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The Controversy over Music and "Sadness" and Changing Conceptions of the *Qin* in Middle Period China

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> When Emperor Huan (r. 147–167 A.D.) heard the *qin* of Chu, his heart was overcome with feelings of despondency. He leaned against the doorway and was sad. Full of emotion, he sighed deeply, saying, "How fine it is! A *qin* played like that is entirely satisfying."[1]
>
> Ruan Ji 阮籍(210–263), "On Music"

As Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717–1796) pointed out, during the Han, Wei, and Jin periods, "sadness" (*bei* 悲) was considered the primary value in music.[2] This taste for "sadness," exemplified by Emperor Huan's reaction to the *qin* 琴 (a five or seven-stringed zither), seems to have been largely a Han dynasty development. It

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[1] Ruan Ji, "Yue Lun," *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu* 阮籍集較注, ed. Chen Bojun 陳伯君 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), A.99.

[2] Lu Wenchao, *Longcheng zhaji* 龍城札記, in *Baojing tang congshu* 抱經堂叢書, comp. Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (Beijing: Zhili shuju, 1923), 2.2b–3a. Lu's remarks, and several of the pre-Tang sources referred to in the following pages are cited in an essay by Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 on the primacy of "sadness" in early Chinese ideas about music. See Qian, *Guanzhui bian* 管錐編, 4th ed., 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 3:946–51. The essay is contained in my forthcoming English translation of selections of that work: *Limited Views: Essays on Idea and Letters by Qian Zhongshu.*

was a departure from earlier thinking and would itself in turn be challenged by a rival musical aesthetic. Classical Chinese views on music are quite well understood, but alternative preferences from the Han and following periods have not been much explored. The Han vogue of "sad" music makes a good starting point.

We should first consider the range of meanings that *bei* possesses in early sources when it is applied to music. *Qin* music of Chu, such as that heard by Emperor Huan was traditionally said to be "sad." The literary lineage of this characterization, quite apart from any auditory validity it may have, can be traced back to a passage in *Zuo zhuan* about Zhongyi, a native of Chu, who was taken prisoner in battle and sent as a captive to the realm of Jin. The ruler of Jin, hearing that Zhongyi was a musician, asked him to play something on the *qin*, whereupon Zhongyi played a southern melody, showing that he had not forgotten his homeland.[3] Centuries later, Wang Can 王粲 (177–217) referred in a poem to Zhongyi's "longing for his native place," and Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581) to "the sadness of the *qin* from Chu."[4]

Music is also said to be "sad" in the melancholy song of Qi Liang's wife, sung to the accompaniment of a *qin*, which is featured in the fifth of the "Nineteen Ancient Poems":

西北有高樓　上與浮雲齊　交疏結綺窗　阿閣三重階
上有弦歌聲　音響一何悲　誰能爲此曲　無乃杞梁妻
清商隨風發　中曲正徘徊　一彈再三歎　慷慨有餘哀
不惜歌者苦　但傷知音稀　願爲雙鳴鶴　奮翅起高飛

To the northwest stands a lofty building,
Its upper stories as high as the clouds.
With patterned windows formed of latticework,
And roofs that rise three stories high.
From above, the sound of strings and song,

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[3] *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, in vol. 1 of *Chunqiu jingzhuan yinde* 春秋經傳引得, 4 vols., Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement no. 11, ed. Hong Ye 洪業 (Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Co., 1966), 228–29/Cheng9/9*fu*ii.

[4] Wang Can, "Denglou fu," *Quan Hou Han wen* 全後漢文, in *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文, comp. Yan Kejun 嚴可均, 4 vols. (1887–93; rpt., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 90.4a; and Yu Xin, "He Zhang shizhong shuhuai shi," *Bei Zhou shi* 北周詩, in *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩, comp. Lu Qinli 逯欽立, 3 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 3.2371.

Oh, how sad are the sounds!
Who is it that sings such a melody?
It must be the wife of Qi Liang.
The pure *shang* mode is carried forth on the wind,
In the middle, the melody falters.
She plucks once and sighs three times,
Ardent feelings with sorrow that lingers.
I do not pity the singer for her bitterness,
But am distressed that so few understand her tune.
If only I could join her as a pair of singing cranes
Beating our wings, we'd rise to fly away.[5]

The woman is said to have become completely alone in the world, having lost her father, husband, and son.

One other passage characterizing music as sad may be cited. It tells of Jing Ke setting off on his mission to assassinate the First Emperor of the Qin. Expecting that he would not return alive, he paused on the banks of the Yi River to bid farewell to his countrymen. Gao Jianli played the stringed *zhu* and Jing Ke sang in harmony with the instrument. "The on-lookers all shed tears and sobbed."[6] This passage does not explicitly use the word *bei* to describe the music, but the context certainly evokes it.

Each of these passages posits a correlation between the emotional state of the musician and emotive quality of the music produced. The listeners are sensitive to this quality, and so are filled with sadness as they listen. Since it is clear that, in each case, the musician had good reason to feel disheartened, we are apt readily to accept a characterization of the music itself as "sad." As commonsensical as this may seem, it is, of course, problematic to assume that music will necessarily embody the emotion of the musician, or have any identifiable emotion at all. But these passages do not raise such questions. They appear to assume unquestioningly the notion that music produced by troubled persons will embody and communicate their distress.

The meaning of *bei* as applied to music is not always so clear. It is often used in a way that makes "sad" or "sadness" appear to be an overtranslation. In many instances, we might sense that "plaintive" or "melancholy," or perhaps "poignant," or even just "moving" or "touching" is a more appropriate interpretation of the term. This is because the context seems to call for a word that accounts for the affective force of the music, shown in the effect it has upon listeners, without restricting its identification to the emotion of "sadness." The affective quality of a piece of music is, to be sure, notoriously elusive. What is to one listener a "sad" tune may well be "tender" or "sweet" to another. In practice, the term *bei* had a wide range of meanings. Listeners might well agree that the music was *bei* even when they had dissimilar ideas of precisely what *bei* meant.

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[5] "Gushi shijiu shou," no. 5, *Wen xuan* 文選, comp. Xiao Tong 蕭統 (Hu Kejia 胡克家, 1809; rpt., Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1971), 29.3a–b.

[6] Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 86.2534.

Because there is no ready link between a distressed person and the music being played, we often want to understand *bei* as something less determinate than "sad." When Emperor Shun (r. 126–144) passed by Fanqu, outside of Luoyang, "he heard birds singing there and was *bei* ('moved' or 'melancholy'). With tears streaming down his face, he said, 'How fine are the birds' songs.' He had his attendants intone the sounds in imitation and observed, 'Wouldn't it be pleasurable if stringed instruments could play like that?' "[7] The songs of the birds could not have been "sad" in the same sense as was the song sung by Qi Liang's wife. It is just that the emperor calls them deeply affecting. A similar use of *bei* is found in several early sources that relate the story of Music-master Kuang playing the *qin* for Duke Ping of Jin (r. 556–531 B.C.). At the end of the musician's first piece, the Duke asks if there is any music even more *bei* than what he has just heard. Kuang replies that there is and then is pressed by the nobleman into playing it. "The first time he played, sixteen dark cranes arrived from the south and perched on the highest point of the porticoes. The second time, the birds spread out in formation. The third time, they stretched their necks and sang, and then flapped their wings and danced."[8] Obviously, the birds found the music to be "moving." We might, however, hesitate to say that they were reacting to its "sadness," or that they were

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[7] Ruan Ji, "Yue lun," *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu* A.99.

[8] *Han Feizi jishi* 韓非子集釋, ed. Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1974), 3.10.171 ("Shi guo").

"saddened" by it, and search instead for some more vague emotive term. In his excellent study of early Chinese music, Kenneth DeWoskin consistently renders *bei* as "gravity" of feeling or sentiment, rightly sensing that the normal meaning of *bei* is altered when applied to music.[9] Even this, however, may prove to be unsuitably specific and somber in some circumstances. We may not sense "gravity" in bird calls every time we encounter the phrase *beiming* 悲鳴 in Chinese writings.

Whatever nuance we assign to *bei*—and our interpretation will differ from passage to passage—it is clear that, during the Han, Wei, and Jin periods, the sentiment of *bei*, both as a quality perceived in the melodic line and as a feeling that is thus instilled in the listener, had come to be intimately and commonly associated with music, especially *qin* music. When the Lord of Mengchang, famed for his wealth and multitude of retainers, has an interview with the *qin* player Yongmen Zhou, the lord opens the conversation by asking, "Sir, will your *qin* be able to make even me 'sad'?"[10] Yongmen Zhou replies that, no, his playing occasions sadness only in men who have experienced some crushing misfortune in their lives. Such men begin to snivel and sob the very moment his fingers touch the strings. But a man who is as blessed and comfortable as the Lord of Mengchang would not be subject to such emotions. This statement turns out to be a calculated prelude to an "afterthought" that the musician adds: yet if one reflects that even the greatest and richest of leaders is mortal, and recalls the speed with which the world forgets them upon their death, then no man is truly favored. His mood altered by this thought, the Lord of Mengchang does indeed begin to weep when the musician proceeds to play. Now, this anecdote broaches other issues, including precisely where the listener's "sadness" originates (is it in the music or was it in his heart to begin with?), which I shall discuss further on. The point I wish to stress here is that the passage hinges on an expectation that *qin* music engenders "sadness" in the listener. The Lord of Mengchang, knowing that his life is exceptional, asks if he will not also be an exception to the rule of sadness instilled by music. The rule, however, is affirmed by his question.

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[9] Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China*, Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, no. 42 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1982), e.g., pp. 108, 109–10.

[10] Huan Tan 桓譚, *Huanzi xinlun* 桓子新論 ("Qin dao") in *Quan Hou Han wen* 15.10a–b.

The Han dynasty validation of ''sadness'' in music is so widespread that, as Qian Zhongshu has argued, the descriptive term *bei* becomes virtually interchangeable with evaluative terms like *hao* 好 ''beautiful'' or 和 ''harmonious.''[11] This extended sense of *bei*, or the blurring of the distinction between description and evaluation, is typified by a parallel that Wang Chong 王充 (b. A.D. 27) draws between ''beautiful faces'' and ''sad music.'' In the course of a discussion of the rarity of high achievement in learning and literary skill, Wang matter-of-factly delivers this pronouncement: ''Women who adorn their faces do so to make themselves beautiful, but few among them succeed in turning people's eyes; those who practice music try to make it sad, but few of them succeed in startling people's ears.''[12]

Emperor Huan, as Ruan Ji describes him above in our first example, is obviously pleased to be moved to ''sadness'' by the Chu *qin* he hears. Sadness is what he wants from *qin* music. Duke Ping of Jin, too, equates music with *bei*. Just before he asks Music-master Kuang if there is not a piece that is even more *bei* than one just played, he repeatedly states, ''What I like is music.'' This open association of the enjoyment of music with the ''sadness'' that it occasions in the listener is perhaps most forcefully and memorably expressed in a statement that Wang Bao 王褒 (1st century B.C.) makes about different levels of musical appreciation: ''Those who understand music take pleasure in it and are moved to 'sadness,' while those who do not understand music marvel at in and find it impressive'' (知音者樂而悲之，不知音者怪而偉之).[13]

As widely accepted as such formulations evidently were, they were not universally approved. Some persons objected to the notion of ''taking pleasure [in music] that makes one 'sad''' (樂而悲之) and they crafted careful and elaborate criticisms of it. Their criticisms in time led to the development of a radically different approach to music, one that was to remain an important alternative to the sentimental appreciation by such listeners as Emperor Huan.

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[11] Qian Zhongshu, *Guanzhui bian* 3:948.

[12] Wang Chong , *Lun heng jiaoshi* 論衡較釋, ed. Huang Hui 黃暉, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 13.39.617 (''Chaoqi'').

[13] Wang Bao, ''Dongxiao fu,'' *Wen xuan* 17.14b.

We can distinguish several reasons why some persons were uneasy with the idea of delighting in music that makes one "sad." Whether it is found in music or some other form, the enjoyment of beauty that brings tears to the eyes or causes other symptoms associated with "sadness" is universally apt to be seen as an inherently illogical behavior. As such, the experience is often singled out for comment, whether in Elizabethan England (as when Shakespeare's Jessica observes, "I am never merry when I hear sweet music") or in Tang dynasty China (as when Du Fu writes: "The brocade stones in the clear water, / Are pretty enough to wound the heart").[14] The experience of beauty has always had its mysteries and apparent contradictions.

The enjoyment of music is made all the more thorny by the prominent use of the word *bei* and its synonyms (*ai* 哀, *shangxin* 傷心, *qichuang* 悽愴, etc.) to describe both the perceived quality of the music and the feeling it instills in the listener. Writers of Han and Jin times generally did not search for terms that might be thought more appropriate in a particular instance, for example, equivalents of "poignant," "touching," or "tender." Instead, they largely remained loyal to the word *bei*. They thus cast a pall of "sadness" over their discussions of music and missed an opportunity to differentiate the aesthetic appreciation of musical beauty from ordinary human sadness. This, in turn, made the enthusiasts of "sad" music easy targets for their critics, who attacked them as self-indulgent sentimentalists.

Most important, the vogue of "sadness" in music was quite at odds with classical notions of what music was and the purposes it served. The chapter on music in *The Book of Rites* assumes a thorough and intimate connection between music and the emotions. Still, the primary role assigned to music in the chapter, "The Record of Music," is to complement the rites in providing for a well-ordered community. The rites differentiate people, so that each may perform his or her proper role in social and ritual observances. At the same time, music unites people in their different roles, joining them together in a shared experience and purpose. Or, as the classic puts it: "The rites mark divisions in the minds of the people, while music harmonizes the voices of the people";[15] "Music brings out what people have in common, while the rites emphasize distinctions among them."[16] Always, it is the social and moral purposes that are emphasized in "The Record of Music." The former kings, we are told, did not establish the rites and music to satiate the mouth and stomach or to fulfill the desires of eye and ear. Rather, they regulated these practices "to instruct the people" and to return "the Way of man" to what is proper and right (*zheng* 正).[17]

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[14] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* 5.1.68, in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. by Charlotte Porter and Helen Clarke, 12 vols. (New York: The Kelmscott Society, 1903), 3:85; and Du Fu, "Teng wang tingzi," *Du shi xiangzhu* 杜詩詳注, ed. Qiu Zhaoao 仇兆鰲, 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 13.1089. (Both passages are cited by Qian Zhongshu, *Guanzhui bian* 3:948–49.)

Within this context, "The Record of Music" also discusses the special connection between music and the emotions. The chapter recognizes that the emotions, variously enumerated as four or six (grief, joy, fondness, anger, reverence, and love), are an inevitable part of human existence. Not only are they bound to be instilled in the heart, as a response to external circumstances; but they are also bound to find expression in tangible forms (such as music).[18] That does not mean that the emotions are necessarily "good." "The Record of Music" takes care to differentiate the emotions from human nature (*xing* 性). Unlike the nature, which is intrinsic, the emotions are set in motion by external things. Since the emotions also have untoward tendencies, the former kings were cautious about the way their people were "moved."[19] Grief may be lacking a requisite "firmness" to temper it, and pleasure may be wanting the needed "calmness" to restrain it.[20] If likes and dislikes are not properly measured, external things may transform a man himself into a thing; thus will he lose his natural humanity and give himself up to every possible craving and desire.[21] In fact, improper music, born of immoral times, is itself capable of moving the emotions in harmful ways, instilling in men a "contrary aura" that leads to depravity. In such a time, "The Record of Music" speaks of the necessity for the superior man to "reverse the emotions to harmonize the will."[22] The commentator Kong Yingda (574–648) explains that the superior man "reverses and does away with licentious and unmanly emotions, thereby harmonizing the will that is good."[23] Here, we see the negative aspect of the emotions. Moreover, music, which is the agent that harmonizes the will, is used as a corrective to their excesses. But it is only a certain type of music—that devised by the ancient kings and appreciated by the superior man—that may "effect goodness in the hearts of the people," and "alter the mores and improve the customs" of the land.[24]

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[15] "Yue ji," *Li ji zhushu* 禮記注疏, in *Shisan jing zhushu fu jiaokan ji* 十三經注疏附校勘記, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Nanchang, 1814), 37.11a.

