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Mind and manifestation: The intuitive art (miaowu) of traditional Chinese poetry and poetics

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The Ohio State University, 1993
MIND AND MANIFESTATION: THE INTUITIVE ART (MIAOWU)
OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE POETRY AND POETICS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

by
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To Zhaozhao
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my adviser David Y. Ch'en and other members of the dissertation committee, Professors Yan-shuan Lao, Galal Walker and Xiaomei Chen. My thanks and gratitude are not only for their advice on the writing of this dissertation but also for their guidance and support throughout my graduate study at the Ohio State. For past several years, I have been benefited from my adviser Prof. Ch'en's profound knowledge in Chinese literature. He inspired my interest in classical Chinese poetry and, most importantly, my choice of critical methodology. Many of the ideas in this dissertation were shaped in the classes I took under him and our personal talks. I am particularly grateful to him for his critical advice on the presentation of this study and his painstaking reading of the drafts that has saved me from many embarrassing mistakes. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to Prof. Yan-shuan Lao. Prof. Lao's years of instruction in traditional Chinese learning, both in classroom and during our personal contacts, has not only made this dissertation possible but also enabled me to become a competent professional in the field. To Prof. Galal Walker I am particularly indebted for the direction under which my present research is proceeding. This dissertation would certainly be different without his insights that have put it within a larger and more significant framework. Thanks are also extended to Prof. Xiaomei Chen, whose extensive knowledge in modern Western literary theory and experience in East-West comparative literature have helped me produce a meaningful comparative discourse. I especially want to thank her and Prof. Walker for their
constant encouragement and support during the difficult time of my life when I
was writing this dissertation.

I would also like to express my thanks to Prof. Timothy Wong. Though he
was not directly involved with the instruction of this dissertation, his insights on
Chinese literary study and, especially, his rigorous training of the intellectual
minds of his students have contributed crucially to the accomplishment of this
project. Finally, I want to thank my son, Zhaozhao, for his understanding of
mother's preoccupation with work that took away almost all the precious time
playing with him. He may not understand it at present or for a while in his life, but
words are inadequate to explain Zhaozhao's contribution to the establishment of
my career as well as the completion of this dissertation.
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INTRODUCTION

As we all know, the question of how to transmit understanding across cultures lies at the forefront of Asian Studies. Surveying the field, David D. Buck has identified two "most commonly used" paradigms, those of cultural relativism and evaluative universalism, and stated that relativist interpretations "are advanced with much more frequency among Asianists."1 Correct as it may be when applied to other sub-fields of Asian Studies, Buck's statement does not hold true to the study of Chinese literature. Indeed, I would argue that in Chinese literature, a major component of Asian Studies, the dominating paradigm has been, and, is still, that of evaluative universalism.2

The word "evaluative" is crucial. Relative or universalistic, the choice of a methodological paradigm hinges upon its evaluative and ideological stance. Studies of Chinese literature that directly involve or concern trans-cultural understanding reveal two popular and representational arguments.3 The first is

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2What I have said also applies to comparative studies done in the Chinese language. Here in this dissertation discussion is focused on studies done in the West and predominantly in the United States.

3In his review article "The Study of Chinese Literature in the West" (Journal of Asian Studies 35, no. 1 [Nov. 1975]: 21-30), James Liu divides books and articles in the field of Chinese literature into various categories: translations, annotations, historical-biographical studies, thematic and generic studies, and studies of formal and stylistic concerns. Studies in the last category, which Liu also terms works with "analytical approach," are broadly informed by Western literary ideas and often conducted with comparative approaches. Although some twenty years has lapsed since the publication of the article, the distinctions still hold insofar as the last category includes the works of critical or theoretical orientations. Such works have been increasingly published in the past two decades.
what I call, for convenience, "the argument of inferiority". It holds that Chinese literature, with its limitations such as the flawed practice of "criticism," meager use of "metaphor," "flat character," "episodic structure," etc., is qualitatively inferior to Western literatures. The second, which I call "the argument of equality," contends that Chinese literature has produced nearly all the schools, genres and concepts that the Western literary tradition can boast of: mimetic theory, expressive theory, pragmatic theory and possible objective theory; realism, romanticism, symbolism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and reader-response theories, and hence is on the equal footing with, if not superior to, its Western counterparts. Despite the opposition created by the two arguments, scholars of both sides employ Western paradigms in their evaluation of Chinese literature, and all, a close look reveals, subscribe to the idea of what James Liu terms "a universal theory of literature." The latter also characterizes the efforts of many other scholars with differing methodologies, which together form the powerful universalistic trend in the field of Chinese literature.


