

# Between the Heaven and Human Beings: On the Idea of the Heaven and the Transformation of Poetry in the Mid-Tang Dynasty

LIU Shun, AN Jiaqi

Heilongjiang University, Heilongjiang, China

The relationship between the Heaven and human beings is a central issue in the transformation of Confucianism in the Mid-Tang Dynasty. The discourses on the Heaven by Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan, and Liu Yuxi helped to promote the transformation and greatly influenced the transformation in literature. The differences in the poetry among the three authors may also be interpreted from the perspective of their perceptions of the Heaven—Han Yu's discourse on the Heaven focused on the enemy-relationship between the Heaven and human beings, so his poems always showed tension and loss. Liu Zongyuan was interested in the alienation between the heaven and human beings, so his poems were more rational and placid than Han Yu's. However, Liu Yuxi's discourse on the Heaven paid attention to the positive influence of the Heaven on human beings, and most of his poems were filled with reason. The changes in the relationship between the Heaven and human beings lead to the broadened themes, innovated vocabulary, diversified styles, and varied fresh imageries. Likewise, the relationship between the Heaven and human beings established in the Song Dynasty led accordingly to a new type of literature different from the Tang literature.

*Keywords:* discourse on the Heaven, intellectual transformation, transformation in creative writing, relationship between the Heaven and human beings

## Introduction

Most histories of Chinese literature hold the idea that the Mid-Tang Dynasty is the era of Confucian transformation and literary transformation. To some extent, leaders of Confucian transformation are also leaders of literary transformation. However, it seems that the high coincidence of identity has not bridged the intrinsic divergence on transformation narration. When researchers describe this historical change, they usually focus on the concept level such as “writings are for conveying truth” or the value level like “essays are for times”—“Confucian transformation” is replaced by “return to Confucianism” potentially, and the research of literary transformation pays more attention to individual experience or skills but not ideological transformation. Transformers become double-men walking between thought and literature. Researchers seem to emphasize “the purity of literature” prematurely when they face to the history of ancient Chinese literature, and maybe the emphasis on the boundary consciousness by disciplinary differentiation has weakened the researchers’

---

LIU Shun, A Post-Doctor Fellow, Professor, School of Literature, Heilongjiang University, Heilongjiang, China.  
AN Jiaqi, Lecturer, School of Literature, Heilongjiang University, Heilongjiang, China.

consciousness of transboundary. However, indicating boundary usually means ignoring the intrinsic association between the possibility of thought and literary transformation. The appearance of thoughts is due to problems, and ideological transformation mainly manifested on the transformation of the way of understanding about “core issue”, which is the important impetus to literary transformation. The fundamental performance of the Confucian transformation in the Mid-Tang Dynasty is the transformation of the Heaven-human beings relationship (Ge, 2001), so it is reasonable to analyze the literary transformation of the Mid-Tang Dynasty under the relationship of the Heaven and human beings.

### **Enemy-Relationship Between the Heaven and Human Beings: Strange Experiences in Han Yu's Literature**

An-Shi Rebellion had broken the balance of nationality, region, and stratum structured by the Tang Dynasty; “Celestial phenomena means occurrences in humans' life” had lost its effectiveness. Although interaction between the Heaven and human beings still has a strong influence in the universal knowledge-belief world and political life, but the elite class felt the advent of a new ideological era acutely. Since the second half of the eighth century, mainstream knowledge, thought, and belief need a more stable logical starting point (Senoo, 2007):

The nature gradually deteriorated with humans' corruption: reclaiming wastelands, cutting down trees, digging wells and caves, building pavilions for tours, excavating ponds, chopping wood to get fire, melting metal to get weapons. These behaviors hurt the nature of all things on earth seriously. In my opinion, persons who could damage degenerates doing things above are meritorious; those conniving with degenerates to damage the nature are the enemies of heaven. (Liu, 2000, p. 442)

Defining the relationship between the Heaven and human beings is the logical starting point of Confucian value system, so the new relationship between the Heaven and human beings is the determinant of Confucian transformation. The citation written by Han Yu thought extremely that the Heaven and human beings killed each other, which had seldom seen before. Although complaining or even cursing the Heaven was seen in the previous literature, it had not subverted the normal understanding of the relationship between the Heaven and human beings. Han Yu's expression could naturally be regarded as a frustrated person's attitude, but this kind of explain neglected and smoothed the differences in historical effects. Han Yu was agreed on establishing orthodoxy and excluding of Buddhism and Taoism. Corresponding to this, the researches on strange experiences in Han Yu's literature also stop at personality and experience, neglecting the deep influence of ideological transformation on literary writing. Despite the existence of original interaction between the Heaven and human beings, advocating strange experiences could still be regarded as a spontaneous display on the new relationship between the Heaven and human beings.

