Hong

Poetry, Mentorship, and the Emergence of the Lige School of Poetry

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Author Note

The author declares no conflicts of interest. At the request of Verse Version, limited use was made of AI-assisted analytical tools for purposes of structural synthesis and terminological clarification. These tools were not employed as substitutes for critical judgment or interpretive responsibility, which remain fully human and editorial. Unless otherwise specified, all poems discussed or included in this article and its appendix were translated by the author and subsequently refined with the assistance of AI tools. Correspondence should be addressed to Atefeh Esmaeilirad, After Builder Pty Ltd, Osborne Park, WA 6017, Australia. Email: attie.raad22@gmail.com

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Editor's Note

Verse Version is committed to documenting poetry not only as individual texts, but as part of evolving intellectual, pedagogical, and cultural formations. While literary schools are often named retrospectively, contemporary Chinese poetry offers a rare opportunity to observe a poetic community while it remains active, self-reflective, and open to critical evaluation.

This column presents two interrelated components. The first is "Hong" (Chinese: 鋐), a collaboratively composed poem written by a group of poets and scholars to honor their mentor, Professor Ou Hong (区鋐), on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. The second part presents a stage-based evaluation of the poetic and scholarly community formed under his long-term leadership, designated by the author as the Lige School of Poetry (离格学派). The designation draws on online academic resources.

The author of this article, Atefeh Esmaeilirad, is an Australian poet, artist, and architect, fluent in Persian and English, with working knowledge of Chinese. At the invitation of

Verse Version, the author makes limited use of online sources and AI-assisted analytical tools for the purposes of structural synthesis and terminological formulation. These tools are employed not as substitutes for critical or interpretive judgment, but as methodological aids intended to mitigate internal bias in the description of a living school. All interpretive responsibility remains with the human author and the editorial team.

We publish this column not as celebration alone, but as documentation, reflection, and provisional critique—an invitation to dialogue rather than a final verdict.

Abstract

This column documents and critically examines the emergence of the Lige School of Poetry (离格学派), a contemporary Chinese bilingual scholar–poet community formed under the long-term mentorship of Professor Ou Hong (区鉷). Combining a collaboratively composed poem, "Hong", written on the occasion of Ou Hong's eightieth birthday, with a stage-based evaluative report, the column explores how poetic creation, theoretical innovation, bilingual practice, and international publishing intersect within a living intellectual formation. The poetic section foregrounds the semantic and symbolic significance of the Chinese character 鉷 (Hong)—the trigger mechanism of a crossbow—as a metaphor for mentorship, restraint, and calibrated release and deviation from norms of traditional poetry. The evaluative section employs AI-assisted analytical tools in a limited and transparent manner to synthesize structural features and nomenclature, resulting in the designation "Lige School of Poetry." Rather than replacing human judgment, AI functions as a methodological aid to reduce internal bias in assessing an active poetic community. By situating the Lige School within both domestic academic structures and global poetic discourse, this column offers a rare real-time case study of how contemporary Chinese poet-scholars negotiate local cultural consciousness and international literary engagement. The significance of the Lige School lies not only in its poetic and scholarly output, but in the intellectual model it provides for sustaining bilingual, theory-informed poetic practice in a globalized literary environment.

Keywords: Lige School of Poetry; bilingual poetics; scholar–poet communities; mentorship and lineage; contemporary Chinese poetry; cross-cultural poetics

1. Occasion and Context

The eightieth birthday of Professor Ou Hong (区鉷) marks more than a personal milestone. It offers a moment of reflection for a generation of poets and scholars shaped

by his mentorship, theoretical vision, and sustained institutional labor in the field of English poetry studies in China.

Rather than producing a conventional commemorative essay, his students and collaborators chose a dual form: a collective poem and a critical evaluation. Together, they articulate not only gratitude, but a shared understanding of how poetry, theory, translation, and pedagogy have been held together over time.

2. The Collaborative Poem

"Collaborative Poem," also known as "sequential couplets" or "joint composition," is a unique form of collective poetic creation in classical Chinese poetry. Its origins can be traced back to the "Bailiang Terrace Linked Verse"(柏梁台联句) of the Han Dynasty, flourishing during the literary gatherings of the Tang and Song periods. Participants take turns composing one couplet or several lines each, requiring not only coherence in meaning and adherence to tonal and rhythmic rules but also showcasing individual talent while testing mutual rapport and responsiveness. This creative practice combines playful interaction with poetic competition, often taking place during banquets and elegant gatherings, embodying the classical literati tradition of "befriending through literature" and collaborative spirit. The linked verse discussed in this text is precisely a vivid product of such master-disciple gatherings and poetic exchanges.