5I shall soon discuss in detail the universalistic approaches of the two arguments. As for the other forms of universalism, Yip Wai-lim has spent his lifetime searching for what he calls the "common grounds" between Chinese and Western literatures. His methodology, expressed and argued for in his article "The Use of 'Models' in East-West Comparative Literature" (Tamkang Review 6.2 & 7.1 [1975-76]: 109-126), differs from those of other scholars in that it engages in historical and cultural inquiries in addition to textual analysis in the study of Chinese poetry. Andrew Plaks resorts to "intellectual history" for factors responsible for the formation of the essential features of the novel in the East and the West. He identifies Chinese xiаoshuo 小說 with Western fiction because he has located parallel developments in Chinese and Western fiction with regards to their respective cultural, social-economic histories ("Full-length Hsiao-shuo and the Western Novel: A Generic Reappraisal," in China and the West: Comparative Literature Studies, eds. William Tay, Ying-hsiung Chou, and Heh-hsiang Yuan [Hongkong: The Chinese University Press, 1980], 163-176). Recently, Zhang Longxi, in his The Dao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), identifies the use of silence in the Chinese and Western literary traditions as the common ground for setting up a theory of "interpretative pluralism" for literary reading that will cut across both hermeneutic communities and combine two otherwise unrelated literary traditions.
But the universalism in Chinese literature is only the Chinese share of the grand project of comparative literature to set up a metropolitan world literature. A translation of Goethe's *Weltliterature*, the phrase "world literature" is understood to indicate a time when "all literatures would become one." It is the ideal of "the unification of all literatures into one great synthesis, where each nation would play its part in a universal concert."® First envisaged by the founders of literary history in the early nineteenth century, the ideal is grounded on the assumption that Western literatures are a unity, a whole. From Greek and Roman literatures through the Western medieval world to the main modern literatures, one recognizes parallels and affinities that form "a close unity which includes all Europe, Russia, the United States, and the Latin-American literatures."® T. S. Eliot stated that "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer . . . has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."® The idea of "literature as universal structures," a concept that is as old as the Western literary history, further undergirds the assumption of *Weltliteratur*. Molded by Aristotle's *Poetics* and crystallized in such twentieth-century's literary theories as formalism, New Criticism, structuralism, semiotics, the "science of literature" was theorized, advocated, defended and vigorously practiced. Rene Wellek, for example, deplores the historicist view and recommends earnestly "perspectivism" as the right approach for literary reconstruction. By "perspectivism" Wellek means that "we recognize that there is one poetry, one literature, comparable in


®Ibid., 49.

all ages."\(^9\) Northrop Frye advances a theory of literature as "existing in its own universe, no longer a commentary on life or reality, but containing life and reality in a system of verbal relationships."\(^10\) Roland Barthes, who unequivocally identifies literature with science, claims narrative to be a universal form of literature, present "in every age, in every place, in every society" and is "international," "transhistorical" and "transcultural."\(^11\)

The notion of a world literature engenders the rise of eurocentrism in comparative literature. As Gregory Jusdanis has stated, the dominant practice in comparative literature is either to "dismiss nonwestern literatures as parochial" or to "incorporate them into its cosmopolitan category of the literary."\(^12\) For more than a century comparatists have searched for continuities and conformities. Holding that literature is one and mainly concerned with the traditions of Europe and North America, they function to show the interdependence of various literatures and homogenize national differences within one totalizing system. Wellek and Warren exhort that the great strategy of comparative literature is to "falsify the notion of a self-enclosed national literature." They demand that we transcend all "linguistic distinctions" and suppress all "local and provincial sentiments" in pursuit of a grand universal literature.\(^13\) Comparatists claim not to neglect national paradigms, but, as Jusdanis has put it, their integrative

\(^9\)Wellek and Warren, 35.

\(^{10}\)For Frye's argument about the objectivity of literary criticism, see his *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 3-29.


\(^{13}\)Wellek and Warren, 49-50.
procedures "sacrifice the individual to the general." They "cast aside 'provincial' and local elements and those traditions unable to compete according to Western terms of greatness." Thus, far from escaping nationalism, this cosmopolitanism "becomes a means of asserting nationalism on a supranational scale." By pursuing such a universal poetics, comparative literature explicitly or implicitly affirms the superiority of Western literatures over other national literary products.