Enemy-relationship between the Heaven and human beings expanded the distance between the Heaven and human beings, and broke the “unity of heart and substance” in literary writing (Deng, 2009). Writers in Prime Tang could grasp the whole world in a moment; however, as for those in the Mid-Tang Dynasty, this kind of self-confidence had lost. Relying on individual experience and perception became the basic means of describing the object (Kawai, 2007, p. 79):

I heard the south of capital/surrounded by mountains. Seas on both east and west/having blurred images. *Shan Hai Jing* and *Local Chronicles*/not introducing these wonders. I tried describing the scenery/but worried about missing something. Nevertheless I can't control myself/just do a sketchy narration I wonder at the strange scenery/with countless

changes. Since I was relegated the year before last/I have the change to tour here. (Han, 2007, p. 432)

Though the poet wanted to describe the mountain in the south of the city, the south mountain kept refusing the poet's view. Even if he had a change to enter the mountain, the scenery he saw was only focused on details, and the sentence pattern "or as" made the poetry read like Fu. Nevertheless, Han Yu did not have the self-confidence of grasping the whole world which writers of Fu had, the description of details lacking a holistic perspective, which meant the poet lost in the complex scenes. Enemy-relationship replaced mutual induction between the Heaven and human beings in the poet's mind. Differentiation led to the strengthening of border consciousness, from which the poet achieved the sense of stability as another compensation for the fading of the whole world: "I look down the country/which just like dust focuses on the tip of the writing brush" (Han, 2007, p. 35)—Han Yu recognized that the world he lived was complicated and difficult to grasp. Despite he could imagine an external perspective in the world of ideas, the country that looked like dust still rejected the close observation from the poet. Under the frame of enemy-relationship between the Heaven and human beings, antagonism was the basic pattern:

Double Birds came far away/staying in Zhongzhou. One landed in the city/one landed on a rock. They could not go together/three thousand years passed in an instant. Double Birds met each other one day/keep on chirping all days. Animals was deafened by them/and shy to chirp. Those birds enjoying tweeting before/lowering their heads from then on; They were silence though sick/dying quietly. Thunder God told double birds' behaviors to God/all things need nourishment. Since the double birds chirped all the time/thunder God was afraid of thundering. Ghosts and gods felt dowdy and ugly/natural world didn't work. Plants demonstrated to punish double birds/so did insects. If double birds were not restrained/everything would be anxious. If double birds were not restrained/seasons would be abnormal. If double birds were not restrained/sunrise and sunset would be abnormal. If double birds were not restrained/the rule of heaven would be abnormal. Zhou Gong would not be respected/Confucius would loss his honor. God punished double birds/separating and imprisoning them. Then all the insects and birds/just started to tweet. Double birds were imprisoned/no chirping for introspection. They ate thousands of dragons in the morning/eating thousands of oxen in the evening. Drinking lots of river water in the morning/a great deal of sea water in the evening. Waiting another three thousand years/when double birds gather together again. (Han, 2007, p. 836)

When the double birds that were silent for three thousand years gathered together and started to sing, the original life rhythm of nature and even the human society unexpectedly lost their order. The double birds were against the force of nature and even the ethical order in the world. In the order makers and observers' opinions, the double birds were destroyers; however, from the poet's narration, they seemed to imply another possible order—"appearing every three thousand years" was similar as "the sage appeared every five centenaries". In the frame of enemy-relationship between the Heaven and human beings, the previous sanctity of the Heaven had come across the challenge of disenchantment:

I asked the Heaven/why do not treat human fairly. The Heaven said that "the Heaven, earth and human beings/being unrelated all the time. I hang the sun and moon/decorating all the stars. The sun and moon hurt each other sometimes/the stars collided with each other. I don't blame you/since I know it is not your fault." There are differences among everything/who could change them. Having a son/is not always a good thing. Fishes have so many children/whom parents have no energy to love. Many children become orphans/since their parents died. Owls eat mothers' cerebra/living based on mothers' death. Vipers give birth to babies/with great pain. Although the son is good/grass-inch heart cannot repay parents' kindness. If the son is bad/he is just like owls and vipers to hurt parents. So there's no need to be happy to have a son/and sigh with your son's death. (Han, 2007, p. 675)

Heaven and human had their own destinies, so it was a foolish view that the Heaven was holy and mysterious according to the theory of interaction between the Heaven and human beings. The Heaven with disenchantment was ugly and terrifying, but not a fabulous place. The difference between the Heaven and human beings was just spatial distance. Although the description of the deformed world did not start from Han Yu in the Tang Dynasty, Han Yu's literature was a mark of the conscious writing on the deformed world. Obviously, those views that the strange imageries in Han Yu's literature were due to his personality and experience were lack of depth. The transformation of relationship between the Heaven and human beings provided a special and deep visual angle. Because of the special visual angle on the Heaven and human beings, Han Yu's literature broke through the original theme space naturally and also created a kind of new aesthetic model: "Han Yu's poems are filled with talent, so a poem has thousands of changes. It is like great rivers roaring waves, and then returns to calm. His poems have amazing styles" (Chen, 1996, p. 1595). Because of the enemy-relationship between the Heaven and human beings, the value of humans had risen, and humans could fight against the Heaven with the power of life, which made the glory of life:

The caretaker of the temple understood God's thoughts/worshipping God devoutly. He held a jade cup to divine/saying the result was accurate. I was relegated to this wild place alive/having food and clothing has been fortunate. I don't want to be an official anymore/even though the blessing of God can't change my idea. I ascend a height in the temple at night/the stars and moon was covered by clouds. It is daybreak with monkeys' sounds and bell's ringing imperceptibly/the sun rises with chill from the east. (Han, 2007, p. 277)

The first year of Yongzhen, Han Yu travelled from Yangshan to Jiangling. During the time in Hengshan, he visited the temple there. The caretaker of the temple advised Han Yu to make a divination, but as an atheist, Han Yu refused the suggestion—"My life is not decided by heaven" showed strong self-confidence.

Current customs are not as unsophisticated as before. Disturbances still happened from time to time. So the emperor is not happy, and the prime minister is anxious. Although I am not wise enough, I just want to summarize the gain and loss for the prime minister, attracting the emperor's attention and securing an official position by doing this. If I could not achieve my desire, I will go back to farm, fishing as Jiang Ziya, caring about the affairs of state, studying classical works, and then write a classical work of the Tang Dynasty, being remembered by later generations. (Han, 2010, pp. 687-688)

As a poet, Han Yu tried to compete with Heaven on literature; and as a Confucian scholar, maintaining the Confucian orthodoxy was his lifelong pursuit. In the framework of the enemy-relationship between the Heaven and human beings, the winner was the setter of order. The sages in the pedigree structured by Han Yu were all those making orders for the world:

There were so many harmful things to humans in ancient times. Humans were taught Dao of living by sages. As emperors and hierophants, sages drove venomous serpents and wild beasts out, making common people in central mainland, making clothes resisted chilliness, making food resisting hungry, making houses because of being ill living outside. Craftsmen made tools for humans' living comfortably, businessman doing business for mutual exchange of needed products, physicians making herb medicines for curing diseases. People also laid down funeral to proclaim the love for the dead, making ceremony to maintain public order, making music to catharsis feelings, building countries to administrate humans' life, enacting the criminal laws to prevent humans' evils trying to look ahead at what might happen and be ready to handle it. Someone says that "robbers would not disappear until sages die; There were no dissensions without contrived orders." How ridiculous it is! If there had been no sages, human beings might have died out. Why do I say that? For human beings could not resist chilliness and hungry. (Han, 2010, p. 2)