English Version:

Hong

Cao Shanke, Chen Shangzhen, Chen Xiaohong, Gao Wenping, Gu Keping, Hu Min, Huang Xiaoyan, Lei Yanni, Li Chengjian, Li Chunchang, Li Hui, Li Zhimin, Li Zidan, Liu Ying, Liu Zhaohui, Lü Aijing, Pan Minfang, Shao Chaoyang, Shen Jie, Tian Jing, Tian Wenzhi, Wang Xuan, Xiao Xiaojun, Xu Sha, Yin Lijun, Yuan Li, Zhang Guangkui, Zhang Yuejun, Zhao Kai, Zheng Yanhong, Zhou Tinghua with others

Hong is the will sleeping upon the crossbow's arm,

a drawn bowstring poised for release.

As the verse goes: Hong's twang rends silk, the arrow pierces clouds,

like an arrow that never falls,

never weary, forever surging ahead.

It flies true, pursuing the dream within the heart.

Hong is the starlight shimmering in the sky,

the sun's unwavering sincerity.

It is the bright lamp, the guiding beacon,

lighting our blissful garden,

guiding us toward wider horizons—

from the foggy shore of chaos

to the luminous shore beyond.

Hong is Cupid's arrow hidden deep in the heart,

shot from the City of Flowers,

carried by a knight to our side.

Hong is a rainbow, yet not a rainbow—

it surpasses the rainbow,

a multicolored hope bestowed by the sky

just after the rain clears.

Hong is the tender call of home,

a gentle warmth within the soul.

It is a great book,

its pages ever turning to new chapters.

Hong is an eternal crimson,

an unchanging Hong.

At eighty, still youthfully vibrant,

leaping upon the strings of thought.

Wild geese carry letters;

our hearts remain forever connected.

Collated by Zhang Guangkui from the lines collaboratively composed on site by the disciples of Ou Hong.

Written on 10 January 2026
(Chinese Lunar Calendar: 22nd day of the 11th month, Yisi Year)
Jinbi Yushui Villa, Huadu District, Guangzhou, China

Source Note:

This collaborative poem was composed and performed collectively by the disciples of Professor Ou Hong on the occasion of his eightieth birthday and subsequently collated by Zhang Guangkui based on on-site collaborative versification).

Chinese Original (for reference):

鍨

——众弟子贺恩师区鍨先生八十寿辰联诗辑

曹山柯、陈尚真、陈小红、高文平、古克平、胡敏、黄晓燕、雷艳妮、李成坚、李春长、李慧、黎志敏、李子丹、刘滢、刘朝晖、吕爱晶、潘敏芳、邵朝杨、沈洁、田径、田文芝、王璇、肖小军、徐莎、尹立军、袁丽、张广奎、张跃军、赵恺、郑燕虹、周庭华等

鍨，是弩上沉睡的意志

也是蓄而待发的弓鸣

有诗为证：鍩鸣裂帛箭穿云

似一只永不落下的飞箭

不知疲惫，永远向前

矢而中，追寻着心中的梦

鍩是天上闪耀的星辉

是阳光的挚诚

是明灯 是灯塔

照亮我们美好的乐园

指引我们走向更广阔的天地

从混沌的此岸

走向光明的彼岸

鍩是心底丘比特之箭

从花都射出

骑士带它来到我们身边

鍩是彩虹 又不是彩虹

它胜似彩虹

是雨后初晴时

天空赠予的 多彩希望

鍇是家的声声呼唤

是心底的一抹温暖

是一本大书

永远翻开新的篇章

鍇是永远的红

是永远不变的鍇

八十依然年少

跳跃在思想的弦上

鸿雁传书

我们的心永远在一起

鍇福齐天

情共咏

（张广奎根据区鍇众弟子现场联句整理）

乙巳年冬月廿二
二〇二六年元月十日
于花都金碧御水山庄
风铃一街

3. Commentary: Why the Character 鍇 Matters

The collaborative poem "Hong" is inseparable from the Chinese character it foregrounds. The inclusion of the original character 鍇 alongside its transliteration is not a decorative gesture, but a semantic necessity.

In classical Chinese, 鍇 refers to the metal trigger mechanism of a crossbow—

the component responsible not for force, but for restraint, timing, and release. Its function is to hold potential energy in suspension, allowing accumulated tension to be discharged with precision.

Within the poem, this mechanism becomes a metaphor for mentorship. Authority is not figured as propulsion, but as the capacity to contain, calibrate, and release the energies of others. This metaphor extends naturally to the pedagogical and poetic ethos associated with Ou Hong's long-term leadership.