[16] Ibid., 37.11b.

[17] Ibid., 37.8b.

[18] Ibid., 37.3a and 39.19a.

[19] Ibid., 37.3a.

[20] Ibid., 37.9a.

[21] Ibid., 37.10a–b.

The ambiguity of the character 樂, used both for *yue* "music" and *le* "pleasure," also figures in "The Record of Music," and later would pose a special problem to those who liked to enjoy music's "sadness." Presumably, the double meaning and use of the graph is not coincidental. The equivalence implied by the double meaning must spring from very ancient, that is, pre-Confucian, notions about the nature of music. Since the double meaning is so obvious it was punned upon even when the equivalence it suggests was not wholly accepted. The statement that "music is pleasure" (*yue le ye* 樂樂也) occurs repeatedly in "The Record of Music," yet it is clear that this equivalence could not go unqualified, lest it seem to permit or even to endorse "licentiousness" in the enjoyment of music. Thus "The Record of Music" cautions the reader: "It is said, 'Music is pleasure.' The superior man takes pleasure in achieving the Way, whereas the petty man takes pleasure in achieving his desires. If the Way is used to regulate desires, there is pleasure without disorder. If desires make one forget the Way, there is confusion and no pleasure."[25] By the end, this passage implicitly contradicts the assertion with which it began, that "music is pleasure." Only pleasure in the Way is real "pleasure."

In spite of this Confucian interpretation of the punning adage that "music is pleasure," the intimate association of *le* and *yue* was widespread, indeed, unavoidable in writings about music during the Warring States and Han periods. This linkage implicitly challenged the taste for "sadness" or melancholia in music and provided the critics of that taste with powerful ammunition for their attacks upon what they considered a deviant preference. The association of "music" and "pleasure" is utilized, for example, by Ruan Ji in his essay, "On Music," which argues for the importance of "correct" music in state rituals, and also criticizes "sad" music as improper. Toward the end of the essay, Ruan recounts the stories about Emperors Huan and Shun referred to above.[26] Punning throughout on the double meaning of the graph 樂, he appends this judgment:

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[22] Ibid., 38.9b.
[23] Ibid., 38.10b.
[24] Ibid., 38.4b.
[25] Ibid., 38.12a.

> What these monarchs did is to take sadness as music/pleasure. If sadness is taken to constitute music/pleasure in this manner, what true music/pleasure will there be in the world? And if there is no music/pleasure in the world, it will be hard indeed to harmonize *yin* and *yang* and to prevent natural calamities from occurring. After all, music/pleasure is what calms and harmonizes men's spirits so that debilitating vapors do not enter in. It ensures that Heaven and earth are intermingled, and that all manner of distant things are assembled together. That is why it is called "music/pleasure." Today, however, people's feelings are convulsed by crying, and their vital vapors are injured by moaning. This means that heat and cold will not be properly regulated, and the various things of nature will not complete their growth. Although the sounds may come from stringed and bamboo instruments, they should be called "sorrow." How can they be called "music/pleasure" when they cause men to gaze about in distress and heave great sighs?[27]

XI KANG'S NEW UNDERSTANDING OF MUSIC AND THE EMOTIONS

The terminology in Ruan Ji's discussion overlaps with that in "Music Has No Sorrow or Joy" 聲無哀樂論, the daring essay written by Ruan's contemporary, Xi Kang 嵇康 (223–262).[28] Xi Kang, however, introduced a major change in the argument, one that set him apart both from those who preferred ''sadness'' in music and those who, like Ruan Ji, criticized that taste: he disassociated ''music'' from ''pleasure.'' He also went a step further, insisting that neither sorrow nor joy nor any emotion whatsoever is intrinsic to music. Xi Kang's break with the traditional identification of music and pleasure prepared the way for the development of a cluster of new ideas about the nature, affective force, and uses of music. These ideas appear both in the essay and in its companion piece, Xi Kang's ''Rhapsody on the *Qin*'' 琴賦. The ideas themselves are part of the larger world of third-century philosophical thought and debate associated with the *xuanxue* 玄學 (Mystical Learning) or, as it is often called, the ''Neo-Daoist'' movement.

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[26] For a summary and analysis of Ruan Ji's essay, see Donald Holzman, *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi, A.D. 210–263* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 88–93.

[27] Ruan Ji, "Yue lun," *Ruan Ji ji jiaozhu* A.99.

[28] Xi Kang 嵇康, "Sheng wu aile lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 嵇康集校注, ed. Dai Mingyang 戴明揚 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1962), 5.196–231. Translations from this essay in the following pages are my own. I have benefited, however, from consulting the complete translation of this difficult essay by Robert G. Henricks, *Philosophy and Argumentation in Third-Century China: The Essays of Xi Kang* (Princeton: Princeton Univeristy Press, 1983), pp. 71–106. Henricks does not discuss the essay. A succinct yet valuable discussion of it is contained in Donald Holzman, *La Vie et la Pensée de Hi K'ang* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), pp. 67–72.

Xi Kang's essay, ''Music Has No Sorrow or Joy,'' is difficult and ambitious. Cast in the form of a debate between a ''guest from Qin,'' who defends traditional views of music, and the ''host of Dongye'' (Xi Kang), the essay marshals one argument after another against received notions about music. The order in which Xi Kang takes up these notions is somewhat haphazard, making the essay seem rambling at times. No clear division is maintained in the exposition between what are, in fact, two separate issues: the affective power of music, that is, its effect upon the listener; and the expressive function of music, that is, its capacity to express or convey the emotions of the musician. I take these to be the two key areas of Xi Kang's thinking about music and will discuss them separately below. The essay is rather opaque on the matter of the larger intent or goals Xi Kang has for advancing his iconoclastic views. This important issue of intent will also be considered below, with reference to the author's ''Rhapsody on the *Qin*.''

The most immediate challenge Xi Kang faces in the essay is to explain how it is, if music contains neither ''sorrow nor joy,'' that people are moved when listening to it. Nowhere does Xi Kang deny that an emotional response to music is commonplace. Instead, he argues against the view that people respond to emotions embodied in the music. Xi Kang uses a variety of different arguments or illustrations, but essentially he asserts that music *releases* feelings that are already present in the listener. It does not instill them in him. Music, he says, is like wine: the stimulation of the heart by music resembles the uninhibiting effect that wine has on a person's nature. One cannot say that wine contains the emotions of delight or anger, even though people commonly become happy or angry when they drink it. No more can one claim that music contains the principles of sorrow or joy, even though people react emotionally as they hear music.[29] What is intrinsic to music is not emotion but harmony (*he* 和), and musical harmony has a special property: when someone encounters it, it acts upon and spontaneously releases whatever emotions have already been formed in his heart.[30]

Xi Kang's strongest supporting argument is that the same piece of music is known to affect different people in different ways: "When guests fill a banquet hall and, after wine is consumed, the *qin* is played, it makes some people happy with enjoyment, while it makes other people weep with sorrow. It is not that the music conveys grief to some while delivering joy to others. The music is the same but both happiness and sorrow result. Is this not a case of 'blowing differently through ten thousand things'?[31] It is precisely because music gives no priority to either delight or anger, to either sorrow or joy, that happiness and sorrow both occur."[32] Xi Kang concludes from this that the affective force of music has no constants (*wu chang* 無常).

Xi Kang's illustration certainly has its merit, but many readers will feel that his conclusion is extreme. In fact, the guest from Qin, being unpersuaded by the point, challenges it by mentioning an observation from his own experience. When songs from Qi or Chu are performed, he often sees grief or tears appear on the faces of the listeners, but he never sees such music bring smiles or laughter to anyone. "This surely means," he says, "that the songs of Qi and Chu have grief as their essence."[33] This objection causes the host of Dongye to alter his argument. Abandoning his appeal to such external signs as tears and happy faces, Xi Kang now introduces the thought that strong emotive states have no outwardly visible manifestation. "When there is small happiness the face brightens, but in extreme joy it is the heart that is delighted."[34] Xi Kang calls this extreme joy "self-attainment" (*zide* 自得). Unlike some lower pleasure, which may show itself in raucous outward forms, self-attainment is characterized by a "calm and natural" appearance. It is the serene inner peace a man feels when his entire family is safe and happy, as opposed to the wild clapping or dancing with which he may celebrate their deliverance from some dire crisis. In self-attainment, one's spirits are united but there is no outward change in appearance.[35] That being so, the absence of smiles and laughter on the faces of those listening to songs of Qi and Chu does not prove that the songs convey only grief. The host declares that the guest has made the mistake of paying attention only to trivial externals while neglecting the inner essentials. The host's argument is clever, but it ignores the implication of what the guest had originally said: that *everyone* who hears this music invariably acquires a sorrowful expression.

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[29] Ibid., 5.204–5.

[30] Ibid., 5.204.

[31] From *Zhuangzi*, see *Zhuangzi yinde* 莊子引得, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement no. 20, ed. Hong Ye (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 3/2/9.

[32] Xi Kang, "Sheng wu aile lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 5.217.

[33] Ibid., 5.219.

One can readily understand why Xi Kang felt that he had to address the affective issue: it would naturally be the first objection raised to his unorthodox contentions. The assumption that music instills sentiments in the listener was widespread in Xi Kang's day, and so Xi Kang could not ignore it. Although Xi Kang exercises much ingenuity in defending his assertions about the affective force of music, it is the complementary issue concerning the expressive potential of music that takes up the bulk of his essay. Moreover, consideration of the author's larger purposes and motives, to be discussed below, confirms that this side of the subject is his chief concern.

On the issue of music's expressiveness too, Xi Kang presents a variety of points and illustrations, altering his tactics and reasoning as the debate demands. Just as he denies that music imparts sentiments to the listener, so too he maintains that music does not express whatever emotions the musician happens to be experiencing. Xi Kang insists that music (*sheng* 聲) and the heart or mind (*xin* 心) of the musician are distinct and unrelated, one external and the other internal. There is a disjunction between them. To assume, as is commonly done, that they coincide is a mistake. "The relationship of music to the mind is like that of the physical appearance to the mind. There are people who resemble each other in appearance but whose sentiments are at odds with each other, as there are people whose faces are dissimilar but whose minds are alike.''[36] ``The mind and the music [being produced] are clearly two separate things. Since the two are truly this way, then just as in trying to determine a person's feelings one does not only gaze at his face, in gauging a person's mind one does not rely upon listening to the music he makes. Any examiner who seeks to know a man's mind from the music he produces is certainly off track.''[37]

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[34] Ibid., 5.219.

[35] Ibid., 5.220, reading the variant *bian* in place of *you*.

Xi Kang's position has far-reaching implications, not only for music but also for the larger assumption, which had long been widespread, that various sorts of external indicators hold clues to a person's inner nature or disposition. The whole tradition of physiognomy, or character assessment based on appearance and deportment, is premised on such a belief. The idea was also becoming a cardinal principle of the arts of poetry and calligraphy, where it was assumed that aesthetic qualities perceived in the brushstroke or poetic line reflected personality traits. The same notion had a particularly secure footing in the field of music, in which stories abound about ``knowing listeners'' (*zhi yin zhe* 知音者), who could discern the true character of a man or even an entire region from its music. Xi Kang began with the intent of establishing a smaller point: the nonemotional nature of music. But in making that point he found it necessary to broach this larger issue of the linkage between the mind and external forms of expression. As the astonished guest remarks once he realizes the scope and implications of the argument confronting him: if the host's claims are accepted, then ``all former sayings and past records [concerning music] have to be discarded. They become useless.''[38]

It will be worthwhile to recount how Xi Kang debunks several of these earlier stories about ``knowing listeners.'' Early in the essay the host refers to regional variation of customs and music as support for the claim that ``music has no constants,'' that is, either in its melodies or in their correlation to human emotions.[39] The guest does not contend the point about there being regional differences. But he asserts another type of consistency: the tones and mood may change, even as a single player performs, but music always reflects the mind of the musician, and a discerning listener will know the musician from his music. He reminds his host of the story of Bo Ya and Zhong Ziqi, the "knowing listener." When Bo Ya played his *qin*, Zhong Ziqi knew exactly what was on his mind, and could follow the changes in what the musician was visualizing (a mountain, a river, etc.) by perceiving them in the music.[40] The music kept changing, but that did not prevent Zhong Ziqi from understanding its import with each change. Just because you have never met such a skilled listener, the guest tells his host, you cannot say that such correlations, between music and mind or emotion, do not exist.

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[36] Ibid., 5.213, reading the variant *xin* for *yin* in the opening phrase.

[37] Ibid., 5.214.

[38] Ibid., 5.209.

[39] Ibid., 5.198.

The host first answers by asking sarcastically if his opponent really believes that a man cannot hide his true feelings by deliberately cultivating a false appearance.[41] Evident here is a hint of the skepticism and worldliness that run through Xi Kang's thought. The host moves on to seize upon contradictions that he finds among various famous stories (which the guest had already adduced) about listeners. It is said that, long ago, when Ji Zha heard the "airs" of fifteen different states, from the first section of *The Book of Songs*, he knew right away the moral character and the fate of each place.[42] Similarly, when Music-master Xiang played a *qin* piece thought to have been composed centuries before by King Wen, Confucius visualized the ancient sage as if standing before him.[43] The story about Ji Zha implies that there are constancies in music that reflect the moral character of the place of origin and transcend time and regional differences. The story about Confucius implies that King Wen's *qin* music had likewise remained unchanged across several centuries: it had a fixed pattern that was first established by the sage and was replicated by the musician Confucius heard. If true, these stories show that music has a fixed measure. This calls into question the guest's interpretation of the Bo Ya story, in which he said that the music need not be constant for meaning to be discerned. However, if music really is "inconstant" and the Bo Ya story true, then the accounts of Confucius visualizing King Wen and Ji Zha ascertaining the customs of different states are not credible, for how could the actual notes of ancient music be exactly replicated centuries later? These contradictions, the host asserts, throw doubt upon all such stories on both sides of the issue. The host is uncompromisingly harsh in his conclusion:

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[40] Ibid., 5.200–201. Cf. Ying Shao 應劭, *Fengsu tongyi jiaoshi* 風俗通義校釋, ed. Wu Shuping 吳樹平 (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1980), 6.236. Different versions of the passage are recorded elsewhere, as in *Liezi*, see *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋, ed. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Hong Kong: Taiping shuju, 1954), 5.111 ("Tang wen").

[41] Ibid., 5.203.

[42] *Zuo zhuan* 326–27/Xiang29/8.

[43] *Hanshi waizhuan zhuzi suoyin* 韓詩外傳逐字索引, The Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series, ed. D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1992), 5.7/36/5–12.

> Such stories are false records made up by common pedants, who fabricated the tales, wanting to lend an aura of divine intelligence to their subject. Thus these pedants sought to delude the world about "the Way of music" and did not speak about its true principles. The next step in their method was to make music seem mysterious, arcane, and difficult to fathom, enabling them to complain that they never encountered a "gifted listener" in their own age and to lament their lot, pining away for the ancients.[44]

To support his position, the guest mentions other well-known stories, only to find their veracity challenged or their lesson invalidated by the host. One such story is drawn from the *Zuo zhuan*. During the Spring and Autumn period, officials of the state of Jin were worried when they heard that the army of Chu was preparing to attack them. They were reassured, however, by the Jin musician, Kuang, who reported that an "air" from Chu (*feng* 風, punning on "wind" and "song") had recently come into his courtyard, entered his body, and was blown by him through his pitch-pipes. The musician discerned that the notes had a "non-combative" character about them, and also that they contained "many sounds of death." The Chu army, he predicted, would not be successful.[45] The host scoffs at the tale. He points out that Jin and Chu are geographically far apart. How could a wind from Chu have managed to travel as far as Jin, and even if it did, how could Kuang have known it was a Chu wind and not a breeze from some other southern state? Besides, pitch-pipes have a set tone, which remains the same no matter who or what plays them. Was it not, rather, that Music-master Kuang, being widely learned and discerning, knew in advance which side would be victorious and, wanting to give confidence to his countrymen, cloaked his knowledge in words that sounded mystical and arcane?[46] The guests also brings up the story of Yangshe's grandmother, who, upon hearing the baby cry, remarked that he had a voice like a wolf's. Such a child, she said, must have a brutish mind and would surely grow up to destroy his clan (as he eventually did).[47] How was it, the hosts asks, that the woman acquired her insight from the child's cry? The host answers his own question with two possible explanations, neither of which supports the notion that the crying itself revealed the child's true nature. Perhaps the grandmother somehow gained divine insight (*shen wu* 神悟) into the child's future. But such insight is not based on "reason" or "principle" (*li* 理). It is not, in other words, something that could have been deduced logically from the sound of the crying. Or perhaps the woman had previously heard another child cry in the same manner, and knowing that the first child later brought his family to ruin, had reason to predict the same for Yangshe. In that case, the host concludes, the grandmother's insight did not come from the sound itself but from her knowledge of a previous sequence of events.[48]

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[44] Ibid., 5.203-4.

