line between visual and semantic space becomes blurred. Both Classical Chinese poetry and painting are uniquely efficient forms of visual expression.

Thus, understanding the principles behind Chinese landscape painting is complementary to a discussion on spatiality in Classical Chinese poetry. In painting, the artist mimics the rise and fall, ebb and flow, push and pull of *yin-yang* through the flourish of their brushwork. By channeling the intrinsic rhythm of nature, the painters showcase the panorama of landscape: "Heaven dominated Earth, voids dominated solids, mountains dominated water, and movement dominated stillness, but all were integrated into a single philosophical statement reflecting the grandeur, and limitlessness of nature" (Smith, 298-299).

Rather than viewing landscape paintings from a rigid perspective, the dynamic interplay of movement from both painter and audience facilitates the viewing experience through multiple points of view. The Chinese poet aims to capture the same type of *infinity* through adding "new

dimensions to the world directly perceived in their poems, and in doing so evok[ing] a mood of infiniteness" (Smith, 299). Thus, in poetically transposing the scenery of the natural world, the poet can expand the canvas by creating layers of dimensional space through movement, memory, and imagery.

CREATION OF SPACE: TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL PROGRESSION

In order for the Tang poet to visually and semantically create the overarching sense of space, the key component to establishing spatial parameters is through the use of temporal and spatial progression. To place this in context, Meng Haoran's "Staying Overnight on Jiande River" (*sù jiàn dé jiāng* 宿建德江) and Li Bai's "To Wang Lun" (*zèng wāng lún* 贈汪倫) will be used to illustrate each poet's use of these literary devices and their approach to navigating the architecture of the space he has created.

To better understand Meng's ability to create spatiality, one must know the scope of the experience upon which he draws. One of the successful poets from the early years of the High Tang, Meng was known for his landscape as a recluse poet (Lo and Li, 550). Later poets regarded Meng's work as a reflection of his carefree, independent attitude in writing poetry for pleasure: "…the way he invested freedom and independence with profound dimensions…his free spirit led him to travel widely, making China's far flung rivers and mountains his neighborhood landscape" (Hinton, x). Because Meng failed to pass the civil service examination, he never held a stale court position. Nevertheless, Meng was respected as a prominent poet and held in high regard by his younger and more famous contemporaries such as Wang Wei and Li Bai. Perhaps this is why Meng's style is far removed from the capital poetry of the time, developed in response to the *shan shui* landscapes he encountered in his many travels (Hinton, x). Meng's

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style of poetry encapsulated ideas of seclusion, wilderness, and the traveler's nostalgia. Thus, spatiality within Meng's poetry is found in his detailed depictions of the landscape through realistic imagery and use of progression.

Meng's "Staying Overnight on Jiande River" is exemplary of the creation of dimensional space, along with encapsulating themes such as the traveler's sorrow and nostalgia. This poem was composed by the poet after Meng failed the *Jinshi* examinations, and his frustrations regarding the lack of appreciation shown by the Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-756) after the emperor was "reported to have taken offence at a line of poetry" (Woolley, 56). It is probably no wonder that Meng's journey to Jiande, (in modern-day Zhejiang province) served as inspiration for this poem. It is a piece focused on that of a stranger traveling to a foreign place, tinged with the traveler's melancholy. He expertly weaves threads of spatial and temporal progression throughout the poem, enriching the poem's spatiality to better express and reflect upon his melancholy.

Away from his nativity and far from his homeland, the stranger, or rather Meng himself, communes with the natural environment in sorrow, perhaps in despondency toward his court ambitions. The character that Meng uses to refer to himself, *kè* 客, reveals two identities within Classical Chinese. The term can mean either "traveler" or "stranger" depending upon context. The first definition is "guest, visitor," whereas the second places *kè* as an "outsider, not native to the place visited" (Kroll 2017, 240). Perhaps in this case, Meng is both a traveling guest and an alienated outsider in a foreign place, which is well reflected in "Staying Overnight on Jiande River."