The idea of a universal literature has deeply subsided into the consciousness of the scholars in Chinese-Western comparative literature studies. So has the belief of the superiority of Western literatures that is responsible for the eurocentric, integrative procedures of the scholars assuming both "inferiority" and "equality" perspectives. Scholars of the "argument of inferiority," represented by such notable figures as Arthur Waley, John Bishop, C. T. Hsia, etc., firmly believe in the universality of Western literary paradigms. They rigidly apply Western standards of greatness to Chinese text and judge the latter according to Western assumptions of what it should be like. Frequently, we encounter their criticisms of Chinese text for not being Western enough or, simply, for being too itself. Adele Rickett and Yeh Chia-ying are not satisfied with Chinese literary criticism because it is too "subjective" and "impressionistic;" Donald Holzman is disillusioned in his study of ancient Chinese literature because he cannot find anything "even remotely comparable to ancient Western literary criticism;"

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14 Judasnis, 3-4.


Zhang Longxi, most recently, aligns Chinese traditional hermeneutics with E. D. Hirsch's intentionalism and criticizes it for being unscientific in literary interpretation. The mere titles of such all-familiar works as "The Limitations of Chinese Literature," "Some Limitations of Chinese Fiction" and so on well reveal the eurocentric stance of this group of scholars. On the other hand, scholars arguing for the equality of Chinese literature engage themselves in a rigid and oftentimes difficult synthesis of Chinese literary theories with those of their Western counterparts. J. D. Frodsham, author of *New Perspectives in Chinese Literature*, facilely associates Western Romanticism with Chinese Daoism and Western baroque with Buddhist metaphysics. By doing so, he advances the methodology of bringing Western literary theories to bear upon different Chinese genres and advances "critical studies couched not in traditional Chinese terms but in the language of modern criticism." A similar spirit captures James Liu's *Chinese Theories of Literature*, where the author analyzes, interprets, extracts and reconstructs Chinese texts from the perspectives of Western theories. It is interesting to note that despite their resentment toward

17 Zhang Longxi, *The Dao and the Logos*, 139-142.


cultural chauvinism, their integrative procedures cause them to fall unwittingly into the very ethnocentrism they wish to escape. James Liu, for example, makes it clear that by writing the book *Chinese Theories of Literature* he hopes that "Western comparativists and literary theorists will take into account the Chinese theories to be presented in this book, and will no longer formulate general theories of literature based on the Western experience alone." However, despite his good intentions, his phenomenological methodology, his systematization and analysis that are extraneous to the Chinese text, and especially his use of Western paradigms to extract all the possible Western theories from Chinese critical writings to the distortion of their original meanings take on heavy eurocentric consequences. Thus, Liu's search for a "common poetics" and a "universal theory of literature" is built on the same ethnocentric grounds as the projects of his colleagues on the other side. His attempt to prove the relevance of Chinese literature ends up denying, as much as John Bishop and C. T. Hsia have done, its local specifics and reinforcing the already well-established Orientalist discourse.

Scholars of Chinese literature not only participate in the global pursuit for a universal literature and by doing so ignore cultural relevants and constraints, but living in or having gone through the ages of New Criticism and other modern formalist criticism, they attend to a Chinese text as an autonomous artifact and thus further remove it from its social, cultural and historical contexts. As crystallized in Wellek and Warren's *Theory and Literature*, the formalist position in literary criticism emphasized the unequivocal centrality of immanent aesthetic analysis: "The study of literature should, first and foremost, concentrate on the

21 James Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, 3.
actual works of art themselves. "What literature is, by modern definition, 'pure
of' is practical intent (propaganda, incitation to direct, immediate action) and
scientific intent (provision of information, facts, 'additions to knowledge')." In
practice, the formalist project of purifying literature set politics and ethics as well
as science, philosophy, and culture outside the bounds of proper critical concern.
This narrowing of literary study to pure aesthetic analysis characterized not only
Western literary criticism of the era but Chinese literary scholarship in particular.
C. T. Hsia clearly stated: "I deplore literature which, to use Keat's phrase, has 'a
palpable design' upon us insofar as that design is incompatible with the full-
bodied presentation of reality. Hence I prefer 'disinterested moral exploration' to
the less strenuous kind of literary endeavor which is ulteriorly motivated and
which is merely content to illustrate some ready-made truth rather than explore
it." With the same gesture, James Liu structured his literary theory on two
levels of inquiry, language and delicately nuanced lyrical worlds, and yet never
tried, to use William F. Touponce's words, "to specify in any detail the links
between literature and society or the ways in which a poet might transform
literary language in order to come to terms with new social experience." A
methodology, eurocentric or formalistic, that refuses to take social and
cultural parameters into consideration will inevitably distort the realities of a