[45] *Zuo zhuan* 288/Xiang18/6. I have summarized the anecdote in the way that the host understands it. Actually, however, in the *Zuo zhuan* passage it says that musician Kuang "sang" a southern (i.e., Chu) song.

Another story cited by the guest prompts the host to compare music with language. The story, from the *Zuo zhuan*, tells of Gelu, who, on hearing a cow bellow knew from the mournful cries that three of its offspring had been sacrificed.[49] Naturally, the host does not accept this. In rebuttal the host asks if a sage who is suddenly transported to the land of the northern barbarians will understand their strange tongue upon first hearing it? Or will he, like a child learning new words from a teacher, need repeated exposure and practice before apprehending the new language?[50] The host's analogy might strike us as unfair. It ignores the issue of the difference between communicating emotion through cries (whether human or animal) and conveying semantic meaning in speech. But Xi Kang does not allow the guest to raise this objection.

Xi Kang does make some concessions to his opponent's point of view (even if he would not call then concessions). He allows, first, that different musical instruments produce music of different qualities, and he admits that the musical traditions of different regions vary in style and feeling. He goes so far as to say that the effect these different instruments and styles have upon the listener varies. Here, the host seems to verge upon saying that different musical pieces convey different emotions. In fact, picking his words with great care, he vigilantly avoids associating ''sorrow'' or ''joy'' with musical content.

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[46] Xi Kang, "Sheng wu aile lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 5.211–12.

[47] *Zuo zhuan* 426/Zhao28/fui.

[48] Xi Kang, "Sheng wu aile lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 5.213.

[49] *Zuo zhuan* 137/Xi29/5.

[50] Xi Kang, "Sheng wu aile lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 5.210–11.

The host observes that with the stringed instruments *pipa* 琵琶 (a lute) and *zheng* 箏 (a fretted zither), as with the *di* 笛 (''flute''), the spacing of the notes is close together and the sound produced is high-pitched. Moreover, pieces played on these instruments tend to have fast tempos. Therefore, the effect of the music is one of ''intensity'' or ''ferocity'' (*meng* 猛); it makes people feel ''excited'' or ''jumpy'' (*zao* 躁). By contrast, with the *qin* and another fretted zither, the *se* 瑟, the spacing between the notes is far apart and the sound produced low-pitched.[51] The overall effect of these instruments is to make the listener feel ''tranquil'' (*jing* 靜) or ''relaxed'' (*xian* 閒).

The host notes a similar contrast is found in the music of separate regions. Songs from Qi and Chu have many repetitions, hence the feelings of the listener are uniform and his mind concentrated. The tunes of popular little ditties, however, exploit tonal variety, thus instilling a multiplicity of thought in the mind. The difference between the two styles is like that between, on the one hand, sitting introspectively in a small room, where the mind grows quiet and calm and, on the other hand, going sightseeing in the capital, where the lavish abundance of sights excites the mind and calls forth all manner of feelings. Music may be either simple or complex, high or low, and its effect will accordingly either be to excite or to calm the listener. Whatever emotions are already present in the listener's heart may be released as these states are induced, but that does not mean that the emotions are intrinsic to the music.[52]

Although he began with the seemingly outlandish claim that music is emotively neutral, Xi Kang never denied that people react to music by experiencing the whole range of feelings from ''joy'' to

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[51] Reading the variant *jian* for *wen*, ibid., 5.215.

[52] This paragraph summarizes the argument of the essay in ibid., 5.215–17.

''sorrow.'' He simply insisted on distinguishing between a view of music as the source of emotions and another understanding of it as a facilitating or triggering agent. In this section of the essay, Xi Kang goes a step further, admitting that there are qualitative differences among various pieces and that these, in turn, inspire what might be called different ''moods'' in the listener. Here, Xi Kang even uses the word *qing* 情 ''emotions'' in reference to the moods of excitation and tranquillity. Clearly, he is trying to forestall criticism by moving his viewpoint as close as he can to the conventional understanding that the guest champions. But Xi Kang draws the line when it comes to ''joy'' and ''sorrow.'' These, he tells us, are the cardinal emotions; they are much more primary or fundamental than the moods that correlate with musical tempo and human pulse rate. Music, Xi Kang insists, could never carry these primary affections.

Xi Kang concludes with a consideration of the age-old Confucian distinction between ''proper'' and ''licentious,'' or ''wanton,'' music—that is, between the music of the former kings as opposed to that of the states of Zheng and Wei. This issue has been lurking behind the entire discussion, so well known are various Confucian pronouncements about the moral and immoral musical traditions. It is inconceivable that the host would not at some point have to face the matter. Ever the clever rhetorician, Xi Kang introduces the topic only at the end of his essay, after he has had ample space and time to explain his unorthodox views.

If music has no emotional content, the guest asks, how is it that the sages declared it the most effective means available for improving the customs of the people? If music is emotively neutral, why was the music of Zheng said to be corrupting and dangerous? Surely, the guest implies, the moral content of music, always taken for granted in Confucian discussions, must spring, in part at least, from ''good'' or ''bad'' emotions embodied in it. The host's long response to this inquiry may be divided into two parts. First, he argues that the venerated music of peaceful eras is a consequence, not a cause, of a properly moralized society. He quotes Confucius's statement about the ameliorative effect music has upon popular customs but then suggests that, taken literally, the statement is misleading. After all, he asserts, the essence of music is the mind. It is the mind that gives rise to music, and it is the mind, not music, that is either proper or lewd. When an enlightened ruler sits on the throne, his moralizing influence will transform the empire, people's minds will become harmonious, and they will express their intent in harmonious song. Concludes the host: "Actually, then, what alters and improves the customs is not this (i.e., music)."[53]

Second, the host proceeds to stand on its head received wisdom about the relative "worth" of different regional music. He asserts that the music of Zheng, always said to be "licentious," is actually "the most marvelous of all musical sounds" (音聲之至妙).[54] "Marvelous" in what sense? In its ability to move the listener. But therein lies the problem with such music and the explanation of why it had to be curbed. In its ability to release pent-up emotions and lead people astray, such music is like female beauty or fine wine: only the Perfect Man (*zhiren* 至人) will be able to maintain his self-control. Most people will lose control, which is why the former kings took this step: "They cut off [music's] greatest harmony and did not fully explore its potential transformations. They did away with sounds that were lovely and alluring, making music 'pleasurable but not licentious.'[55] The result is like the Great Broth that is unblended: it does not measure up to the flavor of the peony blend."[56] In ancient times, the Great Broth was used in sacrifices to former kings. It was a plain meat-soup without salted vegetables, so that "much of the flavor was left undeveloped."[57] The root of the peony is said to have been mixed together with thoroughwort and cinnamon as flavorings. This "peony blend" was often described as a mixture of the "five flavors" and, in turn, imparted its rich taste to whatever food it was added.[58]

Xi Kang's essay, which ends soon after making this point, leaves us with this disquieting thought: if orthodox and acceptable music as we know it is not really defective, it nonetheless falls short of the finest music possible. The early sages made it less than perfect because of their pragmatic understanding of the weaknesses of ordinary human character. Still, even as he calls attention to the limitations of orthodox music, and, by implication, to the ordinary understanding of the nature of music, Xi Kang remains true to his primary argument and theme: the most exquisite of music has an unparalleled richness of flavor and texture, and this quality enables it to release emotions present in the heart of the listener. Such music, fit only for the ears of the superior man, neither actually conveys emotions nor has emotions as an intrinsic feature.

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[53] Ibid., 5.223. Here, I am summarizing and paraphrasing the argument from 5.221 to this point in the essay.

[54] Ibid., 5.224.

[55] An allusion to *Lun yu* 3.20.

[56] Xi Kang, "Sheng wu aile lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 5.225.

[57] "Yue ji," *Li ji zhushu* 37.8a; trans. James Legge, *The Li Ki*, 2 vols., *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F. Max Müller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885) 2:96.

[58] See David R. Knechtges, *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 322, note on line 139.

THE ISSUES OF MOTIVATION AND INTENT

Xi Kang's argument in ''Music Has No Sorrow Or Joy'' is both tortured and bold. The extreme viewpoint that he has chosen to embrace, as well as the sheer mental effort that he has devoted to the exposition of his thesis, raise questions about his motivation.

One way of interpreting the essay is to view it in the context of Xi Kang's participation in the development of *xuanxue* thought, especially as an alternative to conventional Confucian doctrine.[59] Understandings of the nature of music were but a small part of the intellectual currents of Xi Kang's time. Yet they were an important and unavoidable part, given the centrality of music to Confucian ideas about social harmony, ritual, rule, and, indeed, the Classics and the sage kings. Xi Kang broke with Confucian doctrines about music by emphasizing its origins in Nature (*ziran* 自然), conceived of in accordance with Daoist tradition. Music was not for him an expression of proper (or improper) sentiments, themselves inseparable from Confucian roles and moral values. It was rather a replica of the soundless ''harmony'' of Nature, which itself partook of the ultimate principle, that is, the Way. This ''harmony'' was untainted by human emotions. Being universal, immutable, and eternal, it transcended all such subjective experience. As Xi Kang says in the opening of his essay:

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[59] See Kong Fan 孔繁, *Wei Jin xuanxue he wenxue* 魏晉玄學和文學 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987), pp. 87–94.

> Heaven and earth join their potencies together and then the ten thousand things are privileged with life. Hot and cold alternately go forth and the Five Phases are thereby complete. Therefore, these become manifest as the five colors and issue out as the five notes. The presence of music is like that of the various odors that permeate Heaven and earth. The good and the bad among them may be mixed together with other things, but their form is constant and does not change. How could fondness or hatred change a melody, or sorrow or joy alter a rhythm?[60]

Later, he says this about the sage kings who codified the earliest music, by tapping in to Nature's harmonies:

> As the kings in ancient times followed the lead of Heaven and brought order to worldly things, they were sure to venerate the teaching of Simplicity and employ the governance of Doing Nothing. Above, the sovereign was quiescent, while below his subjects were submissive. Unseen, mystical transformation united all things, and Heaven and man were perfectly intermingled. Whatever had been withered and decayed was nourished by life-giving fluids. Within the six directions all was bathed in the Vast Stream and cleansed of dust and contamination. All living things were at peace and "brought to themselves many blessings."[61] Silently, they followed the Way, embracing duty and rightness, while not realizing why they did so. They were filled with harmonious minds inside and manifested a harmonious manner externally.[62]

Xi Kang's understanding of music thus follows from a general philosophical orientation, and it requires that music and human emotions be sharply distinguished and separated. Imputing emotion to music would debase it.

Xi Kang's interest in music has another, more personal dimension, as is clear from even a cursory reading of his well-known essay, "On Nourishing Life," and other writings. Xi Kang believes in the utility of "nourishing life" (*yangsheng* 養生) to prolong one's days in this world. He criticizes both those people who belittle the idea that longevity may be purposefully cultivated and those who accept the notion but do not understand the right way to go about such "nourishing." The aim of Xi Kang's argument is to stress the importance of cultivating inner peace and serenity. It is this mental and emotional quietude, not drugs or other techniques designed to benefit the body or stave off disease, that Xi Kang champions.

Xi Kang seeks to direct attention to the duality of inner or psychic/daemonic components of life (*xing* 性, *xin* 心, *shen* 神) and the outer or physical form (*shen* 身, *xing* 形). He stresses the dependence of the latter upon the former. Longevity of the body can only be attained through care of the inner spirit. In Xi Kang's view, nothing is more harmful to the spirit than apprehensions and emotions. For most men the great problem is simply that "thoughts and apprehensions diminish the refined spirit, and sorrow and joy injure the calm essence."[63] The goal is to find ways to ensure that "love and hate do not dwell in one's feelings, and worry and delight do not linger in one's thoughts."[64] Significantly, the binome *aile* 哀樂 ("sorrow and joy") that Xi Kang uses in the first of these statements is the same that occurs in the title of his essay on the non-emotive nature of music. The other expressions, "love and hate" and "worry and delight" are synonymous substitutions.

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[60] Xi Kang, "Sheng wu aile lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 5.197.

[61] A line quoted from *The Book of Songs* 詩經, no. 235/6.

[62] Xi Kang, "Sheng wu aile lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 5.221–22.

Xi Kang draws a clear distinction between his approach to nourishing life and one that might be confounded with it. The goal, he insists, is not "to suppress the emotions and endure the desires." A man who does this may distinguish himself from the common lot, but "what he longs for will constantly confront his eyes and ears."[65] His mind will be beset by temptations and doubts, so enamored will he remain with the attractions of the world. Sooner or later, this inner turmoil will lead to failure and defeat. The preferable alternative to this is, of course, to transcend ordinary emotions and desires, to cultivate supreme disinterest in them, and to preserve the freedom thus achieved:

> He who excels at nourishing life behaves differently: pure, empty, tranquil, and at peace, he "has little self-interest and few desires."[66] Understanding that fame and position injure virtue, he banishes thoughts of them from his mind and makes no schemes; it is not that he has such desires and forcibly represses them. Recognizing that rich flavors harm the nature, he rejects them, without giving them a glance; it is not that he craves them but suppresses those urges. External things impede the mind. Consequently, he does not keep them in his thoughts. Spirit and breath are pure and blank, and so he focuses on these alone. Unobstructed, he is free of worries and concerns. Stilled, he has no longings or apprehensions. He maintains himself with the One and nourishes himself with harmony. . . . Having

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[63] Xi Kang, "Yangsheng lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 3.151.

[64] Ibid., 3.146.

[65] Ibid., 3.154.

[66] From *Laozi* A.19.

forgotten about happiness, his pleasure is complete. Dispelling thoughts about life, his body is preserved.[67]

As exemplified in this passage, there are repeated references to "harmony" in "On Nourishing Life." "Harmony," in one passage, is a condition of the inner self that follows upon the elimination of emotions and desires: "Floating free, he has no feelings and so his body and breath are harmonious and at peace."[68] Xi Kang does not elaborate on the precise character of this "harmony," but by the very nature of the word one would expect it to be a complex state made up of distinct psychic and modal states coexisting accordantly together. The juxtaposition of "harmony" with "One" in the passage just cited also suggests that it is not conceptualized as a simple condition, an unblended singularity. In another place, Xi Kang says that, if the nature does begin to stir (with emotion), it is "harmony" that is used to rein it in. The nature thus remains content with harmony.[69] This certainly implies that "harmony" allows for various moods and impulses, but that it serves to balance them.