Staying Overnight on Jiande River

As my boat glides through the mist and moors upon an islet,

In the dusk of the twilight sun, my traveler's sorrow begin anew.

How sweeping the wilderness, as the heavens
dip down
to kiss the crest of the trees...
The crystal clarity of the water, how close the moon to man!
(Tr. Grace Xu)

sù jiàn dé jiāng

宿建德江

1 yí zhōu bó yān zhǔ

移舟泊烟渚，   move • boat • anchor • mist/smoke • islet

2 rì mù kè chóu xīn

日暮客愁新。   sun • dusk • visitor/traveler • sorrow • anew

3 yě kuàng tiān dī shù

野旷天低树，   wilderness • vast • heavens/sky • lower • crest of trees

4 jiāng qīng yuè jìn rén

江清月近人。   river • clear • moon • close • man

(*Tang Shi San Bai Shou*, 271).

Meng's creation of malleable space in "A Night Mooring on the Jiande River" is splendid.
Line 1 of the quatrain begins with the scene filled with a hazy mist upon the river, obscuring the
vision of the water. The parallelism of active and passive movement exists within the veiled

space, particularly in which the physical setting of twilight sun (*rì mù* 日暮) contrasts with the intangible, growing anxiety in the poet's voice as the light fades into darkness (*kè chóu xīn* 客愁新).

Line 3 of the quatrain, the line of finesse, subverts the idea of scene and emotion. Conventionally, the line of finesse indicates a significant shift from scene *to* emotion, yet Meng chooses to focus his line of finesse upon the changing landscape, and *then* transition to the emotions that implicitly follow. This line perfectly illustrates how the poet can navigate the spatial progression within the landscape: Meng begins with a sweeping view of wilderness (*yě kuàng* 野旷), but reigns in its broad expanse to focus upon the singularity of "sky low tree" (*tiān dī shù* 天低树). Space is collapsed into a singular horizontal line as the audience gradually watches the trees and sky merge in the horizon. One can imagine the beginning of the third line as a long, panning shot of the vast wilderness, only to zoom in upon the sunset as it disappears in the skyline to reveal the moon.

In Line 3, the phrase "sky low tree" (*tiān dī shù* 天低树) can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. Perhaps the most evident is the idea of the sky lowering itself to the level of the treetops. Another alternative interpretation follows the vision of the descending sky reflected upon the water, creating a mirror image. Lastly exists the idea of both the sky and treetops converging together towards a single vantage point. Interestingly, the sky or heavens is pseudo-personified, almost as if the gradual descent mirrors the gentle quietude, much like the sunset in the second line of the poem. The spatial progression of this poem, though not perceptible in a first reading, is clearly discernable upon further examination.

Meng's use of temporal progression can also be tracked throughout the quatrain. The poem begins with an obscured view of the landscape scene and marked by a temporal marker of

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the sun setting in Line 2, only for the mist to be cleared and the water unobstructed (*jiāng qīng* 江清) to reveal the clarity, brightness, and luster of the moon at night in Line 4. The poet conjures through his imagery the dusk and the approaching sunset. The passing of time during the evening hours is almost imperceptible, smoothly transitioned. The poet guides the audience to watch the slow descent of the sun and rise of the moon.

The conventions of twilight sorrow convey the themes of nostalgia and longing. Meng's application of spatiality places the individual traveler on his little boat in contrast against the immeasurable landscape of the natural world. It is almost as if the proximity of the moon and its light cuts through the poet's sorrow, in reflection upon the landscape. Meng originally uses temporal and spatial progression to create space in order to delineate the alienation of the traveler, lonesome in his own thoughts. Ultimately, he closes the spatial distance not only between the poet and the moon, but to the audience as well. The lucidity of this moment clears through the mist and through the water, a signifier to the traveler of his communion with nature – an ever present, infinite existence.

