

Appendix:

Manifesto of the Lige School of Poetry

The Emergence and Transgression of a Poetics

The manifesto, distilled from the poetic practice and scholarly reflections within the Selected Poems of Ou Zhuang and centered on the spirit of Ou Hong's "The Bastard Child of Poetry", formally articulates the poetic principles and aspirations of the Lige School. Presented here as an appendix, it serves as both a conclusion to this section and an opening onto a broader poetic path, while also constituting a foundational theoretical document of the movement and being available as a standalone text for scholarly reference with its own independent DOI.

Prologue: From "The Bastard Child of Poetry" to a Poetic Possibility

When Ou Hong wrote "The Bastard Child of Poetry", he was not merely composing a poem; perhaps without intending to, he was naming a new poetic path. The poetic life it imagines—a life of "blood type X"—refuses to be absorbed by any single tradition. Suspended between the Olympian gods and the spectral presences of the Miluo River(汨罗江), between the ancient Chinese poetic triad of *fu-bi-xing* (赋比兴) and the modern rhythm of Coca-Cola, it finds its own way of breathing through "tears, laughter, dreams, and Yunnan Baiyao." This is not simply an expression of personal style, but the spiritual prototype of a possible poetic community.

More than a decade later, the publication of *Selected Poems of Ou Zhuang* transformed this prototype into a collective debut. Centered on the "English Poetry and Poetics" research direction at Sun Yat-sen University, a group of scholar-poets presented the tangible results of a bidirectional nourishment between research and

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creative practice. It became clear that a third path—distinct from purely academic criticism on the one hand and purely lyrical creation on the other—had taken shape. Today, we name this path the **Lige School** (离格学派).

1. The Arch-Text and the Prototype: “The Bastard Child of Poetry” as Poetic Manifesto

The formation of any literary school requires a spiritual archetype—a foundational text capable of generating shared orientation and consensus. For the Lige School, Ou Hong’s “The Bastard Child of Poetry” fulfils precisely this role. Written during China’s era of reform and opening in the 1980s, its significance far exceeds that of an individual poem. It functions as a poetic encoding and aesthetic prelude to what would later be recognized as the Lige spirit. The poem is as follows:

English Translation:

The Bastard Child of Poetry

*Olympus conducts a divine census, my grandfather Zeus tosses me a registration form,
and this has got me stumped —*

Who knows which Muse,
Weary of Parnassus Hill’s solitude,
Thus brought into this world
Akid of blood type X.

They say I’m a descendant of the dragon,
Yet my eyes are light brown,
Inside flickers an icy rainbow,
Making “fu-bi-xing” change its hue.

They say I'm a child of Adam,
Yet I reek of the Miluo River's damp,
Intermittently trailing
Li Changji's specters of ghosts and strange gods.

I don't drink Coca-Cola,
Nor swallow elixirs of immortality,
What keeps me alive are
Tears, laughter, dreams, and Yunnan Baiyao.

The immortal gods mock me,
Yet I pity them —Not as good as mortal humans,
Who understand the mule's worth,
Stronger than the donkey, more enduring than the horse.

5 June 1982

Chinese Original (for reference):

诗的私生子

奥林匹亚进行神口普查，外祖父宙斯甩给我一张登记表，这可让我犯了愁——

不知哪位缪斯

不甘帕那萨斯山的寂寞

于是世界上便有了我

血统为 X 的小子

说我是龙的传人

眼珠却是浅褐

里边闪着冰的虹彩

映得赋比兴变了颜色

说我是亚当的子孙

又满身汨罗江的水腥

忽明忽灭地跟着

李长吉的牛鬼蛇神怪影

我不喝 Coca Cola

也不吃灵丹仙草

赖以生存的

是哭是笑是梦是云南白药

永生的众神嘲笑我

我却可怜他们不如必死的人

人还懂得骡子的好处

比毛驴孔武比马坚忍

1982 年 6 月 5 日 (Ou, 2017, pp.4-5)

Written as meta-poetry—poetry that reflects on the conditions of poetry itself—

the poem sketches, more than two decades before the school's formal naming, a complete spiritual genealogy. Its poetic force unfolds along four interrelated dimensions.

1.1 Identity Consciousness: Legitimizing the Cultural Hybrid

The poem's self-identification as a "bastard child of blood type X" establishes the foundational identity logic of the Lige School. It simultaneously rejects absorption into two singular genealogies: neither the exclusively national narrative of the "descendant of the dragon" nor the universalist myth of the "child of Adam." The speaker openly acknowledges having "light brown eyes" while carrying the "dampness of the Miluo River," signalling that heterogeneous cultural inheritances are not decorative layers but a constitution that penetrates to the marrow.