"Harmony" is clearly a musical term, that is, a term drawn from the domain of music theory and applied here to human psychology. Apart from the use of this term, there are other brief but telling references to music in these essays. The enlightened man, Xi Kang says at one point, "soothes himself with the five strings [of the *qin*]."[70] Likewise, in his answer to Xiang Xiu's "Refutation" of his views, Xi Kang refers to a certain Master Dou, a blind musician said to have had an audience with Emperor Wen of the Han dynasty, at which time the musician was already one hundred eighty years old. When questioned by the emperor about the methods he used to achieve such longevity, Dou replied that he took no special medicines and did not know Daoist exercises. Huan Tan (d. A.D. 28), who first records this story, explains that because Dou was blind, his "vision" was directed inward. He did not dissipate his essence on external things and, instead, delighted himself with music so that his nature and life span were enhanced.[71] Xi Kang puts the matter somewhat differently, emphasizing his own particular interest: "Master Dou had nothing [i.e., elixirs or techniques] that he utilized, and yet he reached the age of one hundred eighty. Was it not that by strumming the *qin* he harmonized his mind? This, too, is evidence of the results of nourishing the spirit."[72]

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[67] Xi Kang, "Yangsheng lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 3.156–57.

[68] Ibid., 3.146.

[69] Xi Kang, "Da nan yangsheng lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 4.175.

[70] Ibid., 3.157.

[71] Huan Tan, *Huanzi xin lun*, "Qu bi," in *Quan Hou Han wen* 14.6a–b.

From his own words and from stories about him, we know that *qin* playing was an important part of Xi Kang's life. Here, we need not take account of the later, popular image of Xi Kang as the musician among the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove," conventionally pictured together with his *qin*. We may content ourselves with the opening lines of the preface to his "Rhapsody on the *Qin*":

> In my youth I was already fond of music and as a grown man I still amuse myself with it. Other things flourish and decay, but music never changes. I grow sated of other flavors, but of this I never tire. Music guides and nourishes the spirit and breath, and it manifests and harmonizes the emotions and intent. Nothing compares with music in its ability to give solace to one who dwells in poverty and seclusion.[73]

The well-known and relatively early account of Xi Kang's behavior on the night before his public execution, which had been plotted by his personal and political enemies, is also germane:

> Thereupon Xi Kang was convicted and imprisoned. On the eve of his death, his elder and younger brothers and his nearest of kin went together to bid him farewell. Kang's facial expression showed no change. He asked his elder brother, "Have you brought my *qin*?" His brother said, "Yes, I have brought it." Kang tuned it and played the "Melody of the Grand Peace." When finished, he sighed and said, "From now on, the 'Melody of the Grand Peace' is no more!"[74]

If credible, this anecdote provides a memorable illustration of Xi Kang's *qin* playing and the supreme imperturbability associated with it. To be sure, the night before one's execution is, in any case, an extraordinary occasion, one that lends itself to drama and spectacle. But Xi Kang had an on-going, indeed life-long, devotion to *qin* music, as the statement from the rhapsody implies. In the light of Xi Kang's other beliefs, reviewed above, one finds special significance in his claim that *qin* playing "nourishes the spirit" and "harmonizes the emotions." Xi Kang's involvement with music was a part of his larger concern with "nourishing life" and achieving inner "harmony"—even though we do not know enough about the man to gauge just how large that part was.

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[72] Xi Kang, "Da nan yangsheng lun," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 4.179, reading the variant *zheng* "proof" for *wei* in the last phrase.

[73] Xi Kang, "Qin fu," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 2.83.

[74] Zhang Yin 張隱 (4th century), *Wenshi zhuan* 文士傳, as quoted in Liu Xiaobiao's 劉孝標 commentary on Liu Yiqing 劉義慶, *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏, ed. Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 6.2.344; trans. Richard Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yu, A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 181, with modifications.

XI KANG'S "RHAPSODY ON THE *QIN*"

Xi Kang's celebrated "Rhapsody on the *Qin*" complements in various ways his essay, "Music Has No Sorrow or Joy."[75] In the essay, Xi Kang sets forth his idiosyncratic views on the nature of music and its relation to the emotions, as he takes on and attempts to discredit contrary opinions. But in the "Rhapsody," Xi Kang is content to present a poetic vision of the Perfect Man reveling in the act of playing the *qin*. Here the lyrical description of the high-minded joys of *qin* playing complements the argumentation of the essay. Given its renown in later ages, the "Rhapsody" arguably did more than any other single piece of writing, and surely more than Xi Kang's essay, to promote and solidify the alternative musical values that he and others embraced.

The "Rhapsody," moreover, stands in sharp contrast to earlier rhapsodies on musical instruments regarding the very same issues considered above. It is evident from Xi Kang's preface that he was dissatisfied with the emphasis of earlier pieces on the "sadness" of music. In the preface, Xi Kang explicitly takes exception to this tradition, alerting us from the outset that his treatment of music will be different.

> The various types of musical instruments as well as the many manifestations of song and dance are topics that talented scholars through the ages have celebrated in rhapsodies and rhymed verses. Yet the form and style of these compositions are redundant, each imitating its predecessors. As for the materials from which instruments are made, the compositions prize those that grow in precipitous and harsh

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[75] The translations that follow are my own. For a translation of the entire piece, see David Knechtges, *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 279–302. Cf. the prior translation by R. H. Van Gulik, *Hsi K'ang and his Poetical Essay on the Lute* (1940; rpt., Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1968), pp. 70–121.

> environments. In discussing the quality of the sound produced, they say that which is sad and grievous is the most important. As for the the emotional effect upon the listener, that which causes tears to be shed is the most highly valued. Such music certainly has its beauty and appeal, but these discussions of the subject do not do justice to the underlying principles. The source of this shortcoming is that the authors seem in some fundamental sense not to understand musical notes and melodies. To judge, moreover, from the drift of their statements, neither do they grasp the true nature of the rites and music.[76]

A glance at the earlier rhapsodies on musical instruments that survive verifies the preferences that Xi Kang describes. Wang Bao's "Rhapsody on Musical Pipes" 洞簫賦 opens with an account of the mountain setting in which the bamboo used to fashion the instrument grows. Just as Xi Kang asserts, Wang emphasizes the remote, precipitous, and inhospitable aspects of the environment. Consequently, he observes, "it is truly sad how discomfited the bamboo is" (*qi bu an* 其不安).[77] Even the animals who live in this setting are said to be full of emotion. In spring, birds flit gaily amid the groves. In autumn, cicadas cling to the branches and emit their interminable drone, while black gibbons "call out sadly," seeking for companions amid the deserted forests. Eventually, the bamboo is cut down and fashioned into pipes. The instruments are then given over to blind musicians, men "whose natures are dimmed by an excess of darkness, who have never since the day they were born glimpsed the true form of Heaven and earth, and who are ignorant of the appearance of black and white." Naturally, such persons are full of unhappiness. "Frustration wells up inside them, causing them excessive sorrow, as they grieve that their eyes have lost their brightness. Left with nothing else to relieve their worries and apprehensions, they express themselves solely in music."[78] Wang Bao then describes pipe music in all its rich variety of texture and emotion, including tender commiseration, noble fortitude, martial valor, and grievous longing. Whatever the style of a melody, Wang Bao stresses its emotive, moving force. That is why in conclusion he observes (as quoted earlier) that "those who understand music take pleasure in it and are moved to sadness, while those who do not understand music marvel at it and find it impressive."[79]

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[76] Xi Kang, "Qin fu," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 2.83–84.

[77] Wang Bao, "Dongxiao fu," *Wen xuan* 17.10b. The entire rhapsody is translated in Knechtges, *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature* 3:233–43.

[78] Ibid., 17.12a.

About a century later, in his "Rhapsody on the Long Flute" 長笛賦, Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166) fastened upon the same motifs and developed them still further, writing about them in an almost exaggerated manner. In describing the northern side of Zhongnan Mountain, the setting where the choice bamboo for the long flute grows, Ma Rong uses language that is as obscure and tortuous as the cliffs themselves. He emphasizes two aspects of the setting, the craggy steepness of the mountain and the torrential power of the rivers and waterfalls that cascade down its face. The forests of this forbidding mountain are shunned by people. Paths are lacking and visitors are few. There is, however, an animal presence, but one that is overwhelmingly distressed. Gibbons cry out during the day, and flying squirrels screech at night. Wild fowl and pheasants "call out sadly and wail," looking for a mate. The animals' grievous din never lets up, day or night.[80]

Wang Bao had only hinted that the harsh surroundings and animal cries may have been connected to the sounds eventually produced by the bamboo pipes. Ma Rong makes the link explicit and sure. It is both the topographical severity, which "presses" itself upon the plants, and the accumulated melancholy of the animals there that suffuse the bamboo, even before it has been cut, with a predisposition to produce sad sounds. Consequently, when breezes blow upon the plants, their tiny tips emit plaintive notes like those of stringed instruments.[81] These sounds, in turn, attract the attention of like-minded persons, the only persons who happen to be in the vicinity. These are not Wang Bao's blind musicians but rather a singular collection of "banished ministers, disowned sons, rejected wives and forlorn friends." As they listen downwind to the sounds emanating from the towering bamboo, they weep, overcome with grief. They use ladders to climb up and cut down the upper reaches of the plants, fashioning them into long flutes, so that they can make this music their own.[82] Ma Rong then characterizes, at considerable length, all the types and styles of music produced by the long flute. Yet as varied as he makes his description of the music, his treatment of the long flute has obviously been colored by his opening section on the origins of the bamboo used to make the instrument. Consonant with this emphasis, he mentions in his preface that he had recently heard a flute melody that was ''extremely sad and so gave me great pleasure.''[83]

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[79] Ibid., 17.14b.

[80] Ma Rong, "Changdi fu," *Wen xuan* 18.2a-3b. This rhapsody is also translated in entirety in Knechtges, *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature* 3:259–78.

[81] *Wen xuan*, 18.3b.

[82] Ibid., 18.3b–5a.

The convention of linking sad music to inhospitable surroundings had a power that outlasted Xi Kang's own rhapsody on a musical instrument, despite Xi Kang's departure from that convention. In his ''Rhapsody on the Mouth Organ'' 笙賦, Pan Yue 潘岳 (d. 300) presents a much more moderate account of the source and inspiration of music than had Ma Rong. Pan even makes a point of dispensing with the standard opening concerning the bamboo's habitat, saying that earlier writers have treated it adequately. Still, when describing the musician who plays, Pan Yue retains the traditional assumption that effective music springs from sadness. The occasion is a lavish banquet in a grand hall. The assembled guests are drinking and enjoying themselves, except for one of them who sits by himself facing the wall and wiping away tears. What is he thinking about? ''At the beginning there was grandeur, but in the end constraint. Formerly there was flourishing but later withering. Filled with frustration towards his present lowliness, he longs for his prior eminence.''[84] He then picks up a mouth organ and begins to play. His music, as we have come to expect, is described as being richly varied in tempo, texture, and mood. But the opening account leaves little doubt that the source of these marvelous melodies is the player's troubled heart.

Xi Kang's ''Rhapsody on the *Qin*'' departs radically from these other literary treatments of musical instruments. Xi Kang too begins his rhapsody by describing the natural setting where there grows the paulownia tree, from which the *qin* is made. Though remote and mountainous, this environment, as viewed by Xi Kang, has qualities utterly unlike those we have seen in other treatments. These paulownia trees are said to:

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[83] Ibid., 18.1b.

[84] Pan Yue, ''Sheng fu,'' *Wen xuan* 18.23a. For a complete translation of the piece, see Knechtges, *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature* 3:303–14.

> imbibe the pure harmony of Heaven and earth, and inhale the perfect brightness of the sun and moon. They concentrate in themselves the surrounding luxuriance, and, being uniquely splendid, send their verdant radiance aloft to the azure sky. At sunset they absorb the waning rays from the Springs of Yu. At dawn they dry their trunks in light from the coast of Heaven. For a thousand years they await one who will perceive their worth. Quiet they stand, spiritlike and forever hale.[85]

This is just the opening of a long section on the trees' habitat. Subsequent lines describe the soaring peaks, the swirling mists, and the churning, billowing rivers there, all in a manner that stresses dynamic movement and that, in fact, anticipates the language used later in the piece to describe music produced by the *qin*. Moreover, these mountains have no soughing winds or lonely crying animals. The trees are fortuitously located in a region that abounds with things of beauty and value. The hillsides are embedded with jades and jaspers, with orchids growing to the east and the magical yellow crab apple to the west. Clouds provide shade for the treetops, where circling phoenixes alight. Pure dew moistens the bark and beneficent breezes flow through. Consequently, observes Xi Kang, "those who are in the midst of the trees certainly find that the divine beauty of nature there suffices to delight their thoughts and desires."[86]

This last statement leads toward the next section of Xi Kang's piece, in which he describes the people who enter upon the scene to fashion instruments from the trees there. Like the setting itself, these people differ greatly from their counterparts in the earlier rhapsodies. They are Perfect Men, scholars who have withdrawn from society. They dwell in the wilds not because they have been banished or dispossessed but because they want to be there: "Realizing that worldly life in their day is fraught with constraints and impediments, they lift their gaze to the lingering glow from Ji Mountain (where Xu You retired when offered the throne by Emperor Yao). Admiring the high peaks for their breadth and grandeur, they are filled with profound admiration and have no thought of returning home."[87] The *qin* originates with such men as these.

The next section of Xi Kang's piece describes the physical properties of the instruments they make, the way the instrument is tuned, and the pieces traditionally played on it. Then, after giving an account of an ideal setting for *qin* playing, Xi Kang reaches the rhetorical climax of the entire piece, celebrating the music itself with all (and more) of the poetic and rhetorical flourish one expects in this form. The material setting is one of elegance and quietude, qualities that Xi Kang treats as prerequisites for the meditative or mystical experience of playing this instrument. In this preferred situation no audience is mentioned. If there are any listeners present, even just a few discerning friends "who understand the tune," communication with them is not the issue:

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[85] Xi Kang, "Qin fu," *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 2.85.

[86] Ibid., 2.88.

[87] Ibid., 2.88–89

> It is a tall hall with flying lookouts, a spacious building with uncluttered rooms. On a winter's night that is cold and clear, the bright moon casts its light. The player wears brightly variegated new robes, with colored tie-strings and wafting fragrance. At this moment the instrument is cool and its strings in tune, the player's mind is at peace and his fingers nimble. His fingers pluck and glide in accord with his will, the music perfectly emulating his thoughts.[88]

The chill of the night air and the touch of the instrument itself befit the player's passionless state of mind of the player. He is not playing to express emotions but to revel in a moment of transcending them. The colorful clothes (or, according to an alternate interpretation, the rustling sound of the silk garments), the perfumed fragrance, and, indeed, the spacious dwelling match the richness and elegance of the music.

Interspersed between the passage about the setting and the elaborate description of the music itself is a song sung by the musician, as he strums the *qin*. The song, a hymn to Daoist immortality, provides the author an opportunity to make the philosophical orientation of his idealized player explicit and unquestionable (in a way that descriptions of the music itself could never equal):

凌扶搖兮憩瀛洲　要列子兮爲好仇　餐沆瀣兮帶朝霞　眇翩翩兮薄天遊
齊萬物兮超自得　委性命兮任去留

Rising on the rocking breezes, resting at the Isle of the Blest,
I seek out Liezi to be my fond companion.
Supping on pure dew and girding myself with sunrise clouds,

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[88] Ibid., 2.94–95.

> I flutter high aloft to draw near Heaven in my wanderings.
> I treat the myriad things as equal, and leap to self-attainment,
> Casting my fate aside, all goings or stayings are one to me.[89]

Having clearly characterized the player's thinking, Xi Kang launches into his lengthy account of *qin* music in its highest form, that is, unaccompanied by human voice. As he says, "The tune changes and the marvelous music then begins."[90] The some sixty-eight lines that follow feature images of dynamic movement that are borrowed from a variety of fields and phenomena including dance, meteorology (swirling clouds, winds, rain), animal life (circling birds, charging beasts), hydrology (flowing rivers, waves), topography (soaring peaks and plummeting ravines), and plant life (the growth and flowering of vegetation). The passage is almost entirely free of emotive language and demonstrates throughout a preference for images of movement over sentimental characterizations. In this respect the climax of the rhapsody remains faithful to the intellectual position Xi Kang staked out in his essay on music and alluded to in his preface to the rhapsody. Comparison of Xi Kang's description of *qin* music with that contained in a slightly earlier "Rhapsody on the *Qin*," by Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192) confirms the singularity of Xi Kang's effort. Although Cai's rhapsody only survives in fragments, it is evident that he dwells on precisely the sort of emotive characterizations that Xi Kang avoids. "And then the sorrowful melody begins," Cai announces, and then he runs through a litany of tunes with melancholy historical associations. Eventually, such music causes "people in sorrow to cover their ears out of grief, and hitched horses to stomp their feet with sad whinnying."[91] Such were the conventions against which Xi Kang wrote his *qin* composition.