22 Wellek and Warren, 139, 239.
discussion of the "inconsistencies" of the "Major Preface" (Shi daxu 詩大序). His failure in
reconciliation of what he calls "expressive" theory with "deterministic" and "pragmatic" theories in
Chinese literature simply reveals his reluctance to accept the social-political dimensions of
Chinese literary criticism. See his Chinese Theories of Literature, 119-120.
nation's literature. Moreover, any universal theories based not on inquiries into
deep structures but on syntheses and compromises of differences will misguide
literary efforts and ultimately jeopardize the integrity of the critical enterprise. A
case in mind is James Liu's syntheses of phenomenology with Chinese
"metaphysical" theories, which led to a wide-spread and yet questionable
application of the Western notion to the study of Chinese literature. Liu and
some of the scholars working jointly for the "universal theory" think that they have
found in phenomenology a common ground that will elevate them above the
East-West opposition and beyond all clashes of traditions and interpretations.25
Among the "affinities" that Liu has spotted between phenomenology and Chinese
metaphysical theories is the one that both phenomenologists and Chinese
metaphysical critics affirm the solidarity of the subject and the object, the
inseparability of "noesis" (consciousness or perception) and "noema" (the object
of consciousness and perception) or that of "I" (wo  wo) and "things" (wu  wu).26
However, Liu forgets, or refuses to mention, that phenomenology as espoused by
Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Marleau-Ponty postulates, first and foremost, the
"intentionality" of consciousness, or, the "consciousness as intentional," as
James M. Edie explains:

Phenomenology is neither a science of objects nor a science of the
subject; it is a science of experience. It does not concentrate exclusively
on either the objects of experience or on the subject of experience, but on
the point of contact where being and consciousness meet. It is, therefore,

25In her study on Wang Wei 王維 (701-761), Pauline Yu says: "I believe that a
methodology drawing on twentieth-century phenomenological criticism, with its possible affinities
to both Chinese and Symbolist conceptions of literature, may be the most appropriate and least
foreign approach to his poetry." The Poetry of Wang Wei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,
1980), 1. Phenomenological theories, especially those of Roman Ingarden, Mikel Dufrenne and
Hans-Georg Gadamer, are among the founding theories for Zhang Longxi's argument of
"interpretative pluralism" that will, in the author's belief, transcend all the conflicts between East
and West literary hermeneutics.

26Chinese Theories of Literature, 59.
a study of consciousness as intentional, as directed towards objects, as living in an intentionally constituted world.27

In other words, to Husserl, consciousness is not a state of being nor a function, but an ever-moving, object-oriented activity. It constantly projects or imposes itself over the object, hence the word "intentionality" and another commonly used term "intentional object." It is in this sense that Paul de Man uses the word "intentionality" in his phenomenological study of Wordsworth's struggle and anxiety in the presence of nature and his reaffirmation of the perceptive power of mind. To Wordsworth, sense experience of nature is insufficient, whereas imagination or mind is the origin of perception. Thus, between mind and nature, the poet brackets the latter in favor of the former.28 In contrast to Wordsworth, Chinese "metaphysical" poets consciously submerge the self in their identification with nature. They espouse the idea of the "fusion of the subject and the object" (qing jing jiaorong 情景交融) and, above all, "to view the object from the perspective of the object" (yi wu guan wu 以物觀物). Pauline Yu has recognized this in her "phenomenological" study of Wang Wei's poetry:

The harmony between self and world implicit in this poem underlies, of course, Wang Wei's work as a whole. His poetry reveals a thoroughgoing fusion of emotion and scene: nature and man can be presented in the same terms, so that the depiction of one simultaneously speaks of the other . . . In each case Wang Wei disrupts normal syntax to place the verb at the end of the line, thus presenting the phenomena not as acting upon one another in an agent-receptor relationship, but as existing side by side in total harmony, without clear subject-object distinctions. And just as there are no privileged objects in nature, so man does not occupy a privileged point of view . . . Throughout the poem Wang Wei refrains from

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obtruding an active, dominating subjectivity upon the scene and suggests instead the integrality and equivalence of man and nature.29