Original individual was just like the chaotic nature, so a life needed to be modified and trained by classics such as *The Book of Songs* and *Shang Shu*, fostering one's moral character (Deng, 2013, p. 357). However, most of

people chased wealth and position, so people like Han Yu who fostered his moral character usually felt lonely. The enemy-relationship between the Heaven and human beings with its anamorphosis like confrontation between human beings and tradition caused his high sense of tension. The achievement of cherishing ego needed the help from self-irony instead: “Books I have read are heterogeneous. I ignore predecessors’ mocking on this behavior. Confucius ever bantered, and *The Book of Songs* said: ‘People good at bantering, must be gentle’” (Han, 2010, p. 562). In a world with differentiation between the Heaven and human beings, the poet had to understand things by self feelings. The space in daily life therefore became the starting point of literature—the literature in the Mid-Tang Dynasty began an era of going back home. Writers paid attention to the details and normality of life in the process of returning to self (Liu, 2013a); however, they could not find the effective channel to link the connect space and public space, so the literature in the Mid-Tang Dynasty always showed tension and loss.

### **The Alienation Between the Heaven and Human Beings: The Complaints and Loneliness in Liu Zongyuan’s Literature**

The first year of Yongzhen, Liu Zongyuan was relegated to Shaozhou, and then to Yongzhou, which was a desolation place at that time. In the last decade of his life, Liu Zongyuan almost lived in the wild south. Although it was a bitter blow for a person who wanted to make a contribution in political life, Liu Zongyuan’s literature achieved a great success in the south area. In the narrative on the literary history of the Tang Dynasty, the name of Liu Zongyuan belongs with that of Han Yu, and they had similar literature ideas. Despite that researchers have already been aware of the differences between Han and Liu in thoughts and literature, the exposition of differences still lack of stable logical starting point when they only concern about personalities and experience. Heaven Theory which had an enormous influence on Han Yu was written by Liu Zongyuan instead of Han Yu. Compared to Han Yu’s anger and determination, Liu Zongyuan seemed to be more peaceful and rational:

The Heaven is up and metaphysical, and the earth is down and yellow. Chaos is in the middle, and yin-yang caused chilliness and torridity. The frame of heaven and earth is just like a huge fruit. Chaos is just like a great carbuncle. The frame of yin-yang is like an enormous plant. Who has the power to reward and punishment? Being rewarded and punished are all the results of people themselves, which have nothing with the Heaven and earth. People complain about not blessed by the Heaven and earth are seriously wrong. (Liu, 2000, pp. 442-443)

Heaven was just like a melon, and had nothing to do with mankind. The meeting of the Heaven and human beings was accidental. The Heaven Theory made by Liu Zongyuan weakened the enemy-relationship between the Heaven and human beings; however, when the Heaven was regarded as the convergence of chaos, the aloneness of human beings would be intensified.

Yongzhou is in the southernmost of Chu, which is the same as Yue. I go for a walk with much scare when I feel tedious. There are vipers and bees in the open air, nothing in the open field. There are also monsters holding sand in the mouth and shoot it at a shadow in the river, and people shooting by their poisonous sand will fester. I therefore have no mood to appreciate the beautiful scenery when I meet them after the thrilling experiences above. (Liu, 2000, p. 801)

Although heaven bore no malice to human beings, the differentiation between the Heaven and human beings brought individuals a strong specific lonely feeling, which was hard to defuse. In the time in Yongzhou, Liu Zongyuan preferred to mark spatial locations in his travel notes. This way of writing was not to strengthen the readers’ understanding, it was, however, just an endeavor to avoid getting lost—the landscapes in his writings

were often too cold and cheerless to be stayed for a long time.

In the Confucian context discussing about the relationship between the Heaven and human beings, one should do his best (making the utmost efforts) and leave the rest to the Heaven (complying with destiny). Liu Zongyuan emphasized that the Heaven (destiny) was irrelevant to human beings (efforts), so human's efforts was praised compared with Han Yu improving human's value: "There are no birds in mountains/and no humans footmarks on the roads. An old man wearing straw raincoat and rainhat was on a tiny boat/fishing in the snow" (Liu, 2000, p. 1221). As a prototype in Li Sao, the fisherman was originally a hermit in troubled times, but Liu Zongyuan described him as a man having self moral fortitude, alone but not lonely. Er An said