Through the tableau, Meng manipulates both the breadth of space and the passage of time. Much like Li Bai's "Sitting Alone on Jingting Mountain," Meng frames the quatrain in a way in which the closeness of communion assuages the nostalgia of the traveler. Because Meng was not restricted by the formality of court poetry, the freedom he expresses in his work "permitted him to integrate experience to reflect an order of 'natural' perception…the authentic expression of personal experience" (Owen 2013, 79). By setting the scene with temporal and spatial progression to create spatiality, Meng could express his inner sentiments in the latter half of the quatrain.

Meng's creation of interior and exterior landscape aptly follows the concept described in the Introduction regarding *poetry articulating intention*. Meng's emotions and reflections stem from his experience of his travels throughout his lifetime, from "Lo-yang...followed by a trip to Yang-chou and the lower reaches of the Yangtze…to the capital metropolis of Ch'ang-an…rambling freely in the territory of the old states of Wu and Yüeh" (Kroll 1981, 17). Meng was not an armchair traveler. His poetry captured the intimate experience of real-life travel as he traversed across actual landscape space.

In the poem, "To Wang Lun," Li Bai utilizes temporal and spatial progression by constructing a sense of depth and breadth in space to compare the tangible to the intangible. For context, Li penned this quatrain to express his emotions in response to Wang's farewell, "written at a place called Peach Flower Pool in Anhwei and given at parting to a friend of the poet, a local wine-seller named Wang Lun" (Watson, 147).

<u>To Wang Lun</u>
1   I was just
          shoving off
          in my boat
2   when I heard
          someone stomping
          and singing on the shore!
3   Peach Blossom Lake
          is a thousand feet deep
4   but it can't compare
          with Wang Lun's love
          or the way he said
          goodbye
          (Trans. David Young) (Minford, 752)

Zèng Wānglún

贈汪倫

1 Lǐ Bái chéng zhōu jiāng yù xíng,

　李白乘舟將欲行，　　　　　Li • Bai • mount • boat • about to • desire • to go

2 hū wén àn shàng tà gē shēng.

　忽聞岸上踏歌聲。　　　　　suddenly • hear • shore • on • stamp • song • sound

3 táo huā tán shuǐ shēn qiān chǐ,

　桃花潭水深千尺，　　　　　peach • blossom • Pool • water • deep • thousand •　feet

4 bù jí wāng lún sòng wǒ qíng.

　不及汪倫送我情。　　　　　not • reach • Wang • Lun • to see off • me • emotion

(*Quan Tang Shi,* vol. 5, 1765)

Line 4 concludes with the intangibility of Wang's sentiments of friendship as they part (*sòng wǒ qíng* 送我情), whereas Line 3 presents the tangible depth of Peach Blossom Lake's waters that reach a thousand feet deep (*shēn qiān chǐ* 深千尺). Li is able to quantify the qualitative sentiments Wang has for him. The nature of this comparison only furthers the deep mutual appreciation Li Bai has for his friend, a transference of the two qualities.

The first two lines of the poem construct space for the visual and auditory experience Li witnesses. Li establishes the distance between himself and his friend through auditory effect. He hears the sound of Wang's dancing and singing (*tàgē shēng* 踏歌聲) that carries across from the shore to the waters, filling the spatial distance between the friends in their farewell. Once again, Li's clever usage of diction evokes the visual landscape.

Note the beautiful aesthetics of the reference to peach blossoms (*táo huā* 桃花) in the name Peach Blossom Lake, which evokes the literary memory of Tao Yuanming's famous utopian fable of "The Peach Blossom Spring" (*táo huā yuán jì* 桃花源記). Additionally, Li uses the clever juxtaposition with his surname, *Lǐ Bái* (李白), where the character *lǐ* 李 means plums, in Line 1 to refer to not only himself, but to parallel the peach blossoms (*táo huā* 桃花) in Line 3. The inclusion of his own name and the brilliance of including imagery of peach blossoms and plums indirectly add to the deeper nuances of the poem.