The distinctions between Chinese metaphysical and English Romantic poets regarding their aesthetic consciousness of nature are clearly demonstrated by Yip Wai-lim in his article "Aesthetic Consciousness of Landscape in Chinese and Anglo-American Poetry." According to Yip, the causes for the distinctions lie in the "root differences" of these poets in their "conception of genre" and "perceptual-expressive procedures," which, he argues, can only be explained in cultural and historical terms.30 The same should be said of the "intentionality" of consciousness advanced by phenomenologists and the Daoist notion of the "unspeaking, self-transforming" (wuyan duhua 無言獨化) object, whose cultural and historical dimensions are seriously ignored by critics interested in their synthesis.31

Despite the fundamental differences between Western Romantic and Chinese "metaphysical" or "expressive" theories,32 attempts to identify these two schools abound.33 These studies focus on some surface "common

30"Aesthetic Consciousness of Landscape in Chinese and Anglo-American Poetry," Comparative Literary Studies 15, no. 2 (June 1978): 211. It is interesting to note that despite Yip's persistence in searching for the "common grounds" between Chinese and Western literary traditions, his analysis of cultural relevance yields that such common grounds are unlikely to exist. Indeed, the further he traces back to the "root differences," the more clearly he displays the impossibility of the existence of any common grounds.
31For a critique of Liu's mistaken identification of Being in Headgear's thought with Dao, see William Touponce, 364-366.
32James Liu's inductive classification of Chinese literary theories into six categories is indeed misleading. Chinese literary theories, often derived from common sources, are in fact interrelated with each other. Thus, despite Liu's efforts of distinction, what Liu calls "expressive theory" inscribes in itself what he calls "metaphysical theory" at the same time, and vice versa.
denominators" while refraining from inquiries into the differences and specifics of the parties compared. As a result, Western theories often do not accommodate Chinese realities, or Chinese realities are twisted and wrenched in order to subscribe to Western paradigms. As Yip has clearly pointed out, when Western models are applied wholesale to Chinese literature, distortions are bound to rise.34

Critics concerned with "universal poetics" are susceptible to formalist approaches. To discover or conjure up more "common denominators," they are obliged to stress the autonomy of the literary object and promote its severance from all social and cultural contexts. In the age of poststructuralism, this at once formalist and eurocentric approach is subject to investigation and serious criticism. As Vincent B. Leitch has pointed out, the age of poststructuralism is an age of "discourse" as opposed to belletristic "literature."35 Texts are now increasingly regarded as communal documents or events with social, historical, and political dimensions rather than autonomous artifacts within an idealized aesthetic domain. However multifaceted it is, poststructuralism demonstrates certain distinctive traits that include, in Leitch's words,

rejection of reason as universal or foundational; problematization of linguistic reference and textual interpretation; decentering of the subject; suspension of totalizing narratives; affirmation of the nexus of knowledge/interest/power; criticism of modernity and the legacy of the Enlightenment; stress on history and culture as discursive constructions and sites of struggle; interrogation of established disciplinary and

34Yip has addressed the problem in several of his articles. See particularly his article "The Use of 'Models' in East-west Comparative Literature" and his introduction to the series of book-length comparative studies published by Dongda Books Company, Taiwan, reprinted as an independent article in Wen Rumin and Li Xiyao 李西堯, ed., Xunqiu kua Zhong Xi wenhua de gongtong wenxue guilu尋求跨中西文化的共同文學規律 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1986).

intellectual boundaries; and sensitivity to differences, exclusions, anomalies, and margins.36

Clearly, unlike New Criticism and other formalist theories that succumb to the temptation to purify, poststructuralism tends to construe literary objects as entangled in complicated networks. Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault have furnished the poststructuralist discourse with powerful vocabularies. Recognized as representing, in Said's words, "the two powerful, contemporary 'ways' of considering, describing, analyzing, and dealing theoretically with the problem of textuality,"37 both have championed the poststructuralist project to, again, in Said's words, "turn the textual problems of human sciences into descriptions of the processes of textual knowledge."38 While Derrida is considered by most critics interested in the interior oppositions of textuality, i.e., its various mysteries, rules and above all "plays," the social, political, ideological functions of literary studies have always been Foucault's ultimate concern.39 In his "Order of Discourse" and other "archaeological" works, Foucault shows that literary discourse is forever linked to the exercise of power and constituted by the social system through forms of selection and exclusion. Text is an integral, and not

36Ibid., xiii.