The fisherman was a self metaphor to Lius. He was in a hopeless situation at that time and should had gone back, Nevertheless, is it because of the nostalgia for his official position that Lius still stayed here? Being an official was as tedious as fishing in the winter, which was a kind of fruitless labour. How could we imitate him? (Chen, 1996, p. 1595)

The statement above seemed to deviate from Lius' original intention. Qian Mu could be said to Lius bosom friend judging from his discussion on aloneness: "The Dao in life is advocated firstly by those alone men of noble character People understanding aloneness could really adopt community. A gregarious man must has the spirit of advocating aloneness. Aloneness is the origin of group Dao" (Qian, 2007, pp. 193-198). A alone person was neither a forbearer nor a hermit with aloofness in troubled times: "Some persons were ignored the chaos in the world, and took it for granted. They desired to achieve a long-life by alchemy, and didn't concern about others' lives" (Liu, 2000, p. 840). People who paid attention to their own body and moral uplift without thought of others were hard to be called men of noble character. A man of noble character should provide peaceful life to common people, which took understanding heavenly principles and tendency as the premise:

The rule of the Heaven is the order. Persons of virtue are in the upper strata and virtueless people are in the lower strata of society, which accord with the order. Now the system of enfeoffment can't guarantee that people in the upper strata are virtuous and people in the lower strata are virtueless. Can it be that sages made the enfeoffment? In my opinion, it is not sages who implemented the enfeoffment, but the tendency. (Liu, 2000, pp. 74-75)

Orders were key elements to heavenly principles, but there were complex situations that only sages could deal with. In the world with alienation between the Heaven and human beings, the order makers could only be sages. Similarly, individuals also need to make orders for the nature:

"Yongzhou was built nearly mountains actually, with weeds, rocks, snacks, fierce animals and poisonous plants inside. Mr. Wei ordered persons to weed the fields, make neat paths, decorate mountains and dredge the river courses. Since then, as a city, Yongzhou turned into a state of order gradually" (Liu, 2000, pp. 732-733). In the eyes' of Lius, the south was a wild place without orders, and Lius often acted as an order maker but not a traveller in his travel notes—the disordered scenery became orderly under his endeavor, and he could live an elegant life in the south that far away from core cultural circle. Orderly south meant the win of official north culture, and Liu Zongyuan made his name live in history by making orders for the south. In the frame of alienation between the Heaven and human beings, it was human beings who set orders for nature and themselves, so the feeling of nature was that of humans to some extent:

The suburb between Chu and Yue was surrounded by mountains/with steep terrain. The mountains were ups and downs/just like ramparts. The highs jostled for spaces/the lows became trenches. Just near the ground/and steeply rose. Bringing rains and wet the thick soil/causing fishy smell. The sun did not shine here/the cool place was cold. It was difficult to cultivate land on narrow farmlands/which brought great trouble to farmers. Brambles spread all over the

forest/besides tigers, leopards, jackals and wolves. If there were sages enlightening people here/which mountain could imprison us? (Liu, 2000, p. 64)

Compared with poets skilled in “feelings following with scenes” in Prime Tang, poets in the Mid-Tang Dynasty tried to write with “merging feelings with scenes and feelings lead scenes” (Jiang, 2013, pp. 112-113). Although it was a involuntary show but not a conscious attempt, as a kind of atmosphere of at that time, the way of “merging feelings with scenes and feelings lead scenes” was an effective footnote for the relationship of the Heaven and human beings. In *Fu of Imprisoned in the Mountains*, Lius wanted to be the leader in the relationship between the Heaven and human beings when facing the great sense of oppression bringing by numerous mountains. Nevertheless, in the era of feeling the world by individual perceptions, the Heaven with disenchantment still refused the watching from human beings:

Confucius said that the benevolent persons enjoyed mountains. Predecessors felt restrictive in public life, but not in nature. I am relegated to Hainan, hating the life surrounded by mountains and faraway from imperial court. In my eyes, the lovely plants are all trips. Moved by all of these things, I write *Fu of Imprisoned in Mountains*. Calling for Hermit written by Huainan Xiaoshan also thought that people could not stay for a long time in mountains, for a noble man far away from imperial court was a bad thing. Besides, I live in such a desolate place! (Liu, 2000, p. 63)

Liu Zongyuan’s poems were more calm and abstemious than contemporaries. Nevertheless, in the frame of alienation between the Heaven and human beings, the gap shut the frustrated poet out all the time. Lius ever said that “If only I could turn myself into hundreds of billions, everybody would be able to look at my hometown on the top of mountains”. But was there really a home waiting for Lius in the circumstance shutting humans out?