However, Li also breaks from convention by not introducing a turn of emotion or change in perspective in the line of finesse. Rather, he focuses on the depth of Peach Blossom Lake, which is a component of the scene and furthers the sense of spatiality through the semantic reference to the depth of a "thousand feet deep" (*shēn qiān chǐ* 深千尺). Conventionally, the most important emphasis is on the last two lines that emphasize the turn of emotion. By choosing not to focus the shift of sentimentalities in Line 3, Li sets up the effective comparison of the concrete and abstract qualities of what exists in natural landscape. The waters of the Peach Blossom Lake, albeit exaggerated, is an extension of what exists emotionally within the internal landscape of his mind.

Li would not be able to create his striking metaphors without the conceptualization of space within "To Wang Lun," particularly with spatial progression. All of the water within the lake cannot measure up to the friendship with the man who had just seen him off, intensifying the sincerity of Li Bai's tone. The depth of the space, the deepness of Peach Blossom Lake, mirrors the depth of Wang's emotion, effectively measuring out the intangible feelings that are greater than "a thousand feet."

DIFFERENTIATING SPACE: STATIC VS. DYNAMIC SPACE

Now that the question of *how* the poet creates spatiality is answered through the usage of progression, the final question to ask is *what* characteristics of spatiality does the poet create within the quatrain? The poet's transformation of space can typically be separated into two distinct categories: static space and dynamic space. Whereas static space involves subtle movement, passive observation, and focuses on slight shifts within the text, dynamic space showcases active, engaging expression through motion and physicality. The poet's observations, interactions, and intuitions upon specific images within the landscape are reflected in the type of space that they create. To better illustrate this, this section compares and contrasts Wang Wei's "The Deer Enclosure" (*lù chái* 鹿 柴) and Li Bai's "Early Departure from White Emperor Fortress" (*zǎo fā bái dì chéng* 早发白帝城).

Wang Wei, accomplished painter, poet, calligrapher, and scholar official, was ranked among the most distinguished of men during the golden age of the Tang dynasty. Wang not only mastered the Three Perfections, but he was also an accomplished musician. His work often reflected his Buddhist affiliations of simplicity, piety, and emptiness (*Śūnyatā*) in both poetry and landscape painting. Though he held a successful position at the capital and was highly regarded for his poetic genius and talents beyond poetry, Wang preferred to lead a life of reclusion in meditation, often spending time in his Zhongnan mountainside villa to devoutly practice Buddhism. The quietude the model scholar-official sought within his personal life is indicative of his poetry as well, characterized by meditative tranquility and graceful austerity (Watson, 170).

Nevertheless, Owen writes of Wang's style as "an act of renunciation born of deeply negative impulse…against the glittering rhetoric and mannered formality of public poetry"

(Owen 2013, 76). Wang was quite familiar in the rhetoric of court poetry, having been extensively trained in the art. However, his own personal poetry reveals the renunciation of the "falseness of feeling by its true negation – absence of feeling…if genuine feeling is to be present, it must be hidden, only implied, spared the manipulative self-consciousness implicit in overt expression" (Owen 2013, 41). Thus, Wang represents the yearning for simplicity, which is no wonder why he was so inspired by the "field and garden" poetry of Tao Yuanming (Lai 2002, 14-15).

Pauline Yu writes of Wang's works: "his poems possess a surface simplicity, the immediate appeal of apparently precise visual imagery and a calm appreciation of nature which seem to leave little for the audience to interpret…on second glance, his works reveal disturbingly elusive philosophical underpinnings, grounded in Buddhist metaphysics" (Yu, 219). Wang's poetry, influenced by both landscape painting and his Buddhist faith, imbued his work with a negation of the self. However, in stark contrast to the simplicity of his language, Wang successfully captures the beauty of the natural world around him, revealing complex, multi-layered meaning behind his diction.