39For a discussion of critics' opinions as to the differences between Derrida and Foucault, see Xiaomei Chen, "Derrida's Pharmacy: Towards A Foucaudian Reading of 'La Pharmacie de Platon,'" Works and Days 4, no. 2 (1986): 33-35. Critics such as Said and Michael Sprinker criticize Derrida's work for lacking a political diminution that defines Foucault's enterprise. However, Xiaomei Chen contends that the Derridian concern with grammatology can be read as relevant to the question of the political and ideological function of language and discourse. She argues that "political implications are 'always' and 'already' embedded in a literary and philosophical discourse which concerns itself with the oppositional values in a tradition." Chen, 35.
merely an accessory, part of the social processes of differentiation, exclusion, incorporation, and rule. The task of the archaeologist is, therefore, to reveal the complicated network of the text and bring its textuality into certain visibility.

The poststructuralist interest in textuality brings to an end the purifying practice of formalistic criticism. Moreover, its call into service of sociological, historical, political, and institutional modes of inquiry evokes a resurgence of interest in cultural studies among literary critics. According to Leitch, the word "culture" in the usage of cultural critics displays a wide range of designations: "it names intellectual and artistic practices, especially literature, music, painting, sculpture, theater, philosophy, and criticism; it describes processes of intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic, and ethical development; it indicates the distinctive way of life of a people or period or humanity as a whole; it signals refinement of taste, judgment, and intellect; and it includes manners, conventions, customs, myths, institutions, and patterns of thought."40 While literary critics have, now and then, engaged in cultural theory and criticism, not all cultural critics have dwelt on literary matters. On the other hand, some contemporary advocates of cultural studies insist that cultural criticism focus on mass and popular culture and renounce literary discourse and literary theory as narrow and privileged. To this Leitch contends that, given their concerns with the social roles of the arts, the uses of education and literacy, the workings of institutions and so on, cultural critics share interests and methods with a wide array of Marxists, semioticians, hermeneuticists, mythographers, feminists, ethnic theorists, and, especially, poststructuralists. Thus, cultural studies "do not supersede literary studies." For cultural critics with literary orientations, "the choice between literary and cultural

40Leitch, x.
The new trends of combining literary studies with cultural criticism, or, in the current terminology, of "transforming literary studies into cultural studies," can be best seen in such works as, in addition to Leitch's own *Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism, Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture* by Gregory Jusdanis, *Literary into Cultural Studies* by Antony Easthope, and *Criticism and Culture* by Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer.

For critics engaged in intercultural comparative literature, the transformation of literary studies into cultural criticism has anthropological underpinnings that warrant attention, for they provide conceptual tools as to how to conceive differences among cultures. According to Elvin Hatch, anthropology, from the time it emerged in the nineteenth century as an organized, self-conscious discipline, has been involved in the controversies with regards to the issue. First conceived in the nineteenth-century that races exhibit moral and intellectual differences, the theory is now explained by anthropologists in terms of cultural conditioning or social milieu. They maintain that human beings everywhere absorb a conventional perspective from their cultural or social environment. This perspective includes categories of thought, beliefs, values, and other mental patterns which collectively provide the medium in which people think and perceive. This process of "enculturation," which few today would dispute, gives much of the power to the twentieth-century theory of cultural relativism. Ruth Benedict argues that cultures differ from place to place, or, in her words, "The diversity of cultures can be endlessly documented." Thus, it

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41 Ibid.

follows that there are no absolutes, for the principles that we may use for judging behavior or anything else are relative to the culture in which we are raised. Western civilization can imagine itself better than other cultures only because it uses its own cultural values as the standards in judging. The ideas of Western society, whether moral or existential, literary or philosophical, are a matter of convention and are not rooted in absolute principles that transcend time and space. Melville Herskovits exhorts that there are no absolute standards or fixed values. "Evaluations," he says, "are relative to the cultural background out of which they arise."

Within the field of comparative literature, cultural relativism entails a liberation from eurocentrism for marginalized literatures. It is the dawning of the reality that Western literatures do not automatically have validity in non-Western cultures. Literatures are all equal and all literary methods are valid in their own contexts. Methodologically, cultural relativism can be understood as an approach, which, in D. W. Fokkema's words,

interprets the literary-historical phenomena of a certain period within a certain cultural area and evaluates them on the basis of the norms and against the background of that period and that cultural area, and which further compares the different value systems underlying the various periods and cultural areas.