### **The Positive Influence of the Heaven on Human Beings: The Reason and Solemn and Stirring Experiences in Liu Yuxi’s Literature**

When Yuan Mei talked about the differences between Tang and Song Poetry, he said like this:

I have ever smelted an incense burner by gold, silver and copper. The gold and silver fused together, so does the silver and copper. But the gold and copper could not fuse, which just like men of noble character and petty men are totally incompatible. I associate with literature therefrom: the essays of Eight Great Literati of Tang and Song Dynasties are just like the gold or silver as well as the poetry of the Tang Dynasty. They are the best because they are pure without impurities. Essays and poetry after the Song Dynasty are just like hodgepodes with gold, silver, copper and tin. The writings are neither elegant nor concise...Liu Yuxi did not use the word “cake” in his poems, which indicated his identity of Tang poet. Su Shi thought that as a poet, Liu Yuxi was overcautious. However, Liu Yuxi’s behavior indicated his identity of Tang poet. Ordinary people always hold the idea that Tang Poetry is harmonious and Song Poetry is outspoken. However, there are also many outspoken poems in *Three Hundred Tang Poems Anthology*, and that is why the later writers imitating Tang Poetry are mediocre. (Yuan, 1982, p. 227)

Yuan Mei thought that the difference between Tang and Song Poetry was elegance and common. Liu Yuxi did not use the word “cake” in his poems, and the behavior refusing to write daily life in poems just indicated his identity of Tang poet. Compared to Lius, the poems of Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi are famous for their vulgar features, and Han Yu and Meng Jiao advocated strangeness and ugliness in their poems. On this account, both of the two kind of poetry were got rid of the traditional standard of Tang Poetry. The Mid-Tang Dynasty was a time that not only the aesthetics of elegance and symmetry was challenged by weirdness, but also a new order was built urgently. The emergency of Mid-Tang Dynasty meant the end of an ideological tradition. Even so, symmetry and order are necessary to normal life, and the reconstruction of order is born with

authority-challenged. So is the aesthetics:

Heaven produces millions of creatures, and mankind governs them. If the order works normally, people say that the Heaven has nothing to do with humans, we just living according to humans' orders; If the order works abnormally, they will say that the existence of the Heaven is insignificant for it could not restrict human's behaviors. It is not advisable to query the existence of the Heaven according to self obscurity or eminence. In my opinion, the Heaven doesn't have the capable to forecast peace or upheavals, so does human beings. Persons in times of peace and prosperity mainly concern about human's endeavor, ignoring the existence of the Heaven; Persons in troubled times have could not understand human beings' order, so they shift all the blame onto the Heaven. (Liu, 2004, pp. 68-69)

The explanatory power of relationship between the Heaven and human beings had declined in the Mid-Tang Dynasty, so the reconstruction of orders should also start from the Heaven-human beings relationship—the logical starting point of Confucian values. That was why the discussion on the Heaven and human beings became an influenced ideological event at that time. Compared to Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan's theories, Liu Yuxi's heaven theory emphasized positive connection between the Heaven and human beings. The Heaven which had no impact or even a negative impact on human beings in Liu Zongyuan and Han Yu's theories became the value basis of human beings again:

I sigh with emotion that a man of honour receipts yang energy from heaven all the time. If my moral conduct does not play its part to the full in the world, I should use the rest to repay the Heaven. (Liu, 2004, pp. 128-129)

The Heaven endowed humans with goodliness, so the process of life should adhere to the goodness from heaven, "using heaven's gift to made humans' order", creating orderly and warm life in the world. Liu Yuxi tried to reconstruct humans' order according to the train of thought that the Heaven and human beings were both different and interrelated. Because of the existence of the Heaven's goodness, Liu Yuxi's literature was a return to "beautiful women and sweet grasses" tradition although it related to ugly plants sometimes. Compared to Liu Zongyuan who always tried to endow the nature with order, Liu Yuxi was good at looking for themes from the nature:

Liu Yuxi's five characters poems included different styles. Such as "It was peaceful in late spring" "I read Dong Wu Yin in the past", mild and indirect, which imitated *Yue Fu*; "Gazing at the lake in an autumn morning" "recalling the past during the relegation period", which imitated Xie Lingyun; "Poultry swam on the water with the inverted image of waning moon", which imitated Shen Yue; "The Chu Lake was boundless", which imitated Lu Jue. The others were partial to reason or incompatible with prosody, showing off his literary talent overly *Mosquitoes Gathered Together* and *Mockingbirds*, had profound themes, which imitated *Yue Fu*. (Chen, 1996, p. 1595)

The interaction between the Heaven and human beings was the keynote of Liu Yuxi's literature on nature, which also decided its range of materials and aesthetic style. To some extent, Liu Yuxi who preferred to classical style was a hunker in the mainstream winds of Han Liu and Yuan Bai. Heaven Theory promoted the change of Liu Yuxi's literary creation, and contributed to his important position in the intellectual history.

The theory of interaction between the Heaven and human beings emphasized that observing the Heaven was contributed to deal with humans' affairs in the Han Dynasty. In Liu Yuxi's discussion on Heaven, the influence of celestial phenomena had gradually declined:

Someone said: "Xuanye, Huntian and Zhoubi were all theories discussing on celestial phenomena. Zou Yan thought the Heaven was high and mysterious. So did your theory have foundation?" I said: "My theory was not based on the theories mentioned above. Things run according to the same rules, no matter big or small; and the Heaven and human beings also follow the same rules. Thus, the basic principle of all things in the world was the same." (Liu, 2004, p. 72)



Human beings should be aware of the fundamental law of humans' affairs, and the rule of the Heaven was the guarantee of success. Hence the attraction of individual vicissitudes seemed to be weakened:

Wang Jun left Yizhou with hundreds of warships/which caused Jiling to fade.  
The long iron chain sank to the bottom of the river/a flag of surrender rose from the Stone City.  
Affairs of human life are full of vicissitudes/the landscape is the same as before.  
Now I lead a wandering life/and see reeds beside the stones swaying in autumn wind. (Liu, 2004, p. 300)

The old capital was still surrounded by stones/the lonely tidal water always beat the empty city.  
The moon in the east of the Huai River/over the parapet wall late at night. (Liu, 2004, p. 310)

In Lius poems, the most affecting part was not individual vicissitudes in histories, but the constant universe. Lius was skilled in conveying the indescribable cosmos by the contrast of motion and silence, more and less, large and small, permanent and changing, expressing the hope for life by “there are still many luxuriant trees in front of sick trees”. Although individuals could not get rid of sickness and death (Liu, 2013b), humans' life was a process of the new superseding the old, just like the verse “new leaves replaced by old ones” he wrote. Individuals should act following the rule of heaven: “The winged steed has been old, but the bound eagle still wants to fly high. I am touched and refreshed by boreas—In spite of being trapped by the world, I yearn for self-realization” (Liu, 2004, p. 18).

The *Qiusheng Fu* was written in the first year of Huichang, the time when Liu Yuxi had already come to the year before death. He is a person coming to his old stage still kept the positive attitude towards life. “Predecessors always felt sad in every autumn/I think that autumn is better than spring” (Liu, 2004, p. 349). Liu Yuxi did not show his strength deliberately in his literature, for his realization of rules of the Heaven and human beings had made him more peaceful and rational than Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan:

(In the first year of Yuanhe) I was relegated to Lianzhou, and then to Langzhou. Nine years later, the emperor ordered me to return to Lianzhou. Afterwards I was ordered to administrate Kuijun and Hejun, and later took up the post of Zhu Ke Lang Zhong to administrate East Capital. Next year, I was promoted to the position of Ji Xian Grand Secretary, and then to Suzhou prefectural governor, granted purple official suit and golden wooden-fish bag. Later I moved to Ruzhou to be prefectural governor and Imperial Minister concurrently, and went to Tongzhou to be Defense Minister for Palace of Eternal Spring. I was appointed as an Adviser of Crown Prince to administrate East Capital because of my foot disease. After a year's working as an official in Imperial Secretariat, I was appointed as Minister of Rites and an Adviser of Crown Prince simultaneously. At my age of seventy-one, I was sick and going to die, so I write my epitaph like this: I neither die when young nor live poor-lowly, which was blessed by heaven. Experiencing ups and downs, living a bumpy fate. Heaven bestows talent upon me, without the changes to give full play to it. (Liu, 2004, pp. 591-592)