Furthermore, beyond returning to antiquity, Wang wanted to return one step further, to return to stillness and simplicity. Wang's poetic craft focuses on the subtle shifts of passive observation, his excursions within nature express themselves through quietude within the landscape, set apart by moments of sudden, instantaneous enlightenment, no matter how insignificant. Wang was a devout practitioner of Chan Buddhism, and his descriptions of landscape and imagery "functions on both the descriptive and the symbolic levels at once" (Watson, 171). The references within his poetry to Buddhism are so subtle that at first glance, that it captures the very essence of the highest ways of Buddhist thought and passivity. "The

Deer Enclosure" is a prime example of showcasing the subtleties of static space within the quatrain, utilized to its fullest potential.

The Deer Enclosure

1 On the lonely mountain I meet no one,

2 I hear only the echo of human voices.

3 At an angle the sun's rays enter the depth of the wood,

4 And shine upon the green moss

(Tr. Jerome Chen and Michael Bullock) (Minford, 704)

Lù chái
鹿 柴

1 Kōng shān bú jiàn rén,

　空山不见人，　　　　　　empty • mountain • not • see • person

2 dàn wén rén yǔ xiǎng.

　但闻人语响。　　　　　　yet • hear • person • voice • sound

3 Fǎn jǐng rù shēn lín,

　返景入深林，　　　　　　reflect • sunlight • enter • deep • forest

4 fù zhào qīng tái shàng.

　复照青苔上。　　　　　　again • shine • blue/green • moss • on

(*Tang Shi San Bai Shou*, 267)

Wang's conceptualization of space can be analyzed through the *yin-yang* duality embedded within the poem of presence and absence: absence, beginning with the usage of the

term (*kōng* 空) in Line 1 to describe the mountains with no trace of others, and presence in Line 2, in which the sound of human voices is heard (*rén yǔ xiǎng* 人语响). The indistinct murmurs of speech cut through the quiet meditation, enhancing the disjuncture between that of the silence created in Line 1, and the noise in Line 2, seemingly out of place against the natural setting within the mountains. Interestingly enough, the English translation for *kōng* 空 is "lonely" instead of "empty," perhaps highlighting the spiritual or emotional state of the poet as he seeks the mountain for a place of solitude, much like Li Bai's "Sitting Alone in Jingting Mountain." Both poets are in the mountains, however, the similarities end here. Li *actively* communes with Jingting Mountain, whereas Wang *passively* meditates within the Deer Enclosure in the presence of the mountains.

To further enhance the contrast of the profundity of stillness, from the "lonely mountain" to the sudden "echoes of human voices," Wang uses the landscape to firstly establish a quiet tranquility of Buddhist introspection within the woods. There is a sense that the poet has been in the mountains for quite some time, a nod to subtle temporal progression, to mark the contrast of interrupting the private seclusion of the poet. There is little movement or interaction with the environment from the poet, harkening back to the abnegation of the self to focus simply upon the passive observations around him within the static space.

Line 3 introduces the line of finesse, the sudden "angle [of] the sun's rays enter the depths of the wood" to bring about a very subtle change as the light pierces through the deep forest. What may seem to be an insignificant detail essentially *makes* the entirety of the poem so memorable. It is unclear whether the poet's location has changed, but there is a definite shift in spatial progression within the scene. The interplay between that of the slanting rays of the sun and implied shadows within the forest once again furthers the concept of *yin-yang* interaction. A

delicate balance is struck between the bright light of the sun (*yang*) that filters through, against the darkness of the shadows within the dense foliage of the forest (*yin*). Line 4 enables the audience to experience the visual immediacy of the poet's observations. The light illuminates the ground and is reflected upon the moss, glimmering as it brings vivid color to the scene and catches the eye of the speaker in the poem.

The reflection of the beams of light can be interpreted as a veritable metaphor for sudden enlightenment, relevant in the context of Wang's personal history and beliefs. Sudden enlightenment in Chan Buddhism or "(*dunwu*, 頓悟) [serves] as a function of personal readiness…to engage in enlightened/enlightening conduct—a function of the keenness or dullness with which one enters into liberating resonance with others" (Hershock). This type of enlightenment is attained in a moment of epiphany and instantaneous realization.