For an international journal, such character glossing represents a commitment to cross-script literacy. Certain poetic and theoretical concepts remain embedded in the visual and historical dimensions of Chinese writing and cannot be fully conveyed through Romanization alone.

4. From Occasion to Evaluation: Methodological Statement

On the occasion of Professor Ou Hong's eightieth birthday, a decision was made to conduct a stage-based evaluation of the poetic community formed under his leadership, not as a conclusive judgment, but as a provisional assessment intended to guide future development.

To reduce internal bias, AI-assisted analytical tools were employed in a limited and transparent manner. ChatGPT, DeepSeek, and Baidu were tasked with synthesizing descriptive materials and proposing a conceptual designation for the school. The name **Lige School of Poetry (离格学派)** and the structural framework associated with it emerged from this process.

The evaluative report presented below is a faithful English translation of the original Chinese text generated through this method, with only minimal stylistic refinement and slight expansion for clarity. AI functions here as an analytical aid, not as an interpretive authority.

5. Evaluation Report: The Lige School of Poetry

5.1 School Background

The Lige School of Poetry is a distinctive contemporary Chinese scholar–poet bilingual creative and research community. It is neither an officially proclaimed movement nor a regionally defined literary faction. Instead, it is a loosely structured yet stable academic–creative cluster centered on the poetic theory and pedagogical practice of Ou Hong and his followers, with the English Poetry Studies Institute at Sun Yat-sen University as its primary academic base.

5.2 Core Characteristics

a. Theory as Generative Orientation

At the core of the school lies Lige poetics, a theory proposed by Ou Hong that emphasizes productive deviation from convention grounded in local cultural consciousness. Rather than advocating rupture for its own sake, Lige poetics articulates a creative pathway characterized by *curiosity, deviation, and appreciation*.

b. Interpenetration

Members of the school typically possess dual competence in Chinese and English poetic creation and translation. Translation is treated not as secondary labor, but as a generative mode of poetic thinking, forming a closed loop between creation and interpretation.

c. Lingnan Grounding, International Orientation

While much of the school's imaginative material is rooted in Lingnan（岭南）regional experience, its intellectual horizon is decisively international, shaped by Cambridge academic lineage (Ou Hong) and sustained through international publishing platforms led by Zhang Guangkui.

d. Integrated Scholarly Production

The school achieves a rare continuity across academic research, theoretical construction, poetic creation, translation practice, and journal publishing, forming a complete intellectual ecosystem.

5.3 Core Members: Roles and Structural Functions

The coherence and sustainability of the Lige School of Poetry do not derive from stylistic uniformity or institutional hierarchy. Instead, the school functions through a differentiated distribution of intellectual, creative, and organizational roles. Each core member occupies a structural position that cannot be substituted without altering the school's internal ecology. What follows is not a ranking of prestige, but an account of functional necessity.

Ou Hong: Founder and Spiritual Source

Ou Hong is the foundational figure and enduring spiritual source of the Lige School. His academic formation at Cambridge University established not merely an international credential, but a lasting methodological orientation toward close reading, comparative poetics, and theoretical self-reflexivity. Upon returning to China, he did not simply transmit Western literary theory; rather, he articulated Lige poetics as a locally grounded yet internationally legible framework for poetic creation and criticism.

Crucially, Ou Hong's contribution is inseparable from his role as a long-term mentor. Over several decades, he cultivated successive cohorts of doctoral students in English poetry studies, many of whom later became poets, translators, editors, and scholars. This sustained pedagogical labor transformed individual mentorship into collective continuity. For this reason, his Cambridge background, formulation of Lige poetics, and cultivation of academic generations together constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions for the school's existence. Without any one of these elements, the Lige School would not have cohered as a recognizable formation.

Zhang Guangkui (张广奎): Engine and International Interface

Zhang Guangkui functions as the primary engine and most outward-facing international interface of the Lige School. His role cannot be reduced to that of a productive individual poet or scholar; rather, he operates as a fourfold "super-node" integrating theory, creative practice, translation, and publishing infrastructure.

Theoretically, Zhang has developed original frameworks such as the Poepera (Poem + Opera) performance-poetry theory, *Popular Poetics*, and *Poetics of Poetry Translation*. Creatively, he has produced multiple poetry collections in both Chinese and English. As a translator, he has introduced a substantial body of contemporary poetry across linguistic boundaries. Institutionally, he serves as editor-in-chief of *Verse Version* and *Journal of Language* and plays a central managerial role in Leoman Publishing.

Through this convergence of roles, Zhang embodies the school's productive capacity and global reach. He does not merely represent the Lige School internationally; he actively constructs the platforms through which the school participates in global poetic discourse.