The next year of Huichang, Liu Yuxi went to the end of his life after the ups and downs in officialdom. Although he sighed of no change to give full play to self talent, his endeavor of self-fulfillment showed his positive attitude towards life. By this kind of belief, his life was settled in the frame of positive influence of the Heaven on human beings.

### Conclusion

The transformation in the Mid-Tang Dynasty left the problem of reconstructing the balance between the Heaven and human beings to later intellectuals. Fortunately, intellectuals in the Mid-Tang Dynasty had already provided a direction. Since the theory of interaction between the Heaven and human beings could not solve the disordered problem, Han Yun, Liu Zongyu, and Liu Yuxi took the relationship between the Heaven and human

beings as the core issues of ideological circle again, and attached the importance role of human beings. The Mid-Tang Dynasty was a time that Confucianism paid attention to individuals, and the balance of the Heaven and human beings became stable under the endeavor of Song Confucian scholars, which centered on benevolence in the relationship between the Heaven and human beings (Huang, 1996, p. 2700). Corresponding to ideological transformation, literature in the Mid-Tang Dynasty also reflected considerations on the relationship between the Heaven and human beings. The expanding subject matters, innovative words, various styles, and strange imageries made the era of literary change colorful. However, literary development still needed to return to equilibrium. A new type of literature different from Tang literature gradually established its style with the complement of reconstructing the relationship between the Heaven and human beings.

### References

- Chen, B. H. (Ed.). (1996). *Collected appreciations of the Tang poetry*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Education Publishing House.
- Deng, G. G. (2013). *Literary styles—traditions and evolution of Chinese stylistics, section 23rd*. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House.
- Deng, X. J. (2009). Cultural characteristic of poetry in Prime Tang Dynasty. In X. M. Hu (Ed.), *Twenty lectures on Tang poetry* (pp. 45-46). Peking: Huaxia Publishing House.
- Ge, Z. G. (2001). *History of Chinese thought, part one, section one*. Shanghai: Fudan University Publishing House.
- Han, Y. (2007). *Chronology and proofreading comments of Han Changli's poetry*. Z. L. Qian, Annotated. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House.
- Han, Y. (2010). *Critical annotations to the collected works of Han Yu*. Z. L. Liu, Annotated. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Huang, Z. X. (1996). *Song Yuan Xue An*. Peking: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Jiang, Y. (2013). *The middle of ancient times—significance of the Mid Tang in poetry history, part sixth*. Peking: Peking University Publishing House.
- Kawai, K. (2007). *The changed face of the Zhongnan Mountain: Essays on Mid-Tang literature* (W. Z. Liu, J. Zhang, & Y. Jiang, Trans.). Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House.
- Liu, S. (April 2013a). Returning to self: Confucian scholars' response to crisis and Confucian transformation in the Mid Tang Dynasty. *Journal of Nanchang University*, 44, 32-40.
- Liu, S. (June 2013b). Literary transformation of Confucian scholars in Mid Tang Dynasty. *Journal of Anhui Normal University*, 41, 743-750.
- Liu, Y. X. (2004). *A collection of Liu Yuxi*. X. X. Bian, Annotated. Peking: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Liu, Z. Y. (2000). *A collection of Liu Zongyuan*. Peking: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Qian, M. (2007). *Blind words from late studies*. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Senoo, T. (2007). Han Yu and Chang'an—the transformation in ninth century. In W. Y. Du (Ed.), *Discussion on Tang history, ninth issue* (pp. 1-28). Xi'an: Sanqin Publishing House.
- Yuan, M. (1982). *Poetry commentaries from the Sui Garden*. X. J. Gu, Annotated. Peking: People's Literature Publishing House.