This identity releases later practitioners from the anxiety of choice. They need not decide between "Sinicization" and "Westernization." Instead, they can accept their condition as cultural border-crossers, seeking creative possibility precisely within the tension between multiple traditions.

1.2 Methodological Exemplar: From Imagistic Collage to Chemical Synthesis

One of the poem's most illuminating images is that of "light brown eyes" causing *fu-bi-xing*—the foundational expressive mechanisms of classical Chinese poetics—to "change their hue." This is not a superficial juxtaposition of Eastern and Western symbols. Rather, it reveals the school's core methodological commitment: deep cross-cultural synthesis.

Here, *fu-bi-xing* represents the internal generative engine of Chinese poetic thought, while the "light brown rainbow" signifies Western perceptual and cognitive modes. When one refracts and alters the other, a qualitative transformation occurs within the poet's subjectivity, producing new aesthetic compounds. This metaphor of chemical reaction implies a demanding discipline: the poet must be deeply trained in

both traditions simultaneously. In this sense, the poem anticipates Ou Hong's later self-positioning as a scholar-poet and provides the prototype for the Lige School's integrated research-creation paradigm.

1.3 Foundation of Values: Authentic Emotion and Local Experience

"I don't drink Coca-Cola nor swallow elixirs of immortality; what keeps me alive are tears, laughter, dreams, and Yunnan Baiyao." These four elements form the value structure of the Lige School.

Tears and laughter represent the most fundamental emotional truth of human life, grounding poetry in shared vulnerability and resonance. Dreams stand for imagination and transcendence, ensuring spiritual elevation and singularity. Yunnan Baiyao, the most decisive image, signifies vitality drawn from concrete local experience—practical, curative, and real. In contrast to illusory "elixirs of immortality," it embodies a poetics rooted in lived history, trauma, and care.

Together, these elements define a poetics of grounded modernity: one that embraces universal human sensibility while remaining anchored in specific experiential soil.

1.4 Spiritual Stance: Turning Away from the Divine, Toward the Human

The poem's closing turn is its most radical gesture: "The immortal gods mock me, yet I pity them—less perceptive than mortal humans, who understand the value of the mule." Here, the "immortal gods" may be read as rigid canons, institutional authorities, or ossified poetic dogmas—figures detached from the living texture of human experience by virtue of their supposed permanence.

By contrast, the poet aligns himself with mortal humanity: finite, vulnerable, yet capable of care and creation. The mule, as the hybrid offspring of a horse and a donkey, is neither noble nor purebred. Yet it combines strength with endurance and is

best suited to difficult terrain. This becomes the emblem of the Lige School: not a divine steed for ceremonial display, but an “academic mule” advancing patiently across the rugged paths between scholarship and creation, East and West, antiquity and modernity. Pragmatic resilience, rather than purity, defines its spirit.

“The Bastard Child of Poetry” as a Poetic Seed

“The Bastard Child of Poetry” is therefore not merely a successful poem, but a generative seed saturated with poetic DNA. In advance, and in poetic form, it articulates a full stance: identity through hybridity, innovation through synthesis, nourishment through locality, and endurance through pragmatic resilience.

Later members of the Lige School—whether inclined toward Zhang Guangkui’s austere speculation, Lei Yanni’s profound engagement with diasporic experience, or other distinctive paths—can all be understood as branches grown from different genetic strands of this seed. To understand this poem is to grasp the key to the school’s spiritual lineage. It is not a closed doctrine but an open framework, inviting each successor to develop a personal mode of “Lige” practice.

2. What Is “Lige”? Methodological Self-Consciousness

“Lige” is not a style but a methodological orientation. Derived from the idea of departing from established form or convention, it manifests as self-consciousness on three levels.

2.1 Departing from the Division between Research and Practice

They reject the model of critics who dissect poetry from the outside, just as they resist the notion of poets who rely solely on intuition. Genuine understanding of poetics arises from within practice—from the labor of making images, from direct struggle with linguistic limits. The scholar-poet path advocated by Ou Hong allows academic rigor to sharpen creative perception, and creative vitality to return warmth to scholarship.

This reciprocity constitutes the first level of Lige consciousness.

2.2 Departing from a Single Cultural Lineage

They are, by condition, hybrids. Their vision carries Western iridescence; their bodies retain the humidity of Chinese cultural memory. They read Keats and Li He, analyze Eliot and dwell with Du Fu. But synthesis is not decorative collage or exotic curiosity. It is the internal chemical reaction of traditions within the poet's consciousness—allowing one system of poetics to alter another from within. They seek depth, not juxtaposition.