In the closing section of his rhapsody, Xi Kang shifts attention from the intensely private setting treated earlier to a social setting for *qin* playing. In this connection, he addresses the affective power of the *qin* and surveys the potential range of emotional reactions among listeners. Here he seems eager to make allowances for a social function of his favorite instrument, even if it is only for an exclusive gathering of like-minded friends. To acknowledge thus some social role for *qin* playing serves to make the rhapsody less extreme, bringing it more in line with the traditional view that music always had a social context and function. Yet even while speaking of the *qin*'s potential to move those who hear it, Xi Kang is careful to maintain his viewpoint about the location and origins of any emotions that may be experienced by the listener.

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[89] Ibid., 2.96–97.

[90] Ibid., 18.30a.

[91] Cai Yong, "Qin fu," in *Quan Hou Han wen* 69.5b–6a.

Two possible social settings are mentioned: a springtime outing into nature undertaken by a few friends, and a small banquet in a painted hall, restricted, again, to ''intimate friends and close guests.'' Both are joyous affairs, when the lovely scenery or the friendly conviviality provide an apt occasion for pleasures of *qin* playing. Yet even with such select company, Xi Kang feels it necessary to add this qualification: ''But unless [the listener] has a truly expansive mind, he will be unable to delight fully in the playing; unless he is deep and still, he will be unable to dwell at leisure with the music; unless he is completely unconstrained, he will eventually begrudge the time spent listening; and unless he is supremely refined, he will be unable to analyze the music's underlying principle.''[92] The traits Xi Kang lists here are reminiscent of those of the idealized player he envisioned in the spacious hall. Xi Kang takes every opportunity to remind us of the special requirements for thorough appreciation of the *qin*.

As he thus focuses on the audience for *qin* playing, Xi Kang touches upon the instrument's ability to move its listeners in various ways. He mentions that it may ''halt aggressiveness and purge anxieties'' (*cheng zao xue fan* 懲躁雪煩).[93] This suggests that music may have a cathartic effect on the listener, but Xi Kang does not dwell on the point. He seems more interested in the idea that the music will affect different listeners differently, depending on their mental and emotional state before the music begins. Reiterating the point made in his essay, Xi Kang observes that when a sorrowful person hears the *qin* he is overcome by grief and when a happy person hears it he is carried away with joy. Tellingly, Xi Kang's third and last example—clearly his favorite, the one he saves for last—concerns a person whose mind is ''harmonious and at peace.'' Upon hearing the *qin*, such a person's spirit is nourished with delight and achieves a state of "purity" or "naturalness" (*xuanzhen* 玄眞): "He is tranquil and vacant, delighting in antiquity. He casts all affairs aside and leaves his body behind."[94] In other words, while acknowledging that the *qin* may cause an outpouring of pent-up feelings in some persons, Xi Kang reminds us that there is also a more profound manner of appreciation.

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[92] Xi Kang, ''Qin fu,'' *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 2.104–5.

[93] Ibid., 2.103.

Xi Kang concludes this section with assertions not about emotions but rather about virtues. The *qin*, he implausibly declares, is what gave each of a series of historical paragons the virtue for which he is remembered. It gave Yan Hui his humaneness, Bi Gan his loyalty, Wei Sheng his fidelity, and Hui Shi his skill as a sophist! The real point here is that the *qin* affects different people differently so that, considered jointly, its effects can yet be characterized as achieving a "middle harmony." These concluding thoughts are clearly just a concession to conventional notions about the social benefits of music. Xi Kang's rhapsody ends with a coda (*luan* 亂) that returns to the themes of the ineffable meaning of *qin* music and, correspondingly, the rarity of persons who truly understand it. "The one who fully appreciates the elegant *qin*," he observes in his final line, "is the Perfect Man and he alone."[95]

THE ISSUES AS REFLECTED IN LATER POETRY

With his essay and rhapsody, Xi Kang articulated more cogently and memorably than anyone else of his era an alternative to the contemporary valuation of "sadness" in music, especially *qin* music. Owing to the power and originality of Xi Kang's essay, the viewpoint that "music has no joy or sadness" came to be one of the three themes or principles (*sanli* 三理) that were discussed and debated by intellectuals of the Wei and Jin periods (the other two were "nourishing life" and "words fully express meaning").[96] That Xi Kang's rhapsody was later included in the sixth-century anthology, *Selections of Refined Literature* (*Wen xuan* 文選), ensured its lasting pre-eminence in Chinese thinking about the *qin*. Moreover, by giving prominent place to representations of the views with which he disagreed, Xi Kang's essay and rhapsody really defined the parameters of later discussions about the relationship between music and the emotions. Taking on a life of their own, the issues surface time and again in later references to music and performance in literati culture of the middle dynasties. To speak in general terms, one senses that, as the *qin* became firmly established as the premier instrument of classic refinement, the ideas Xi Kang endorsed about the nature and psychic function of *qin* music in elite society spread and won acceptance there. Yet the sentimental approach to and appreciation of *qin* music remained viable for nearly as long, even as it was gradually being eclipsed and replaced by the values and outlook that Xi Kang had adopted. In later times the two attitudes still vied with each other.

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[94] Ibid., 2.107.

[95] Ibid., 2.109..

[96] See Liu Yiqing, *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 4.21, p. 211; cf. Kong Fan, *Wei Jin xuanxue yu wenxue*, pp. 87-93; and Lü Kai 呂凱, *Wei Jin xuanxue xiping* 魏晉玄學析評 (Taipei: Shiji shuju, 1980), pp. 86-95.

In succeeding centuries, questions of the nature of music, especially *qin* music, and its relation to the emotions frequently recurred, as a brief survey of selected writings, mostly poems from the Tang period, will demonstrate. That later literary treatments of *qin* music hinge upon these issues itself should establish the historical importance of the debate that Xi Kang joined, quite apart from its inherent interest. Even a cursory look at later writings will show that this debate, which was fully articulated as early as the third century, underlies, animates, or even generates, with an almost uncanny regularity, literary treatments of music and *qin* playing through the Tang. By tracing poetic treatments of *qin* music through major writers of the Tang, it becomes apparent that a new stage in representations of the instrument was reached in the later part of the dynasty. This stage was the basis for conceptions and uses of the *qin* that carried over into the Song dynasty, when, it could be said, Xi Kang's vision of the instrument and its significance in literati culture reached its culmination. The modifications introduced in the Tang, which continue to address the old issues and dilemmas, have implications that go far beyond the *qin* itself, bearing as they do upon literati conceptions of music, performance, and the role of the emotions in the arts generally.

We know, of course, that the *qin* enjoyed a privileged place in high culture well before Xi Kang's day. Because of references to the instrument in the Confucian classics and its associations with ancient sages, especially Emperor Shun and King Wen, the *qin* already occupied a distinctive niche in the musical world of early China. The abundance of anecdotes about the *qin* and Confucius that proliferated in late Warring States and Han periods texts attest to this.[97] The claim here is not that Xi Kang promoted the instrument or raised it to a distinctive status. It already had such status. The point, rather, is that Xi Kang helped to mold a new conception of this preferred instrument, and at the same time he clarified the two sides of a disagreement over how it should be used or understood. Long before the beginning of the imperial age, favorable orientations for what the *qin* would eventually become in the Song and later dynasties had been established. But it was only after these orientations were nourished and shaped in intervening centuries that the *qin* became what it did. Countless persons played some role in this process. The contributions of a few deserve special notice, including, among pre-Tang figures, Xi Kang.

In later periods, vestiges of the Han association of *qin* music with "sadness" remain. Later poets, for example, were very aware of the purported historical provenance of traditional *qin* melodies, which they believed to originate with experiences of anguish in ancient times, whether it be Wang Zhaojun's tearful departure as she journeyed north, Du Muzi's complaint that at fifty he still had no wife (commemorated in the *qin* song, "Peacocks Fly in the Morning"), or Jing Ke's forebodings on the banks of the Yi River, where he paused on his mission to assassinate the First Emperor of the Qin.[98] Consequently, they commonly make statements to the effect that the composer's grief is still present in the music, or that the sadness is renewed across the centuries each time the piece is performed.

Later writers also openly acknowledge the expectation and pleasure of being moved to tears by these tunes that have sorrowful associations. "She plays the sonorous *qin* for me," begins a poem by Shen Jiong 沈炯 (503-561); "Its singing notes wound my heart" is the matching line.[99] A quatrain attributed to Dao Gai (d. 548) feigns to ask a *qin* player not to perform a certain piece precisely because he expects it to overwhelm him with sorrow:

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[97] See, for example, Lü Buwei 呂不韋, *Lüshi chunqiu zhuzi suoyin* 呂氏春秋逐字索引, The Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series, ed. D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1994), 14.6/76/17-28; *Hanshi waizhuan* 5.7/36/5-12; *Kong Congzi* 孔叢子, in *Guoxue jiben congshu* 國學基本叢書 (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1968 rpt), A.3.22-23; and Liu Xiang 劉向, *Shuo yuan zhuzi suoyin* 説苑逐字索引, The Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series, ed. D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1992), 18.29/159 /26-160/3 and 19.25/167/4-10.

[98] For these three *qin* songs and their origins, see Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩, *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集, 4 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 59.853-55, 57.835-37, and 58.849

到溉　秋夜詠琴詩

寄語調弦者　客子心易驚　離泣已將墮　無勞別鶴聲

Dao Gai, "On a *Qin* Played on an Autumn Evening"[100]

I send these words to him who tunes the strings,
This traveler's heart is easily startled.
Tears of parting are already about to fall,
You need not play "The Solitary Crane."

The piece referred to was thought to have originated in ancient times with a loving husband, Ling Muzi, who commiserated with his wife when his family forced him to abandon her. (She had failed to produce an heir in five years of marriage).[101] Dao Gai means that, as someone who now finds himself separated from his loved ones, his heart is already heavy enough. Naturally, this poem serves not only to express the poet's state of mind but also to pay tribute to the emotive power of the *qin* when this piece about forced separation is played.

Neverthless, we also find poems that are true to Xi Kang's notions. Tao Qian, for example, associates the instrument with recluses and his own retirement. In Tao's poetry, much as in Xi Kang's rhapsody, the *qin* is played in moments of tranquil relaxation and joyfulness.[102] A less well known poet, who lived in the century after Tao's, features a similar representation of the instrument:

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[99] Shen Jiong, "Wei wo tan mingqin shi," *Chen shi* 陳詩, in *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi*, 1.2448. Reading the variant *qing* for *ming* in the opening line.

[100] Dao Gai "Qiuye yongqin shi," *Liang shi* 梁詩, in *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi*, 17.1856.

[101] Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji* 58.844.

[102] See, for example, Tao Qian's poems, "He Guo zhubo," no. 1 (on his own *qin*), "Ni gu," no. 3 (on the *qin* played for him by a recluse he visits), "Yong pinshi," no. 3 (which mentions the *qin* of the ancient recluse Rong Qiqi), and "Guiqulai xi ci," (on his own *qin*, associated with his retirement), in *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian* 陶淵明集校箋, ed. Yang Yong 楊勇 (Hong Kong: Wuxing ji shuju, 1971), 2.92-93, 4.191-92, 4.218, and 5.267.

蕭慤　聽琴詩

洞門涼氣滿　閑館夕陰生　弦隨流水急　調雜秋風清
掩抑朝飛弄　凄斷夜啼聲　至人齊物我　持此悅高情

Xiao Que (6th c.), ''Listening to a *Qin*''[103]

The doorway is filled with incoming cool air,
In the restful hall evening shadows appear.
The strings are as swift as flowing waters
The tune partakes of the purity of autumn winds.
Fingers pluck the song ''Fly in the Morning,''
How chilling is their rendition of ''Nighttime Cries.''
The Perfect Man treats as equal himself and all things,
He uses this music to delight high-minded feelings.

The scene evoked in the opening couplet is reminiscent of the ideal setting for *qin* playing envisioned in Xi Kang's rhapsody, emphasizing as it does the evening coolness and quiet hall. The phrases ''flowing waters'' and ''autumn winds'' in the next couplet may be puns on tune titles. The phrases are tune titles, to be sure, yet they seem to be used in these lines more in their literal sense, as analogies for qualities perceived in the music. ''Perfect Man'' is again an echo of a term and human figure that is featured in Xi Kang's *qin* rhapsody. The assertion about ''treating as equal'' likewise harks back to the song contained in Xi Kang's piece, as it also makes unmistakable the intellectual orientation of the player-recluse. The ''high-minded feelings'' are, then, those of freedom from the burden of ordinary emotions, that is, the ''feeling'' that transcends feeling. Interestingly, the pieces named in the third couplet have strong associations of human emotions. The first song originates in Du Muzi's complaint, and the second conveys the joy He Yan's daughter felt when a raven's cry at night portended that her father would be released from prison.[104] Yet, in the context of Xiao Que's poem, the emotional aspect of the songs is irrelevant and is glossed over. The songs are mentioned here simply as tunes that, through their convincing mimicry of avian images and sounds, are conducive to the cultivation of a mood of unworldly high-mindedness.

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[103] Xiao Que, ''Tingqin shi,'' *Bei Qi shi* 北齊詩, in *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao shi*, 2.2279.

[104] See Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji* 60.872.

Although the two modes of reacting to and representing *qin* music diverge sharply, they sometimes converge in a single poetic treatment of the instrument. In each of the following early Tang works, by Liu Yunji and Liu Xiyi, respectively, the primary interest lies precisely in the tension between the two uses of the *qin*.

劉允濟　詠琴

昔在龍門側　誰想鳳鳴詩　雕琢今爲器　宮商不自持
巴人緩疏節　楚客弄繁絲　欲作高張引　翻成下調悲

Liu Yunji, ''On a *Qin*''[105]

Long ago it grew beside Dragon Gate,
Who can imagine that time of phoenix songs?
Today it has been carved and crafted into an instrument,
And does not control its own *gong* and *shang* modes.
A man of Ba slowly fingers the wide intervals,
A traveler from Chu plucks the closely-spaced strings.
Wanting to play a lofty, expansive tune,
It produces instead the sadness of a low, vulgar song.

劉希夷　夏彈琴

碧山本岑寂　素琴何清幽　彈爲風入松　崖谷颯已秋
庭鶴舞白雪　泉魚躍洪流　予欲娛世人　明月難暗投
感歎未終曲　淚下不可收　嗚呼鍾子期　零落歸荒丘
死而若有知　魂兮從我游

Liu Xiyi, ''Playing the *Qin* in Summer''[106]

The emerald hills are, as always, high and quiet,
How pure and remote is my plain *qin*!
As I begin to play ''Winds enter the Pines,''
On cliffs and valleys it is already autumn.
A courtyard crane dances to ''White Snow,''
Stream fish jump the flowing waters.

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[105] Liu Yunji, ''Yong qin,'' *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩, 12 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 63.745.

[106] Liu Xiyi, ''Xia tanqin,'' *Quan Tang shi* 769.8726. I am assuming that the alternate attribution to Liu Xiyi is correct, rather than the attribution to Liu Jian, about whom nothing is known.

I yearn to delight men of the world,
Moon-bright pearls should not be thrown in the dark.[107]
But sighing commences before the tune ends,
Tears fall and will not stop.
How regrettable! Zhong Ziqi
Went in his decline to a desolate grave.
If in death you yet hear my call,
Oh Soul, come amuse yourself with me!