The mountains are representative of the Buddhist concept of "the void of emptiness" (*Śūnyatā*). The serene enlightenment achieved through meditative quietude is demonstrated through the illuminating light penetrating the forest, likened to sudden revelation of wisdom. Wang's usage of static space achieves the full effect and momentum of passive communion within the landscape, thus making his work so widely admired and memorable. What originally appears to be just a highly descriptive poem of aesthetics transforms into an enchanting scene of a profound spiritual Buddhist experience. Simple lines with objective observations and sparse language with little narrative content defies initial observation to reveal the subtleties of religious meaning.

To contrast with Wang's ability to conceptualize an indelible sense of space with such placidity, Li Bai excels in the opposite manner. Much like how music has dynamics, from *piano*

to *forte*, so does Li Bai's poem as it crescendos in movement in dynamic space to incorporate spatial parameters to enhance the aesthetic experience.

Li penned "Early Departure from White Emperor Fortress" (早發白帝城), when freed from exile by imperial amnesty while sailing down the Yangtze River during his journey back home. Li's exile was due to his involvement with the Prince of Yong, Li Lin 's (718-757) government resistance after the Emperor Suzong (r. 756-762) ascended the throne following the turbulent aftermath of the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763) (Owen 2013, 118). With the joyful news of his pardon and no longer having to live his days of exile in Yelang (in modern-day Guizhou), Li's excitement in being a freed man is infectious. Thus, in the poem, space and time are at the foreground amid the colorful landscape, punctuating the dynamic composition of space.

Early Departure from White Emperor Fortress

1 At dawn I took leave of the White Emperor in the midst of luminous clouds,

2 The thousand miles to Jiangling, I have returned in a single day.

3 With the voices of gibbons on both banks crying incessantly,

4 My frail boat had already passed ten thousand towering mountains.

(Tr. Elling Eide) (Minford,732)

Zǎo fā bái dì chéng

早发白帝城

1 Zhāo cí bái dì cǎi yún jiān,

朝辞白帝彩云间，　　　　morning • take leave • White • Emperor • color • cloud •

between

2 qiān lǐ jiāng líng yí rì huán,

千里江陵一日还，　　　　thousand • li •Jiang • Ling • one • day • return

3 Liǎng àn yuán shēng tí bú zhù,

两岸猿声啼不住，　　　　two • shore • gibbon • voice • call • not • stop

4 qīng zhōu yǐ guò wàn chóng shān.

轻舟已过万重山。　　　　Light • boat • already • pass • ten thousand • layer •

mountain

(*Tang Shi San Bai Shou*, 295)

The playful and lighthearted tone Li sets throughout the poem echoes the brisk pace that

his "frail boat" (*qīng zhōu* 轻舟) is moving at. Li Bai uses markers of temporal progression such

as "return in a single day" (*yí rì huán* 一日還) and "crying incessantly" (*tí bú zhù* 啼不住) to

mark his round-trip journey back and forth from Jiangling, along with the endless calls of the

apes from the shores. Furthermore, Line 3 reveals the acceleration of his movement across the

landscape within the quatrain, going at an ecstatic tempo. The brilliance of the line of finesse

indicates how fast Li's boat is moving on the river, so rapidly that the calls of the gibbons on

both shores become a continuous howl. It is not that there are many gibbons on both shores, but

rather, the "incessant crying" stems from the creation of an auditory tunnel mirroring the swift speed at which Li is sailing down the river.

Li Bai also uses quite a choice amount of number words to quantify spatiality within the quatrain, such as "thousand miles" (*qiān lǐ* 千里), "single day" (*yí rì* 一日), "two shores" (*liǎng àn* 兩岸), and "ten thousand-layer mountains" (*wàn chóng shān* 萬重山) to describe his journey across the grandeur of the landscape. The ease of Li Bai's diction adds to how broadly he paints the external scene and charts his spatial progression to create a spontaneous, brilliant inner reflection of his joyous emotions. It is almost as if the audience is with the poet as he is composing the poem while his boat is rushing through the ten thousand layered mountains.