2.3 Departing from the Confusion of Ornament and Truth

Poetry's vitality does not lie in rhetorical brilliance but in experiential truth and emotional sincerity. Its sources are elemental human states—tears, laughter, dreams—and the healing force of local life. They resist excessive ornamentation that obscures experience, pursuing instead a clarity that sustains depth.

3. Defining the Lige School

The Lige School is a poetic and scholarly community centered on Professor Ou Hong and the “English Poetry and Poetics” research direction at Sun Yat-sen University. It advocates the integration of poetic research and creative practice, encouraging scholars to write poetry as a means of deepening poetic understanding. Its principles emphasize Sino-Western synthesis, authenticity, intellectual lyricism, and the construction of a sustained academic-creative community. It represents a modern poetic approach rooted in Chinese experience while engaging transnational perspectives.

4. Core Tenets of the Lige School

a. Scholarly Creation

Research and creation are complementary modes of inquiry. Theory deepens creation; creation animates theory.

b. Cross-Cultural Synthesis

True fusion arises through dialogue and transformation, not pastiche.

c. Authenticity

Poetry must be honest toward experience, history, and language itself.

d. Intellectual Lyricism

Thought and emotion function as poetry's twin wings.

e. Community Poetics

While poetry is solitary in origin, it flourishes through dialogue, mentorship, and shared practice.

5. The Boundary and Transgression of Lige: Zhang Guangkui as Mirror

If Ou Hong is the founder and spiritual source of the Lige School, Zhang Guangkui embodies its internal dynamism and radical testing. If “The Bastard Child of Poetry” establishes the paradigm, Zhang’s work constitutes its most extreme verification and expansion. He is the one who transgresses from within transgression itself—demonstrating that Lige is not a stylistic law but a practice of continual boundary-crossing.

Through his poem “When I Die”, Zhang pushes the school’s principles toward their existential limit, stripping lyricism of consolation and confronting material finitude with philosophical rigor. His work shows that Lige is sustained not by consensus alone, but by the courage to dismantle even its own bridges.

English Version:

When I Die

A Pre-Rite for Myself, One Hundred Years Later

When I die

the earth keeps turning.

So do I—

element by element.

I am

nothing more

than the earth

rearranging itself.

When I die

green remains green.

Red stays red.

White is white.

Black is black.

When I die

you may still be alive.

So am I.

My matter

has entered another body.

You will not last long either.

A hundred years

is a blink—

let alone ten,

or thirty.

When I die

do not burn my poems.

They are

the rhythm

my life once had.

Do not burn me either.

Even if smoke

rises to heaven,

I prefer

the ghosts below.

When I die

and when you die,

we are strangers again.

If we meet,

it will likely be a mistake.

When I die

will anyone

place my image

above the ground

that covers me?

When I die—
what difference does it make?
All enters
the empty cycle
of yin and yang.

Iron rusts.
Iron melts.
Diamond is cut.

Unless
the earth stops.
Unless
the universe freezes.

But stillness
abolishes return.

Unless
we all die.

When we all die
everything becomes ash.

Silence

will rule.

Qingming Festival, April 2015

Chinese Original (for reference):

当我死了

——预祭百年后的自己

当我死了

地球还会在转，我，也在旋转

因为我本地球元素的组合与分解

当我死了，地球该绿的还绿

该红的照红，白的白，黑的黑

当我死了

你可能还活着，我，也在活着

我的元素进入了另一生命的载体

当我死了，你也活不了太久

百年弹指一挥间，何况一、二、三十年

当我死了

我希望有人把我的诗歌留存

不要焚烧，那是我生命曾经跳动的音符

当我死了，不知可否别把我燃烧

即使青烟上天堂，我更喜欢地下的鬼

当我死了

当你也死了，咱又形同陌路

即使再次相识，可能又是个错误

当我死了，不知是否有亲人

在我墓穴的上面放上我的雕像

当我死了

不过，那又有何用

总要进入阴阳虚无的轮回

是铁也要融化或锈腐

是金刚也要被打钻切割

除非，地球或宇宙静止永远

可静止又何谈生命轮回

除非，我们，都死了

当我们都死了，万物俱灰

寂静必会是一切的主宰

2015 年 4 月清明 (Zhang, 2017, pp.142-143)

A close reading of “When I Die” reveals Zhang Guangkui as a “transgressor within transgression”, whose poetic stance unfolds across three interrelated dimensions: affective orientation, poetic language, and philosophical vision. Each dimension represents not merely a departure from conventional lyric practice, but a radical intensification of the Lige School’s foundational impulses.