Both poems treat the issue of rival and, ultimately, incompatible approaches to *qin* playing. The particulars differ, but the authors' standpoints are the same: each holds that *qin* music is debased when a player or listener uses it to indulge his sentimentality. In the first poem, it is the instrument itself, or rather the paulownia wood from which the instrument has been made, that is abused by such crude appropriation. The opening lines refer nostalgically to the pristine setting in which the wood grew. There, phoenixes, birds known to nest in paulownia trees, produced an ideally pure form of music. The theme of subjugation is broached in the next couplet, anticipating the predicament posed in the final lines: the music that the wood, as instrument, now produces is at odds with its wishes and true nature. The two figures referred to in the third couplet exemplify what is to the author the "low" musical tradition. Owing to a literary allusion, the phrase "man of Ba" connotes popular song.[108] "A traveler from Chu" refers to Qu Yuan or persons like him who have been forced from their homeland. The phrase suggests someone who is forlorn and lonely. By joining these two allusions, Liu Yunji indicates that, to his mind, melancholy *qin* music is vulgar. This judgment is made even more explicit in the concluding couplet.[109]

In the second poem, it is the player, not the *qin* material, whose values and intentions are thwarted. This poem features an "*un*knowing listener,” who reacts inappropriately with sighs and tears to the player’s music. It helps to know that “Winds Enter the Pines” is a *qin* piece believed to have been written by Xi Kang.[110] It has, as we would expect, a cooling influence, bringing relief from the summer heat. The player is operating very much in the Xi Kang tradition, and intends to use his music to delight his companions. But the unidentified friend or friends has the wrong reaction. He allows the music to move him to sighs and tears rather than to serene obliviousness. Disappointed with this reaction, the player longs for Zhong Ziqi, the knowing listener, who never would have so badly misconstrued the intent. The word *you* 游 “to amuse, to roam about” in the final line is aptly chosen. It evokes the spirit and mood to which the player-poet aspires.

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[107] That is, it is a shame to waste such music on people who do not properly understand it. The language is from *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 51.2350.

[108] The full version of the phrase is *xiali Baren*, and the allusion is to Song Yu 宋玉, "Dui Chu wang wen," *Wen xuan* 45.2a.

[109] I take the phrase *xia diao* to mean "low" in both senses, that is, placed low in the musical registar and vulgar. See the definition and other examples of the phrase adduced in *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典, ed. Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風 (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 1987-), 1:330b.

Strictly speaking, each poem contains an element that is at odds with Xi Kang’s ideals or understanding. Xi Kang would not have spoken of “the sadness of a vulgar song.” That phrase, locating the emotion in the music, contradicts his beliefs. Likewise, in principle at least, Xi Kang should not object to the tearful reaction that takes place in Liu Xiyi’s poem, since he recognizes such a reaction, given that it is the release of pent-up feelings, as a legitimate listener’s response. But these are small discrepancies. More to the point is that each poem is clearly founded upon a conception of the uses of *qin* music that echoes Xi Kang’s “Rhapsody on the *Qin*” and was surely influenced by it.

Owing to the perceived connection between *qin* playing and quietism, the instrument came to be a favorite of Daoists and Buddhist monks. In Tang poetry the *qin* is frequently mentioned as a possession of such a person. In a poem about listening to the *qin* playing of a Daoist, “Recluse Zhang,” Chang Jian 常建 says that the music has cleansed away all his cares and makes him too want to renounce the world:

稍覺此身妄　漸知仙事深　其將鍊金鼎　永矣投吾簪

I gradually realized the folly of this life,
Slowly I understood the profundity of immortality pursuits.
I shall acquire a furnace for refining gold

---

[110] See Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji* 60.876.

And throw aside forever my official's hairpin.[111]

Li Bo also wrote about the cleansing effect of hearing a *qin*, in this case, one played for him by a Buddhist monk:

李白　聽蜀僧濬彈琴

蜀僧抱綠綺　西下峨眉峰　爲我一揮手　如聽萬壑松
客心洗流水　餘響入霜鐘　不覺碧山暮　秋雲暗幾重

Li Bo, "Listening to Jun, a Monk from Shu, Play the *Qin*"[112]

A monk from Shu, cradling Green Pattern,
Westwardly descends from Omei Peak.
As soon as he begins to move his hands for me
It is as if I hear pines in ten thousand valleys.
This traveler's heart is washed by flowing waters,
The lingering aftertones partake of the frosty bell.
Before I know it, it is dusk on the emerald hills,
How many layers of dark autumn clouds are there?

"Green Pattern" was the name of Sima Xiangru's *qin*.[113]

In Li Bo's verse occasionally the poet himself is the player of the *qin*, but more often the player is an esteemed friend, as here, who is unworldly and transcendent. Moreover, that transcendence itself is shown in part by the man's affinity for the *qin*. By extension, the *qin* is also one of the key possessions of the "immortal" (*xian* 仙), who figures so prominently in Li Bo's verse. In one poem, an immortal descends to a mountain peak on a colored phoenix and presents Li Bo with a "purple-jeweled *qin*," a hallmark of the immortal's identity. This *qin*, the poet is quick to assure us, is not of "this world."[114] Elsewhere, Li Bo is fond of mentioning the one legendary immortal who was named for his skill on the instrument, Qin'gao 琴高.[115]

Yet, because of the persistence of emotive associations, the very notion of a monk or recluse playing music, even refined *qin* music, might be problematic. A poem attributed to Liu Yuxi addresses the issue head-on, if only to insist that with this particular monk there is no problem:

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[111] Chang Jian, "Zhang shanren tan qin," *Quan Tang shi* 144.1454.

[112] Li Bo, "Ting Shu seng Jun tan qin," *Quan Tang shi* 183.1868.

[113] See Fu Xuan 傅玄, "Qin fu," *Quan Jin wen* 全晉文, in *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo liuchao wen* 45.5b.

[114] Li Bo, "Ni gu," no. 10, *Quan Tang shi* 183.1863.

[115] For example, in Li Bo, "Jiuri dengshan," *Quan Tang shi* 179.1832.

劉禹錫　聽琴(一作聽僧彈琴)

禪思何妨在玉琴　眞僧不見聽時心　秋堂境寂夜方半　雲去蒼梧湘水深

Liu Yuxi, "Listening to a *Qin*" (alternately: "Listening to a Monk Play the *Qin*")[116]

Why can't meditation coexist with a precious *qin*?
A true monk does not show a listening heart.
The autumn hall is quiet, the night half over.
Clouds go to Cangwu, the Xiang River runs deep.

It is obvious from the last line that the piece the monk plays is one of several associated with the Consort of the Xiang, that is, the wife (or wives) of Emperor Shun, who died on the Xiang River after her husband died at Cangwu while on an imperial progress through the southland.[117] Naturally, the pieces connected with the Consort had predominantly sorrowful associations, as is evident from the words that numerous poets set to them.[118] This monk, then, is playing music that was generally perceived as sad. His listeners, intimated in line two, on hearing the sad music, inevitably show sadness in their faces. The player, however, being a true monk who is fortified by meditation, is not saddened by the sad music he plays. He neither *shows* (reading 見 as *xian* 現) the same sort of reaction his listeners display, nor does he, presumably, experience their feeling either. In this poem, no one is criticized for having the "wrong" response to music. Player and listeners both respond as they should, although their responses differ. The opening lines accept that *qin* playing is inherently at odds with the state of mind to which a monk aspires. Yet monks who are mentally disciplined will be able to immerse themselves in this contrary activity without being affected by it.

A well-known work by Han Yu figures in the subset of poems on the *problématique* of monks and music:

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[116] Liu Yuxi, "Ting qin," *Quan Tang shi* 365.4110.

[117] See Guo Maoqian, *Yuefu shiji* 57.825.

[118] See the poems quoted in ibid., 57.825–27,

韓愈　聽穎師彈琴

昵昵兒女語　恩怨相爾汝　劃然變軒昂　勇士赴敵場
浮雲柳絮無根蒂　天地闊遠隨飛揚　喧啾百鳥群　忽見孤鳳凰
躋攀分寸不可上　失勢一落千丈強　嗟余有兩耳　未省聽絲篁
自聞穎師彈　起坐在一旁　推手遽止之　濕衣淚滂滂
穎乎爾誠能　無以冰炭置我腸

Han Yu, "Listening to Reverend Ying Play the *Qin*"[119]

The affectionate whisperings of a young boy and girl,
In fondness or anger they call each other "dear."
Abruptly, it changes to the heroic,
Brave warriors charging to the field of battle.
Floating clouds of willow fluff, blown from the stamen
Across the vast sky and earth, drifting as they will.
The raucous cries of hundreds of birds,
Then a phoenix all by itself.
It scrambles upward, inch by inch, to the highest point,
Slipping, abruptly it falls a thousand fathoms and more.
Oh, ever since I've had ears,
I've never known how to listen to strings or pipes.
But once I began to hear Reverend Ying play,
I've remained transfixed at one side.
Suddenly, I wave my arm to stop him,
Gushing tears have soaked my robe.
Ying! You really can play,
But don't fill my belly with your ice and coals!

The phrase "ice and coals" (*bingtan* 冰炭) has an interesting history. It is used in *Han Feizi* as a metaphor for people or ideologies that are mutually incompatible and should not be brought together ("in the same container") because they will destroy each other.[120] The author of "Seven Remonstrances" (2nd century B.C.) uses the phrase to characterize the chills of his sickly body and the righteous outrage in his heart.[121] Tao Qian uses it to evoke the war that ''duty and profit'' wage against each other within the official's breast. He distinguishes his own idyllic life in retirement with that of officials who are constantly tortured by this conflict between the ideals of government service and the lucrative opportunities it offers for self-advancement.[122]

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[119] Han Yu, "Ting Yingshi tan qin," *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 韓昌黎詩繫年集釋, ed. Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), 9.1005. The poem is also translated and discussed by Stephen Owen in *The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han Yü* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 235–39.

[120] *Han Feizi jishi* 8.27.498 ("Yongren") and 19.50.1085 ("Xianxue").

The phrase ''ice and coals'' has a special application in Daoist and Buddhist writings. It is used to characterize the emotional turmoil of the unenlightened man, who has not left behind feelings of pleasure and anger. Passions afflict him, alternately freezing and burning him like ice and coal placed in his innards. The phrase is twice used this way by Guo Pu (276–324) in his commentary on *Zhuangzi*, and again by Bo Juyi in a poem on *Laozi*.[123] It was also readily adapted in Buddhist texts. The phrase occurs in a sixth-century treatise on repentance and, later, in a devotional verse on enlightened ''joy'' in a Northern Song sutra: ''Take leave of love and root out vexation / Ice and coals will not mix in your mind.''[124]

To avoid the ''ice and coals'' of worldly passions is precisely what the Daoist True Man and the Buddhist devotee seek to do. But Han Yu says that Reverend Ying's music has placed these contraries in his belly. Jestingly, he protests and calls upon the monk to stop playing. We recall that, for Liu Yuxi, the idea that a monk would play stirring music was potentially troublesome and required some defense. Surely, Han Yu's ending is lightly ironic and humorous; it too turns on the perceived incongruity of a monk playing this type of emotionally-charged music. Han Yu locates the undesirable passions in himself, but a reader might easily connect them back with the player from whom they, as music, issue. The exaggerated image of Han Yu's tears and the extraordinary action of interrupting and waving the performance to a halt also suggest that Han Yu has more in mind than he chooses to broach openly. This monk does not seem to have been a close friend, since this is the only reference to him in Han Yu's poetry collection. Reverend Ying and his *qin* are also the subject of a poem by Li He. That second mention of the cleric, coupled with the less than friendly way that Li He ends his poem, has led one of Han Yu's commentators to observe that this monk, with an exceptionally large *qin* in tow, evidently went about in search of well-known literati in the capital and asked them to write poems about his musical skills.[125] This makes it easier to understand why Han Yu, even while obliging the monk, would have included a gentle rebuke.

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[121] ''Qi jian'' 七諫, *Chu ci zhangzhu buzhu* 楚辭章句補注, ed. Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1965), 13.151 (''Zibei'').

[122] Tao Qian, ''Za shi,'' no. 4, *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian* 3.203.

[123] Guo Pu 郭璞, as quoted in Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Taipei: Heluo tushu chubanshe, 1974), 2B.4.154 and 4B.11.372 (the first of these is cited in Liao Yingzhong's commentary on Han Yu's poem, quoted in *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 9.1007); Bo Juyi, ''Du *Daode jing*,'' *Quan Tang shi* 460.5244.

[124] *Zhufa jiyao jing* 諸法集要經, ed. Richeng 日稱, *Taishō Tripitaka* (*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 太正新修大藏經), 85 vols. (Daizo Shuppansha, 1922–36), no. 728, 17:514b. The earlier instance is in *Cibei daochang chanfa* 慈悲道場懺法, in *Taishō Tripitaka*, no. 1909, 45:952a.

Han Yu elsewhere wrote disparagingly of another Buddhist's aspirations to excel as a calligrapher in cursive script. The monk Gaoxian should know, Han Yu asserted, that greatness in this style of calligraphy depends on having the right mind, that is, a mind that observes the world and is filled with all manner of emotions ("delight and anger, despair, sorrow, pleasure, resentment, and admiration"), stimulated by the things observed. "These passions blaze inside" the writer until he finally expresses them in calligraphy. Such was the case with Zhang Xu, the eighth-century paragon of draft-script calligraphy. But since Gaoxian is a Buddhist, Han Yu explains, he is committed to cultivating a mind that is placid and passionless. How would he ever to able to create striking calligraphic images?[126] For the monk-calligrapher, Han Yu predicts failure because of Buddhist prohibition against the emotions. For the monk-musician, whose playing provokes Han Yu to weep copiously, Han Yu perceives success, but then, in effect, questions the appropriateness of a monk playing so movingly. Though they differ in particulars, both of Han Yu's pieces treat the convergence of the issues of Buddhism, art, and the emotions.

It happens that Han Yu's friend, Meng Jiao, wrote repeatedly about the *qin*'s ability to instill melancholy in the listener. Meng Jiao is interested in the power of music to transform a scene, investing it with a totally different feeling. This power is seen in the following poem, which Meng wrote when being entertained by the governor of Linru, referred to in other poems as Vice Censor Lu. The *qin* player was evidently the governor's relative, perhaps his son.

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[125] It is Fang Shiju who suggests this, see *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 9.1005. Li He's 李賀 poem is "Ting Yingshi qin ge," *Quan Tang shi* 394.4441.

[126] Han Yu, "Song Gaoxian shangren xu," *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注, ed. Ma Tongbo 馬通伯 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 4.158. Cf. the translation by Charles Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 222–23.

孟郊　夜集汝州郡齋聽陸僧辯彈琴

康樂寵詞客　清宵意無窮　徵文北窗外　借月南樓中
千里愁併盡　一樽歡暫同　胡爲戛楚琴　淅瀝起寒風

Meng Jiao, ''At Night We Gather in a Studio at the Ruzhou Prefectural Office to Hear to Lu Sengbian Play the *Qin*''[127]

Kangle esteems men of letters,
There is boundless meaning on this fine evening.
Poems are solicited outside the northern window,[128]
We borrow the moonlight in the southern hall.
The sorrows of a thousand miles are all put to an end,
As briefly we share one pitcher of wine.
Why must he strum a *qin* of Chu,
Summoning a cold wind and the patter of rain?

Kangle is Xie Lingyun, who had also served as governor of Linchuan (Ruzhou), in Jiangxi. Meng Jiao praises his host by implying that his esteem for men of letters (like Meng Jiao himself) is no less than that of the famous earlier governor.

There is a suggestion of annoyance in the concluding lines, as Meng demands to know why Lu Sengbian has to spoil the refined pleasures of the moonlit evening, when all worldly sorrows had just been forgotten. (''*Qin* of Chu'' has the same connotations of lugubrious music that we have seen associated with the region earlier.) But rather than take this as a real objection, since it is unlikely that Meng would presume to be so contrary, it is preferable to understand the final lines as a pretense of annoyance that everyone is supposed to see through and whose real purpose is to pay the *qin* player a compliment. Lu's *qin* playing is so accomplished that it completely transforms the mood, even the weather. Naturally, the emotions that have been inspired by the music, that is, the nostalgia and longing for home that are associated with a ‘‘*qin* of Chu,’’ will have been one of the pleasures of the evening.