The "thousand miles to Jiangling" is not a realistic representation of the distance, but Li does not intend for the numbers to be inherently factual. Much like the depths of the Peach Blossom Lake in "To Wang Lun," Li employs hyperbole as a turn of phrase to convey the wide scope of the distance across the landscape. The vast space Li must cross does not deter his vigor to return to the distant Jiangling. Rather, it intensifies his determination and desire to return home, crossing the space in as timely a manner as possible.

The speed in which Li Bai crosses the scope of the landscape is spectacular, as he invites the audience to witness the view from a vantage point that displays the breadth of all the imagery, separating the poet from his audience by the sweeping physicality of the landscape. Consider the speed of dynamic space as a concept of physics. Speed is the result of the multiplication of distance and time. The two components of distance and time are concepts addressed through the literary techniques spatial (distance) and temporal progression (time) to further the momentum of the quatrain, capturing both the landscape and the exuberant tone throughout the poem.

Moreover, "Early Departure from White Emperor Fortress" is an exceptional representation of space-time compression as Li is able to capture the deep sense of infinity through the boundlessness of the Classical Chinese language. Li's journey across the geography of space is condensed into a heptasyllabic quatrain, yet the precision of the 28 characters only seems to further enhance the conceptualization of space within the poem. Not only does Li apply temporal and spatial progression to accentuate the expression of the spirited energy in his verse, the dynamic conceptualization of space is vital to his poetic expression, and thus brilliantly featuring his tremendous literary craft.

CONCLUSION

The conceptualization of spatiality through progression is invaluable in deciphering and appreciating the landscape poetry of the High Tang poets. How does the Tang poet say so much with so few words? What aspects make his poetry so timeless and memorable, transcending centuries and leaving a deep-rooted legacy within the Chinese cultural memory? By exploiting the deliberate application of ambiguity in Classical Chinese, the Tang poet could be as elusive or concrete within his work as he intended it to be. The brilliance of the poetic craft, particularly in regard to the regulated quatrain, lies within the poet's ability to transcend the limitations of the rules to create boundless innovation.

The poet creates semantic space as his canvas to draw upon, a vehicle of self-expression and articulation of his intention. The descriptive poetry of the landscape quatrain extends further than just a way of demonstrating cognitive, semantic space. It also serves as an effective medium of visual communication, due to the unique traits of the Classical language. Furthermore, the poet could exercise his literary craft to infuse multiple layers of meaning to aid in the progression and movement of the poem, often revealed through the line of finesse.

Using literary devices and aesthetics such as spatial and temporal progression to conceptualize static and dynamic space, the Tang poet could create such vast worlds of external landscape and therein, develop his inner contemplations of emotion. The exegesis of poems by Li Bai, Meng Haoran, and Wang Wei in this thesis highlight each poet's unique application of progression to his advantage in adapting to the spatiality of the quatrain. The Classical formulation of the Chinese lyric, *poetry articulating intention* comes from internal reflection that grows out of describing the poet's perspective of the externalities of the world. The Tang poet

facilitates this formulation through the indispensable element of spatiality, allowing Classical Chinese poetry to be appreciated in a new light for the aesthetics, language, and innovations within the landscape quatrain.

The objective of the thesis is to address the study of the landscape quatrain through the lens of spatiality. However, there are a multitude of new avenues to pursue for further inquiry. Further research includes looking at the origins of spatiality in the Chinese tradition, such as directional space within geography, as seen in earlier pieces[1]. Additionally, there is a wealth of genres within Classical Chinese poetry beyond the regulated quatrain of the Tang dynasty. The techniques of temporal and spatial progression can be examined to investigate the creation of active and dynamic space throughout the many poetic forms in Chinese literature.

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[1] For example, directional space can be tracked in "The Ballad of Mulan" (木兰词) (See Minford, 409-411)

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BIOGRAPHY

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