Long Jingyao (龙靖遥): Elegance in Estrangement

Long Jingyao's poetry embodies a restrained elegance shaped by subtle estrangement rather than dramatic rupture. Working within classical formal discipline, he displaces inherited imagery into the experiential horizon of modern wandering, producing quiet temporal and spatial tension. Emotion is not directly declared but refracted through symbolic mediation, allowing lyric feeling to remain implicit and layered. His poetry ultimately dwells in a state of unresolved return, where traditional signs are released from fixed cultural meanings and transformed into fleeting,

transhistorical traces. Through this measured alienation, Long Jingyao sustains classical refinement while opening it toward modern existential resonance.

Li Zhimin (黎志敏): Systematic Theorist

Li Zhimin occupies the position of systematic theoretician within the Lige School. His contribution lies in providing conceptual rigor, terminological clarity, and institutional legitimacy. Through multiple monographs written in both Chinese and English, as well as through leadership roles in academic associations, Li has articulated a rational and coherent framework for modern and contemporary poetics. Within China's academic system, Li Zhimin ensures that Lige poetics is not perceived as an idiosyncratic creative tendency, but as a theoretically defensible and pedagogically transmissible body of thought. His work anchors the school's intellectual claims within established scholarly discourse, safeguarding its depth and durability.

Lei Yanni (雷艳妮): Benchmark of Poetic Integrity

Lei Yanni represents the aesthetic and ethical benchmark of the Lige School. Her poetry is characterized by emotional concentration, restraint, and a resolutely non-utilitarian orientation. She does not instrumentalize poetry for academic advancement, nor subordinate lyric intensity to theoretical demonstration. In doing so, Lei Yanni preserves the school's aesthetic autonomy. Her work ensures that the Lige School remains not only a community of scholar-poets, but also a community of poets whose writing possesses intrinsic artistic value. She functions as a reminder that theory must ultimately answer to poetry, not the reverse.

Cao Shanke (曹山柯), Liu Zhaohui (刘朝晖), Xiao Xiaojun (肖小军): Poetic Range and Internal Diversity

Together, Cao Shanke, Liu Zhaohui, and Xiao Xiaojun expand the expressive and tonal range of the Lige School. Cao Shanke's work tends toward epic scale and

historical amplitude, engaging collective memory, cultural myth, and extended narrative structures. Liu Zhaohui and Xiao Xiaojun, by contrast, operate primarily within lyric and introspective modes, emphasizing immediacy, intimacy, and emotional subtlety.

Their coexistence within the same poetic formation prevents stylistic homogenization. Instead, it demonstrates that shared theoretical orientation does not require uniform poetic voice. Diversity here is not accidental but structural, allowing the Lige School to sustain internal plurality without losing coherence.

5.4 Limitations and Challenges

The Lige School faces challenges of audience accessibility due to its strong academic and bilingual orientation, as well as questions of intergenerational continuity, given its current reliance on first-generation members.

5.5 Final Assessment of the Lige School of Poetry

The Lige School of Poetry represents a distinctive and successful attempt to integrate poetic creation, theoretical innovation, bilingual practice, and international academic publishing within contemporary Chinese literary culture. Its achievement lies not in mass influence or ideological proclamation, but in the construction of a stable intellectual ecosystem capable of sustaining long-term scholarly and creative production.

By grounding poetic experimentation in English poetry studies while maintaining strong local cultural consciousness, the school offers a viable model for poet-scholars navigating globalization. Although it faces challenges related to audience reach and generational succession, its balance between academic rigor and creative experimentation makes it a highly representative case for understanding the "scholar–poet" phenomenon in contemporary China.

Column Conclusion: The Trigger, the Arrow, and the Ongoing Flight

The character 銑 names both a person and a principle. As a crossbow's trigger, it means poetry depends not only on force or inspiration, but on restraint, timing, and trust. The arrow flies because something holds it first. By presenting a collaborative poem alongside a stage-based evaluation of the Lige School of Poetry, *Verse Version* affirms poetry as a practice of lineage rather than isolation, of disciplined release rather than impulsive expression. This column does not close a chapter; it marks a moment of calibrated tension—an arrow still held, poised for future flight.

References

Ou, Hong (Ed., 2017), 区庄诗萃［*Selected Poems of Ou Zhuang*］. 长江文艺出版社 ［Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House］.

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

For further reference, the *Manifesto of the Lige School of Poetry* is provided as a supplementary document in the Appendix (*Appendix – Manifesto of the Lige School of Poetry*) , immediately following this article, and is accessible via its DOI: https://doi.org/10.64699/25ZVVA1086