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[127] Meng Jiao, ''Ye ji Ruzhou junzhai ting Lu Sengbian tan qin,'' *Quan Tang shi* 376.4215.
[128] Reading the variant *chuang* for *shan*.

Meng Jiao also wrote an intensely personal poem about hearing a *qin*, a poem that seems to be much less influenced by social constraints and affectations.

孟郊　聽琴

颯颯微雨收　翻翻橡葉鳴　月沈亂峰西　寥落三四星
前溪忽有琴　隔林寒琤琤　聞彈正弄聲　不敢枕上聽
迴燭整頭簪　漱泉立中庭　定步屐齒深　貌禪目冥冥
微風吹衣襟　亦認宮徵聲　學道三十年　未免憂死生
聞彈一夜中　會盡天地情

Meng Jiao, ‘‘Listening to a *Qin*’’[129]

The soughing patter of light rain subsides,
Rustling leaves of the chestnut-oak sing out.
The moon sinks behind jumbled peaks in the west,
Three or four stars faintly appear.
Abruptly a *qin* is tuned by the stream in front,
A cold tinkling of notes from across the grove.
As I hear the player begin a proper piece,
I do not dare to listen from my pillow.
I retrieve the lamp, straighten my hairpin,
Having rinsed my mouth, I stand in the courtyard.
I come to a halt, the teeth of my sandals rooted,
My face is trance-like, my eyes dim.
A light wind blows on my lapel,
Still I can discern every change of mode.
I’ve studied the Way for thirty years,
But cannot escape worrying over life and death.
As I listen to the playing all night long,
I know every emotion in Heaven and earth.

Qin music rekindles emotions in Meng Jiao, reminding him that, in spite of his efforts at ‘‘self-cultivation,’’ he is still not immune to human feelings. A monk who has perfected himself may indulge his fancy for the *qin* while remaining unaffected by its emotional force. A monk who is perceived to convey emotions through *qin* playing may be criticized for engaging in an activity unbecoming to his calling. But in this poem the *qin* in effect reaffirms Meng Jiao's identity as a layman, a non-monk or non-sage, because it reveals that he is not above the emotions of "Heaven and earth." Although he implies that his reaction to the music betokens his failure to attain the Way, there is ultimately a strong sense of the rightness of Meng Jiao's reaction in the closing lines. The *qin* music calls Meng Jiao back to what he really is. It has a socializing, humanizing effect—precisely the opposite effect it had upon the lay speaker in the poem by Chang Jian quoted above.

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[129] Meng Jiao, ‘‘Ting qin,’’ *Quan Tang shi* 380.4261.

Tang poets not only produced poetic elaborations of the issues and rival aesthetics inherited from earlier centuries; they also entered a new stage in thinking and writing about *qin* music. They redefined the *qin* as an ancient instrument and its music as "classical." They then sharply differentiated the *qin* from all other instruments and song, largely on the basis of their perception that *qin* music is not sad. At the same time, *qin* playing becomes an indispensable part of literati diversions, and the *qin*, whether played or not, a ubiquitous accouterment of the refined scholar. No doubt, certain elements in this conception of the *qin* had a lengthy prior history, and might even be traced back to Xi Kang or earlier. After Xi Kang, many writers contributed to the gradual refinement of the ideal. Influential among these was Tao Qian. His references to personal involvement with the instrument, though few, are vivid and memorable, and in time they had a telling effect upon the literati cult of the *qin*. In the first centuries of the Tang dynasty, the poets Meng Haoran and Li Bo further promoted the cultivation of a special literati affiliation with this instrument. But it was only later in the Tang that the diverse motifs and associations with *qin* playing truly coalesce. The clearest and most insistent articulation is in the poetry of Bo Juyi. Even in crude, numerical terms, which scarcely tell the entire story, the frequency with which Bo Juyi mentions the *qin* in his poetry is noteworthy. In his entire poetic works Han Yu mentions the *qin* four times, Du Fu some twenty times, Wang Wei eight times, Du Mu seven times, Li He ten times, and Li Shangyin eighteen. In Bo Juyi's poetry collection, the *qin* is mentioned over 160 times.[130] Admittedly, Bo Juyi left more poems than these other poets, but not so many fold more to make these numerical differences meaningless.

The following poem will serve to introduce Bo Juyi's treatment of the instrument:

白居易　廢琴

絲桐合爲琴　中有太古聲　古聲澹無味　不稱今人情
玉徽光彩滅　朱弦塵土生　廢棄來已久　遺音尚泠泠
不辭爲君彈　縱彈人不聽　何物使之然　羌笛與秦箏

Bo Juyi, "An Abandoned *Qin*"[131]

Silk and paulownia wood combine to make a *qin*,
Within dwell the sounds of antiquity.
Ancient sounds are mild and flavorless,
Not matching the preferences of men today.
The jade studs' luster has faded,
Dust gathers on the red strings.
Although abandoned long ago,
Its lingering notes are still clear and bright.
I will not decline to play it for you,
But even if I play, no one will listen.
What has caused it to be so?
The Tibetan flute and the western zither.

The important contrasts in Bo's musical world are clearly delineated here: the *qin* is antique and refined, while other instruments are not (and their origins are not "central" either). Other instruments pander to the vulgar popular tastes of his degenerate age, while the *qin* embodies pure ancient values.

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[130] These figures are based on published concordances to the poets' collected works. The Du Fu concordance is *Du Fu shi yinde* 杜甫詩引得, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement no. 14, ed. Hung Ye (rpt., Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Co., 1966). The Han Yu concordance is *Kan Yu kashi sakuin* 韓愈歌詩索引, ed. Hanabusa Hideki 花房英樹 (Kyoto: Kyōto furitsu daigaku jimbun gakkai, 1964). Concordances for other poets mentioned are separate volumes in the series *Quan Tang shi suoyin* 全唐詩索引, ed. Quan Tangshi suoyin bianji weiyuan hui (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju and Xiandai chubanshe, 1991-).

[131] Bo Juyi, "Fei qin," *Quan Tang shi* 424.4656.

Bo Juyi is rarely so exclusionary and elitist as he sounds here. He is, of course, a great enthusiast of all sorts of music, including that of song, flutes, and other stringed instruments. At the same time, Bo Juyi clearly draws a sharp distinction between the emotive import of the *qin* and all other instruments, thus changing the issue we have been examining. The argument over whether *qin* music conveys ''sadness'' or not gives way in Bo Juyi to a distinction between the antique ''mildness'' of the *qin* and the emotional power of the voice and other instruments. It is true that Bo's attitude towards the *qin* has, in certain respects, a long prior history. Still, he stands out as perhaps the first literatus to write voluminously about the *qin* and yet put the ''problem'' of its long-standing connection with sadness behind him. Bo Juyi does not write about rival uses of the instrument or about performances where, expecting one mood, he is disappointed to encounter another. For him, the *qin* has only one use, and that use differentiates the *qin* from all other instruments.

When writing about music other than *qin* music, Bo Juyi stresses its ability to convey melancholy feelings, as in the following lines: On a *pipa*: ''Luckily, my heart has no worries or cares / Otherwise, how could I tolerate those strings you play?'' (賴是心無惆悵事, 不然爭奈子弦聲); ''Tears of pearls moisten the golden pick / The rougefaced student can't control her feelings [as she plays]'' (珠顆淚霑金捍撥，紅妝弟子不勝情).[132] On a flute (*di*): ''Anyone who hears this evening's music might turn white-haired / How much more so a man with much sorrow and little sleep'' (此時聞者堪頭白，況是多愁少睡人).[133] On a fretted zither (*zheng*): ''As the string stiffens, the fingers grow mute, and the music stops / There are yet deep feelings, ten thousand kinds'' (弦凝指咽聲停處，別有深情一萬重);[134] ''But today since my head is already turned snowy, / You can play all you want, even until dawn'' (如今格是頭成雪，彈到天明亦任君).[135] On a female singer: ''In the next boat there was a singer / The words she sang brought utmost sorrow'' (鄰船有歌者，發詞堪愁絕);[136] ''I truly know every note of 'Enjoying the World' is joyful / But an old sick man hearing them can't avoid sorrow'' (誠知樂世聲聲樂，老病人聽未免愁).[137]

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[132] Bo Juyi, ''Pipa'' and ''Dai pipa dizi . . . ,'' *Quan Tang shi* 442.4948 and 455.5154.

[133] Bo Juyi, ''Jiangshang di,'' *Quan Tang shi* 437.4850.

[134] Bo Juyi, ''Ye zheng,'' *Quan Tang shi* 442.4937.

[135] Bo Juyi, ''Ting ye zheng yougan,'' *Quan Tang shi* 442.4947.

[136] Bo Juyi, ''Ye wen gezhe,'' *Quan Tang shi* 433.4791.

No matter how the issue is phrased, no matter what the conceit or rhetorical device, the association between music and deep, melancholy feelings is ubiquitous in Bo Juyi's treatment of non-*qin* music. It may be the performer or the listener who is thus affected. It may be some identifiable circumstance or something unknown that stirs up the emotion. Regardless, the element of emotion will be present and it will be referred to, even featured, in Bo Juyi's poetic treatment of musical performances. However much Bo Juyi may protest that he cannot bear the burden of sadness, it is evident that for him and other listeners in his poems the emotional content is what makes music appealing and worth hearing. The best-known lines by Bo Juyi that exemplify this way of representing music are, of course, the following ones from ''Pipa Song'' 琵琶引:

千呼萬喚始出來　猶抱琵琶半遮面　轉軸撥弦三兩聲　未成曲調先有情
弦弦掩抑聲聲思　似訴平生不得意　低眉信手續續彈　説盡心中無限事

Called to a thousand, ten thousand times
  before she came out,
She still held a *pipa*,
  half concealing her face.
As she turned the pegs and touched the strings,
  sounding two or three notes,
Even before she began a proper piece
  there was already feeling.
Then every string that she plucked
  was note after note of longing,
As if she were voicing complaint
  of a lifetime of hopes unfulfilled.
Her brow lowered, she set her hands free
  to play on and on,
Fully expressing innumerable cares
  that lay in her heart.[138]

In writing about the *qin*, Bo Juyi departs from this doleful characterization of music. To begin with, he himself is apt to be the player of any *qin* that is mentioned in his poetry. The *qin* is a prized personal possession belonging to him or to a dear friend. It is not exclusively played by professional entertainers. *Qin* music, moreover, brings quiet joys to the poet's mind, not heart-rending sorrow, and dispels his concerns rather than instilling new ones: ''When a single note enters my ear / Ten thousand cares leave my mind'' (一聲來耳裏, 萬事離心中).[139] The *qin* is a source of serene pleasure: just as wine dulls the senses, the *qin* relaxes and eases the heart.[140] Indeed, if it were not for wine and the *qin*, how could one ever experience pleasure? (無琴酒不能娛也)[141] Also, whether or not it is in the forefront of the poet's thinking, the tranquil pleasures of the *qin* are regularly informed by some sense of identification with ''the ancients'':

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[137] Bo Juyi, ''Ting ge liu jueju: Leshi,'' *Quan Tang shi* 458.5212.
[138] Bo Juyi, ''Pipa yin,'' *Quan Tang shi* 435.4821.

> 人情重今多賤古　古琴有弦人不撫
>
> Men today value the present
>   and mostly look down on the past.
> The antique *qin* has strings
>   but no one plays them.[142]
>
> 抱琴榮啓樂
>
> Holding his *qin*, he has Rong Qi[qi]'s pleasure.[143]
>
> 自古有琴酒　得此味者稀　祇因康與籍　及我三心知
>
> *Qin* and wine there have been since ancient times,
> But few men have captured this flavor.
> There's only [Xi] Kang and [Ruan] Ji
> And me, three knowing friends.[144]

Although Bo Juyi claims affinity with these earlier figures, in several respects his representations of *qin* music differ from theirs. Unlike the earlier writers, he sharply distinguishes two musical traditions and then goes on, in various pieces, to show his keen appreciation for both. The image and significances of the *qin*-playing predecessors that Bo Juyi invokes and, by extension, the relationship that he establishes with the early history of the instrument are also unlike what we find in prior writers. Xi Kang and Tao Qian may mention some famous *qin* players of antiquity, such as Bo Ya and Rong Qiqi, and *qin* pieces believed to be composed by such paragons as Emperor Shun or Music-master Kuang, but they do not make such a strong claim to befriend these figures across the centuries. Bo Juyi's pretensions of affinity with "ancients" are more pronounced, and in a sense they are more credible too. After all, Xi Kang's exemplars were not literati poets like himself, whereas Bo Juyi can plausibly assert that he and Xi Kang, or Ruan Ji (the drinker), or Tao Qian, are like-minded.[145] This feeling of affinity is symptomatic of a larger issue. The *qin* for Xi Kang is not ancient, and its music not "classical," in the way that they are for Bo Juyi. This is partly a matter of emphasis. The motif of the *qin* as an antique instrument, though discernible in Xi Kang's rhapsody, is not stressed. In Bo Juyi's poetry, antiquity is a key aspect of the *qin*'s identity and appeal. There is also a qualitative aspect to the difference in conceptions of the instrument. As we have said, Bo Juyi can point to literati predecessors in a way that Xi Kang cannot. Consequently, Bo Juyi can superimpose himself on the past with an apparent ease and nostalgia that are unavailable to Xi Kang. For Bo Juyi, emotionally and psychologically, the past history of the *qin* is familiar, inviting, and accessible. Xi Kang's representations of the *qin* suggest more of a disjunction with its prior history. In light of these contrasts, one can speak of Bo Juyi creating a new aura of "classicism" around the *qin*.

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[139] Bo Juyi, ''Hao ting qin,'' *Quan Tang shi* 446.5010.
[140] Bo Juyi, ''Jiangshang dui jiu,'' no. 1, *Quan Tang shi* 447.5035.
[141] Bo Juyi, ''Chishang pian,'' preface, *Quan Tang shi* 461.5249.
[142] Bo Juyi, ''Wu xian tan: wu Zheng zhi tao ya ye,'' *Quan Tang shi* 426.4697.
[143] Bo Juyi, ''Luoyang youyu sou,'' *Quan Tang shi* 453.5122.
[144] Bo Juyi, ''Dui qin jiu,'' *Quan Tang shi* 453.5123.

Another element is new in Bo Juyi's treatment of the *qin*. We may broach it by noting, first, that the *qin* is personified as his "companion"(*ban* 伴). Several times Bo Juyi speaks of his *qin* this way: it is his "only" companion, his "old" companion, and the companion that never leaves his side.[146] His poetry also has images of the poet keeping intimate company with this "companion." He sits with it, runs his hand over its surface (not to play it, just to touch it), mentions it as the only thing he keeps in his lap, or rests his head on it as a pillow. This last statement occurs several times.[147] Now, neither Xi Kang nor Tao Qian, though deeply fond of the *qin*, speak of using it as a pillow. Such a line would, in fact, sound out-of-place in either man's works. There is a chatty informality about Bo Juyi's relationship with his "companion" that is not evidenced in pre-Tang writings. This informality is, admittedly, characteristic of Bo Juyi's treatment of many subjects. But with the *qin* this tone also reflects Bo Juyi's effort to cultivate a meaning and role for the instrument that is not quite like what it had been before.

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[145] For Bo and Tao and Tao's *qin*, see, for example, Bo Juyi, "Xilao zichao," *Quan Tang shi* 460.5242.

[146] See, for example, Bo Juyi, "Yi Weizhi shang Zhongyuan," "Dui qin dai yue," "Xian wo ji Liu Tongzhou," *Quan Tang shi* 439.4883, 449.5056, and 456.5165.