With this approach, comparative literature will become truly comparative. Instead of one voice, the field of comparative literature would be sounding with an anomaly of voices. The results of the dialogues and conversations are mutually

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beneficial. Just as an understanding of Western literary theory has led literary scholars in the East to reassess some of the views they hold about their own literature, so an adequate inquiry into the value systems of non-Western literatures may further Western knowledge of the structure of its own literary value system. As J. V. Cunningham wrote in a study on Shakespeare: "Our purpose in the study of literature, and particularly in the historical interpretation of texts, is not in the ordinary sense to further the understanding of ourselves. It is rather to enable us to see how we could think and feel otherwise than we do."46

The study presented here is intended to fulfill two objectives: one is to advance the enterprise of poststructuralist cultural criticism, and the other to engage in a dismantling of the eurocentric discourse that has dominated so long and is still so powerful in Chinese literary study. In both tasks, this study will put Chinese literature back in its own social and ethnographic background, describing it, analyzing it, making statements about it and theorizing views over it. It will assume a "contrastive" approach and argue for a "contrastive poetics."47 It will reveal the stark "otherness" of the Western Other and show the impotence of Western paradigms outside the tradition that has produced them. As Earl Miner has put it: "The pawns of usual talk in Western languages derive from but one game, whose rules are so far from being universal that if we played by the rules

46J. V. Cunningham, Tradition and Poetic Structure, Essays in Literary History and Criticism (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1960), 141.

47John J. Deeney, in his review article on Chinese-Western comparative literature studies, proposes a "poetics of contrast" as a counterpart to the one-way approach, that is, using Western critical theories and methodologies to bear upon Chinese literature. See his "Chinese-English Comparative Literature Studies: A Poetics of Contrast?" included in Proceedings of the Xth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, eds. Anna Balakian and James J. Wilhelm (New York: Graland Publishing, Inc., 1985), 602-7.
used elsewhere we would soon suffer checkmate, if indeed we knew how to move at all.48

In its argument for the "otherness" of Chinese literature, this study resembles Earl Miner's own project.49 However, while Miner's study centers on genre-analysis, believing as the author does that a paradigmatic poetics develops in a culture when a critic or critics of insight defines the nature and conditions of literature in terms of the then most esteemed genre, this study exposes the differences of the Western Other through a macroscopic cultural and anthropological critique. On the other hand, in its quest for what Yip calls the "root understanding of models,"50 this project joins effort with Yip's with but one major disagreement: Yip's cultural inquiries are intended to find what he believes as the "common grounds" between Chinese and Western literatures, whereas using the same approach, this study will demonstrate that such common grounds are impossible.51 Yip was once concerned that cultural, historical-oriented inquiries may go beyond the immediate object of literary study and thus sacrifice the aesthetic parameters of the profession.52 This perhaps accounts for the fact


49Prof. Miner is an expert in Japanese-Western comparative literature, but in his studies he often invokes comparisons between China and the West as well. For instance, he argues that "mimesis" as the founding poetics of the West derived out of drama is in fact a minority of one. The mainstream is instead a lyric-based poetics, which he termed "affective-expressive," that dominates literatures of China, Japan, Korea and India. Earl Miner, 8, 24-31.

50"The use of 'Models' in East-West Comparative Literature," 113.

51In his article "The Use of 'Models' in East-West Comparative Literature," Yip draws two circles, those of A and B crossing with each other, to illustrate his point. Circle A represents one model or literary tradition, and Circle B another. Circle C, the overlapping part of the two circles, represents the resemblance between the two literary traditions and therefore is perhaps, he says, the base for establishing a universal literary model.

52Wen Rumin and Li Xiyao, 31.
that in Chinese studies area and literary studies go side by side and few attempts have been made to cross over into each other's domains. Despite the concern, Yip called for literary studies that would combine what he terms "cosmological order," "social order" and "aesthetic order," and make the three levels of discourse cross-reflect each other. Such efforts have already been attempted by scholars like Stephen Owen, Pauline Yu and few others. My present study is meant as yet another effort toward this direction. Limited as my fields of knowledge are, I shall attempt to sketch in this dissertation a holistic, cultural and anthropological critique of Chinese literature. By doing so, I wish not only to rectify the distortions hitherto rendered to Chinese literature, but also to further the projects with contrastive approaches, such as Miner's, by searching for cultural and ethnographical constrains and underpinnings. In the case of Miner, for instance, questions should be asked and solutions sought as to why "mimesis" dominates Western literary theory whereas "affective-expressive" paradigm that of the East. Or, further, why different genres came about at the dawn of each cultural history that engendered different originative poetics in the two parts of the world in the first place.