5.1 First-Level Transgression: Theme and Affect

Against Humanistic Warmth and Lyric Consolation. The Lige School’s emphasis on “authentic writing” has, in its mainstream manifestations, often foregrounded emotional sincerity rooted in cultural memory, familial attachment, and ethical intimacy. Works such as Yin Lijun’s “Qingming” (Yin, 2017, p.51-52), with its father–daughter bond, or Lei Yanni’s meditations on existential solitude, exemplify an authenticity that is integrative and human-centered—seeking resonance through affective continuity and shared experience.

Zhang Guangkui’s poem departs decisively from this paradigm. From its opening lines—

When I die

the earth keeps turning.

So do I—

element by element. (Zhang, 2017, p.142)

—authenticity is redefined not as emotional truth, but as ontological exposure.

The speaking subject is stripped of spiritual privilege and reduced to material process:

I am

nothing more

than the earth

rearranging itself. (Zhang, 2017, p.142)

Here, death is neither tragic rupture nor transcendental passage. It is material reorganization. The poem refuses all consolatory narratives—religious, emotional, or cultural—by insisting on a strictly physical account of being.

This refusal extends to the persistence of value. Even continuity of life does not confer comfort:

When I die

you may still be alive.

So am I.

My matter

has entered another body. (Zhang, 2017, p.143)

Existence continues, but without personal identity. The lyric “I” survives only as redistributed matter, while relational continuity is explicitly denied:

You will not last long either.

A hundred years

is a blink—

let alone ten,

or thirty. (Zhang, 2017, p.143)

Temporal scale erodes all affective urgency. Longevity is rendered trivial; memory, provisional.

Most strikingly, the poem interrogates poetry’s own claim to endurance:

When I die

do not burn my poems.

They are

the rhythm

my life once had. (Zhang, 2017, p.143)

Yet this plea is immediately undermined by the poem's later conclusion that all symbolic acts are ultimately inconsequential. This is not sentimentality, but self-negating authenticity—a truth that refuses to protect even its own aesthetic vehicle.

Zhang thus transgresses lyric humanism by insisting on a version of authenticity that is cold, material, and unaccommodating, yet precisely for that reason uncompromisingly “true.”

5.2 Second-Level Transgression: Poetic Language and Formal Stance

Against Synthesis, Imagism, and Reflective Mediation. A defining feature of Lige poetics has been its pursuit of cultural synthesis—particularly the integration of Chinese and Western traditions through imagistic density and intellectual dialogue. Ou Hong's “The Bastard Child of Poetry”, for instance, exemplifies a reflective mode in which cultural symbols interact to generate renewed lyric meaning.

“When I Die”, by contrast, employs a post-synthetic, declarative poetics. The repeated anaphora “When I die” structures the poem not as lyrical accumulation but as a conceptual sequence. Each iteration advances a logical proposition rather than an image.

This language exhibits several distinctive features:

a. Repetition as Philosophical Iteration

The recurring phrase “When I die” functions as a formal marker of successive thought experiments. Each occurrence extends the inquiry—from physical dissolution, to cultural residue, to relational negation, and finally to cosmic extinction.

b. Materialist Lexicon

Terms such as “element,” “matter,” “rearranging,” and “body” replace metaphorical transcendence with scientific precision. The poem speaks in the register of materialism rather than myth.

c. Irony within Gravity

Even if smoke
rises to heaven,
I prefer
the ghosts below. (Zhang, 2017, p.143)

These lines introduce a note of personal irony that destabilizes death's solemnity. Heaven and hell are not moral destinations, but aesthetic preferences, thereby dismantling their symbolic authority.

d. Logical Exhaustiveness

The poem advances inexorably toward its terminal claim:
When we all die
everything becomes ash.
Silence
will rule. (Zhang, 2017, p.143)

No emotional reprieve interrupts this progression. Language becomes a vehicle for deductive clarity, not lyrical ambiguity. The poem reads less as expression than as demonstration—a philosophical argument articulated through verse.

5.3 Third-Level Transgression: Philosophical Orientation

Against Linearity, Meaning, and Salvific Narrative. Where much Lige poetry integrates thought and lyric within recoverable meaning—historical, cultural, or ethical—Zhang Guangkui's poem embraces a vision of existential finality.