The *qin* becomes for Bo Juyi part of his poetic persona. It is important to understand that the *qin* is not, in fact, Bo's only companion, or the only essential element in this persona, despite what he sometimes claims. The *qin* is regularly paired in his poetry with other pervasive facets of his life: his *qin* and his books; his *qin* and wine; his *qin*, wine, and poetry (sometimes dubbed his "three friends"); his *qin* and the moon, or his *qin* and tea.[148] Such associations may not be entirely new, but the weight they acquire from frequent mentionings is distinctive. This cluster of valued presences in the poet's life goes far towards providing a self-image and identity. It is tempting to say, indeed, that if the *qin* were given the sort of unique preference or priority that it had in Xi Kang's life, it would be unsuited to or interfere with the cultivation of Bo Juyi's literary persona. It is only when the importance of *qin* playing is restricted that it can function as one of a cluster of literati pursuits and thus be subsumed as part of a poet's "voice." Bo Juyi does not take the next step of naming himself after the cluster of things and pursuits upon which his persona is constructed. Subsequently, Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) would do just that, calling himself the "Retired Scholar of Six Ones" (*liuyi jushi* 六一居士), the *qin* being among those six "ones" that he possessed. But Bo Juyi was clearly moving towards such a self-conception and self-presentation as a poet.

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[147] Bo Juyi, "Qiuzhong you yishi," no. 2, "Chishang zuo," "Xianwo you suosi," no. 1, "Zuizhong de shangdu qinyou shu . . . ," *Quan Tang shi* 424.4668, 453.5127-28, 455.5151, 459.5231

[148] Bo Juyi, "Zeng Hou Sanlang," "Dui qin jiu," "Beichuang sanyou," "Shi jiu qin renli duo boming. . . ," "Dui qin dai yue," and "Qin cha," *Quan Tang shi* 446.5011, 453.5123, 452.5115, 455.5151, 449.5056, and 448.5038.

No doubt, many writers had a hand in elevating the *qin* as the epitome of literati ''classicism'' in music, with its characteristic emotional reserve. Yet Bo Juyi's role in this transformation is particularly visible. If my argument here about Bo Juyi having an important role in the coalescence of this conception of the *qin* is correct, it helps to explain a Northern Song dynasty remark that has itself attracted no end of attention. That remark concerned Han Yu's poem, translated above. We have it directly from Su Shi that once his mentor, the elder statesman Ouyang Xiu, asked him which *qin* poem, of all those written, he considered the best. Su Shi replied that Han Yu's poem was the finest. Ouyang said, ''Certainly, that poem is marvelous and scintillating. But it shouldn't be called 'Listening to a *Qin*.' It should be called 'Listening to a *Pipa*.''' Taking the cue from his teacher, Su Shi rewrote Han Yu's poem to describe a *pipa* performance.[149]

Ouyang's statement implies that Han Yu's poem makes the *qin* sound like its less refined cousin in the string family. Presumably, the poem does this by drawing attention to the emotionally-charged nature of the music, with its sudden and violent shifts of mood, evoked by Han Yu's exuberant imagery. Naturally, Han Yu has had his defenders in the debate that was instigated by Ouyang's remark, and which lasted through ensuing centuries. At least one of those who came to Han Yu's defense has pointed out that many of Han Yu's lines were anticipated by lines in Xi Kang's ''Rhapsody.'' Since Han Yu's words have such an incontestable pedigree, the argument goes, it was unjust for Ouyang to criticize Han Yu.[150] The point here is not to take sides in the disagreement over whether Han Yu's poetic description of the *qin* is apt or not, but rather to call attention to the timing of his description and the criticism of it. By the Northern Song dynasty, the *qin* had become, in the minds of leading literati, so elevated and genteel that Han Yu's poetic celebration of the stirring qualities of its music, written two centuries earlier, ceased to be acceptable. The Northern Song argument does not concern preferences in types or styles of *qin* playing, but turns on a distinction between the *qin* and other more "vulgar" instruments. This new perception is consistent with Bo Juyi's treatment of the *qin* and other instruments, and must derive in part from it. Among Northern Song literati who were avid connoisseurs of *qin* playing, Ouyang stands out as being particularly close to Bo Juyi in the importance that the *qin* had in his life and poetic persona. Like Bo Juyi, Ouyang wrote frequently about the *qin*. Taking Bo Juyi's classicism a step further, Ouyang was even a connoisseur and collector of antique instruments.[151] Given his many statements about the quiet pleasures of *qin* playing, Ouyang's disapproval of Han Yu's poem is completely in character.

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[149] See Su Shi's preface to his ''Shuidiao getou,'' no. 4, in *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞, ed. Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋, 5 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 1:280. A different version of the same exchange is recorded in Hu Zi 胡子, *Tiaoxi yuyin conghua* 苕溪漁隱叢話, ''qianji,'' 16.105, quoting *Xiqing shihua*.

[150] See the comments of Fang Shiju, quoted in *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 9.1008.

To conclude, I now return to the question of the expressive function of the *qin* and use it to introduce what might be considered the final stage (up through the Northern Song dynasty) in changing literati conceptions of the instrument. One understanding of expressiveness in music is represented in the following interesting remark attributed to Wang Xizhi (b. 309):

> Xie An once said to Wang Xizhi, "In middle age I suffer from sorrow and joy (*aile* 哀樂). Whenever I take leave of a relative or friend, these feelings plague me for several days." Wang replied, "When one's years are advanced, this is a natural occurrence.[152] It is just because of this that I rely on flutes and stringed instruments to give shape and expression to such emotions. Yet I constantly worry that the younger generation will realize this, and that it will diminish their own enjoyment [of music]."[153]

Now that Xie An has reached the age when many of his friends and relatives, particularly his parents, presumably, have become elderly, he is constantly concerned about their health. He is grieved when they fall ill or die, and he is joyful when they recover or are free of complaints. His apprehensions are particularly acute whenever he parts from a loved one, for he never knows if he will see the person again. Wang Xizhi seems to know immediately what Xie An is talking about, and reveals his own method of coping with these emotions: he plays music to express them and to restore his equanimity. The language in the final clause is ambiguous. It might be translated either as above or as ‘‘this has diminished *my* enjoyment [of the music that I play].’’[154] Whichever way the clause is read, the concluding remark implies that music played by older folks is enjoyed but not really understood by the young. Young people like the music for all the feeling it conveys, but they do not appreciate that inside the hearts of the players the feeling is genuine and distressing. However construed, Wang Xizhi's comment makes clear his belief in the emotive basis of music and the expressive utility of performing it. His reason for playing music is much like that which we naturally attribute to Qi Liang's wife or any of the other sad musicians mentioned earlier. He plays because the emotions inside him are so unbearable that he must play. Wang, furthermore, believes that the act of playing will soothe his heart.

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[151] See Ouyang Xiu's "San qin ji," *Jushi wai ji* 居士外集 13, in *Ouyang Wenzhong gong ji* 歐陽文忠公集, in *Guoxue jiben congshu* 國學基本叢書 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1933), 8.13.16–17. The essay is translated in my *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–72)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 221–22.

[152] I am paraphrasing the phrase "mulberry and elm" (in *nian zai sang yu* 年在桑榆). The meaning of this phrase is clear enough even though its derivation is obscure. See Richard Mather, *A New Account of Tales of the World* 2.62, p. 61 n. 1.

[153] Liu Yiqing, *Shishuo xinyu* 2.62, p. 121. Cf. Mather's translation, *A New Account of Tales of the World* 2.62, p. 61.

Xi Kang plays the *qin* for different reasons. It is true that in his ‘‘Rhapsody’’ Xi Kang mentions that *qin* music may serve to ‘‘purge anxieties’’ from the mind, as it may also ‘‘release and express hidden feelings’’ (發洩幽情).[155] But he says this with regard to the *qin*'s effect upon listeners, not about its effect upon the player. Music, he asserts, ‘‘guides and nourishes the [players'] spirit and breath, and it manifests and harmonizes the emotions and intent.’’[156] We recall, again, the image of Xi Kang's idealized musician, playing his *qin* on a moonlit night in winter: the instrument is cool to the touch and the mind is serenely vacant. This is not a mind that is troubled and eager to express its anxieties in music.

Throughout the school or tradition that follows Xi Kang's lead, there is a reluctance to dwell on the expressive function of *qin* playing. Instead of presenting the goal of playing as a cathartic release of emotions, this tradition emphasizes the instrument's ability to elevate the mind of the player to a heightened state, a condition of harmony that leaves emotion behind. Not uncommonly this school speaks of the playing serving initially to banish mundane concerns, or to cause them to be forgotten. "I delight in my books and my *qin*," writes Tao Qian, "to dispel my worries"; "As soon my ears hear it," says Bo Juyi, "the *qin* puts me at ease."[157] But this dispelling of anxieties is just the preliminary effect. The real joy and purpose of *qin* playing is what ensues, when the player achieves the heightened "self-attainment" (or self-abandonment) celebrated by Xi Kang. As we have seen, in time it was this notion of *qin* playing that became the literati ideal and was invoked to differentiate the *qin* from song and other instruments, which *were* used to vent feelings and frustrations. Literati had no objection if other instruments conveyed "ice and coals" from the belly of a player to those of the listeners. Indeed, they tended to view such expression as precisely what made a performance "good." But for a *qin* they had higher expectations.

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[154] This is the way Richard Mather understands the line, see ibid., p. 61.

[155] Xi Kang, ‘‘Qin fu,’’ *Xi Kang ji jiaozhu* 2.106.

[156] Ibid., 2.83.

Nevertheless, a prose farewell written by Ouyang Xiu appears to be a blatant contradiction of this characterization of the literati *qin*. It will be useful to examine the composition and to consider what its departure from these expectations means.

Ouyang Xiu, "A Farewell to Yang Zhi"[158]

I used to be afflicted by hidden worries. Even when I withdrew and lived at leisure, I could not rid myself of them. Later, I studied the *qin* with my friend Sun Daozi, who taught me several melodies in the *gong* mode. In time I found such pleasure in playing that I was no longer aware of any affliction in me.

Qin playing is a minor art. Yet, at its finest, the player alternates between the grand *gong* mode and the delicate *yu* mode: he begins with a sudden flurry only to change the style abruptly. The quick sections are rushed along with piercing notes; the slow sections present harmonious melodies with a calm air. The music resembles boulders cleft asunder from sheer cliffs, springs flowing forth from high mountains, or wind and rainstorms arriving in the dead of night. It is like the moans and sighing of bitter men or lonely women, or the amicable mating calls of birds. In the depths of its worries and expansiveness of its thought, it is the sounds handed down from Emperor Shun, King Wen, and Confucius. In its grief and frustration, it is the sighs of the orphan Boqi and the loyal minister Qu Yuan. Its pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy move men's hearts profoundly, and yet it is pure, antique, and

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[157] Tao Qian, "Gui qulai xi ci," *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian* 5.267; and Bo Juyi, "Qin jiu," *Quan Tang shi* 449.5068.

[158] Ouyang Xiu, "Song Yang Zhi xu," *Jushi ji* 居士集 42, in *Ouyang Wenzhong gong ji* 5.42.57.

> mild. In this respect, it is no different from the speeches of Yao and Shun, the writings of Confucius, the worries and concerns of *The Book of Changes*, or the complaints and censure in *The Book of Songs*. Those who are able to listen to it with their ears and replicate it with their own hands, capturing its harmonies, will be able to vent their pent-up feelings and give form to their worries and thoughts. In this way they shall attain to the most moving kind of expression known to mankind.
>
> My friend, Mr. Yang, is devoted to learning and a man of refinement. Several times he has been recommended for the doctor of letters degree but has not achieved his desire. He finally entered the bureaucracy through his hereditary privilege and has now been appointed sheriff in Jianpu. Confined to a district several thousand miles away to the southeast, his heart is bound to be disturbed. Furthermore, since he was young Mr. Yang has suffered from numerous afflictions. Doctors and medicine are in short supply in the south, while the food and customs there are unwholesome. If a person with many afflictions and a disturbed heart dwells in a place whose ways are unwholesome, how long will he be able to endure his discontent? A *qin*, however, should help him to pacify his heart and cure his afflictions. That is why I have written this account of *qin* music to present to him as he leaves. I also invited Sun Daozi over to toast Mr. Yang and to give him a *qin* as a parting gift.

We may seem to have come full circle with a composition such as this one. It reintroduces the emotions into literati treatments of the *qin*, and does so without a hint of uneasiness over them. Is this not just a reformulation of Wang Xizhi's belief that music's primary function is to rid us of feelings by expressing them? And, by the same token, is this not the same point of view that Xi Kang strenuously opposed?

I suggest that it is neither of these but instead a further development of the stage of literati treatments of the *qin* exemplified in the works of Bo Juyi. In most of his poems and prose writings about the *qin*, Ouyang Xiu represents the instrument and his relationship to it and its music much as Bo Juyi does.[159] It is certainly a part of his poetic persona, the instrument he plays in moments of serene solitude. Yet Ouyang is also capable, as we see here, of acknowledging—even embracing—the sentimental approach to *qin* music. Of course, the situation is special: sympathizing as he does with Yang Zhi's circumstances, Ouyang feels obliged to emphasize all the reasons that the underappreciated Yang has to be unhappy. Nevertheless, the really interesting aspect of his farewell to Yang Zhi is that Ouyang combines the two approaches to *qin* playing into what for him is a seamless whole: "Its pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy move men's hearts profoundly, and yet it is pure, antique, and mild." *Qin* music fulfills both ideals at once. There is no contradiction between them, no problem to be addressed or avoided.

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[159] In addition to the prose piece by Ouyang cited in n. 142 above, see, for example, his "Ye zuo tanqin yougan ershou cheng Shengyu," *Jushi ji* 8, in *Ouyang Wenzhong gong ji* 2.8.45, and "Jiangshang tanqin," *Jushi waiji* 居士外集 1, in *Ouyang wenzhong gong ji* 6.1.47, and "Song qinseng Zhibo," *Jushi waiji* 2, in *Ouyang Wenzhong gong ji* 6.2.62.

For Ouyang Xiu, so thoroughly has the *qin* been transformed into a classical instrument, and so completely has it become the epitome of scholarly high-mindedness, that it is permissible now to speak openly of its emotive expressiveness. Why? Simply put, because these are the right emotions, indeed, they are the right person's emotions. There is no more apprehension over improper or unseemly sentiments appearing in the music. After all, Ouyang can be confident about the prospective player. He is a personal friend, a man of learning and refinement. He is not just anybody and certainly not a "musician," professional or otherwise. We might at first suppose that the *qin* had always been conceptualized this way. As we have seen, however, when Xi Kang wrote about the instrument he did not do so this way, nor did Tao Qian, nor did Bo Juyi.

A thousand years earlier, Ma Rong had asserted in his "Rhapsody on the Long Flute" that the different musical qualities of the instrument were analogous to different philosophies or personality traits (such as the "unconstraint" of Daoists, the "directness" of Confucianism, the "resoluteness" of the warrior Meng Ben, and the "expansiveness" of the rhetorician Fan Ju).[160] The analogy is an ambitious figure of speech, but it does not resonate with any noteworthy conception of the instrument, either at the time or later in the literati tradition. Ma Rong's statement is a strained attempt to validate flute music by referring it to well-established intellectual schools. There is a similar passage in Xi Kang's "Rhapsody," as mentioned earlier, in which he likens aspects of *qin* music to exemplary human traits. This also has limited impact or credibility. Ouyang Xiu's comparison of *qin* music to the content and sentiments in the Confucian classics is of a different order altogether. Ouyang's analogy does resonate: it is informed by widespread literati attitudes towards the *qin* that were by his day fully formed and persisted thereafter. The instrument and its music had been transformed by the elite culture that claimed it and enshrined it. Therefore, it made a certain sense, by Ouyang's time, to describe the traits and sentiments of *qin* music in terms of the Confucian classics. The *qin* had been so thoroughly classicized by then that these analogies came to have a degree of plausibility. Naturally, there had never been a problem over the recognition of emotions in the classics. These were, of course, the sanctioned emotions, experienced in proper measure, and were above reproach. Now they could be imputed to *qin* music as well, without any apology or prevarication.

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[160] Ma Rong, "Changdi fu," *Wen xuan* 18.8a–b.