Four philosophical negations define this stance:

a. Negation of Individual Singularity

The self is reduced to matter in circulation. Consciousness leaves no residue.

b. Suspension of Cultural Permanence

Poetry's potential to memorialize is acknowledged but ultimately rendered futile:

When I die—

what difference does it make? (Zhang, 2017, p.143)

c. Erosion of Relational Continuity

Even posthumous encounter is framed as error:

If we meet,

it will likely be a mistake. (Zhang, 2017, p.143)

d. Termination in Absolute Silence

The poem's final vision admits no rebirth or transcendence. Even cyclical cosmology is emptied of promise:

All enters

the empty cycle

of yin and yang. (Zhang, 2017, p.143)

The invocation of yin–yang does not restore harmony; it is qualified as “empty.” Cyclicity itself is stripped of metaphysical reassurance.

Therefore, the Lige School's foundational ethos may be summarized as a triple movement: a. from singular tradition toward fusion; b. from ornament toward authenticity; c. from lyric expression toward speculative depth.

“When I Die” radicalizes and re-transgresses each of these movements to their furthest limit:

a. It pushes “fusion” to the point of forcibly welding poetry to philosophy, science to metaphysics, and existence to nothingness. In this poem, “fusion” is no longer a strategy of enrichment but an explosive dismantling of traditional poetic categories themselves.

b. It drives “authenticity” toward the brutal truth of death, materialization, and nihilism. While other poets continue to seek “truth” within cultural memory or humanistic nostalgia, Zhang reaches directly toward the material truth of elemental decomposition and the ultimate truth of universal ash.

c. It extends “speculation” into a sustained interrogation of the absurd foundations of existence. The poem functions as a complete philosophical argument, in which poetry itself becomes the very medium of speculative reasoning, rather than its ornament or illustration.

Zhang Guangkui is therefore not an aberration within Lige poetics, but its most uncompromising outcome. While other poets construct bridges between cultures and epistemologies, Zhang dismantles the bridge itself, exposing its materials as finite, contingent, and ultimately perishable.

In this sense, he stands as the Lige School’s most unsettling yet most faithful inheritor: a poet for whom verse no longer consoles or reconciles, but states, with severe lucidity, the terminal conditions of existence. This extreme transgression does not negate Lige poetics; it reveals its deepest energy—a poetics that advances by crossing boundaries, even when that crossing leads into silence itself.

6. “Lige” as a Verb: An Ongoing Practice

Accordingly, the Lige School is not a closed club but an open field of practice. While they share certain foundational methodological commitments and poetic orientations, they categorically reject the prescription of a unified aesthetic style.

The members may produce works like Ou Hong’s “The Bastard Child of Poetry”, marked by intellectual rigor and cultural dialogue; meditative reflections on displacement such as Lei Yanni’s “Everyone Is Their Own Lonely God” (Lei, 2017,

pp.99-103); or austere ontological deductions like Zhang Guangkui's "When I Die". Diversity of poetic form and temperament is not incidental to the school—it is constitutive of it. Long Jingyao's "West Window" (Long, 2017, p.178) exemplifies subtle estrangement within classical form, where temporal and spatial dislocation, mediated emotion, and measured alienation transform traditional imagery into modern lyrical resonance.

For them, "Lige" is always a verb rather than a noun. It signifies:

- a. the continual departure from the comfort zone, challenging established habits of creation and thought;
- b. the conscious crossing of boundaries, constructing provisional bridges among disciplines, cultures, and languages;
- c. the courage to confront truth, even when that truth is unsettling;
- d. and a sincere commitment to community, sustaining individual distinctiveness through dialogue rather than conformity.

Epilogue: In Praise of the Mule

At the conclusion of "The Bastard Child of Poetry", the poet expresses pity for the "immortal gods" and instead praises what "mortal humans" understand as the virtue of the mule—"stronger than the donkey, more enduring than the horse."

This may be the most fitting metaphor for the Lige School of Poetry. They do not aspire to be noble, purebred "divine steeds." They would rather become hybrid, utilitarian, and resilient academic mules. They carry a double inheritance—Chinese and Western, classical and modern, scholarly and creative—and move forward silently along rugged poetic paths.

They accept the ambiguity of an identity whose "lineage is marked with an X,"

and embrace the creative freedom of the “bastard.” They believe that it is precisely within this ambiguity and freedom, within continual acts of *lige* and transgression, that poetry may discover new vitality in our time.

Here, the Lige School declares its existence—not as an endpoint, but as a point of departure for innumerable possibilities.

Let poetry continue to transgress.

Winter 2025

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Declaration: During the preparation of this article, AI tools were used, and primary reference was made to *Selected Poems of Ou Zhuang*, CNKI (<https://www.cnki.net/>), Google Scholar, and other online resources. As none of these sources were directly cited in the text, they are not individually listed in the references. This statement is provided for transparency.