The central focus of this study is on the intuitive artistic thinking in traditional Chinese poetry and poetics, a topic left unattended by scholars of "common poetics" for being "marginal" and above all "oppositional" to Western discursive paradigms. I choose this subject because Chinese intuitive thinking


54 James Liu is one of the few scholars who have touched on the intuitive characteristic of Chinese thinking in relation to Chinese literature. However, he did not develop any argument along this line because any argument in this direction would reveal fundamental differences of
in literature, termed in Chinese miaowu 貓語, not only reflects the traditional Chinese way of thinking and therefore is a cultural and anthropological issue, but it permeates all the literary genres such as poetry, prose and fiction, and runs through the entire process of the literary undertakings from writing, reading to literary criticism. Moreover, in their study of traditional Chinese poetry, scholars such as Stephen Owen, Pauline Yu and Steven Van Zoeren, focus exclusively on interpretation of its images and symbols, while neglecting the maneuvers of the literary thinking behind the acts of image-making and re-making. The latter is most important, for the revelation of it will lead to an unraveling of many puzzling questions. People from non-Oriental cultures have noticed that Chinese classical poetry, concrete and highly imagistic, presents but does not comments; that Chinese critical terms are elusive, evasive and impressionistic; and that many Chinese literature from Western counterparts and therefore undermine his efforts in establishing a universal theory of literature. Perhaps the reason for his omission of this important issue is that his comparative study is concerned with what he calls "theory of literature" only (Chinese Theories of Literature, 10) and intuitive thinking is a topic that belongs to the opposite category of "literary theory." In fact, Liu's distinction between the two categories serves as a good point of departure for my study, for, as I have found out, Chinese and Western literatures may bear some resemblance in "theory of literature, concerned with basic nature and functions of literature, as to "literary theory" that concerns aspects of literature such as form, genre, style, and technique, the two traditions differ from each other drastically. However, as Liu himself has acknowledged, the two kinds of theories are interrelated in such a way that "one's conception of style will be influenced by one's conception of literature," and vise versa (p. 1). Thus, the distinctions between Chinese and Western theories at the phenomenological or methodological level may well reflect their differences in ontological and philosophical terms. In this connection, I think, the similarities that Liu has spotted between Chinese and Western literatures are isolated, sporadic, lacking in cultural, historical and philosophical accounts.


would be lost if Chinese poetry is read in a Western way. From the native points of view, it is said that poetry should seek only "spiritual resemblance" (shensi 神似) with the object of presentation; that "reading poetry is like communing in Chan" (xue shi ru Chan 學詩如參禪); and that reading (i.e., evaluating) poetry is "not to seek thorough understanding" (bu qiu shenjie 不求甚解). All these impressions from people of other cultures and explanations by native poets and critics point to one predominant feature of Chinese poetry, namely, the use of intuition in literary thinking, which is determined fundamentally by the unique way of thinking of the Chinese people.

The examination of classical Chinese poetry on a cultural, ethnographic scale will therefore not only answer these questions immediately associated with poetry but also shed light on the following questions that cut across or pertain to other genres: Why phenomenology differs fundamentally from Daoist philosophy and literary theory? What prevents us from aligning Chinese lyric poets with Romantic poets? Why Chinese fiction "is merely content to illustrate some ready-made truth rather than explore it?" Why in Chinese literature the vehicle and the tenor are one, or in Pauline Yu's argument, there is no metaphor in the Western sense in Chinese poetry? Why exist in Chinese fiction "lyrical" elements, "flat characters" and "episodic structures?" Why there is no epic in the Chinese literary tradition, and neither realism as it is understood in the West? The list of "whys" can be further extended, but when, and only when, poetries

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59 That different ways are involved in reading Chinese and English poetry, say, those of Du Fu and Wordsworth, is the central concern of Stephen Owen's book Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics.

60 By C. T. Hsia, see Note 19.

from the East and the West come to reflect each other in cross-cultural and ethnographical contexts can dubious questions and arguments in literary criticism be settled to our satisfaction.

What follows is a summary of the dissertation's five core chapters. I start in Chapter One with a definition of the term miaowu in comparison with the phenomenon of intuition in the West. Though often translated into "intuition" or its adjective "intuitive," the term miaowu contains a plenitude of meanings that the English term does not convey. In addition to an outline of the historical development of the term, I try to piece together some characteristics of it from the fragments of philosophical and critical texts despite that such a synthesis or systemization contradicts the very nature of the term. Three major characteristic features of miaowu are to be derived, those of "subjectivity," "ambiguity," and "holistic," and before tracing their manifestations in literary practice, I, in the next chapter, conduct an inquiry into the cultural determinants on miaowu as artistic thought. I first relate miaowu to the mechanisms of Chinese traditional thinking shaped under particular world views and first reflected in the Book of Changes (Yi jing 易经). Then I discuss some philosophical arguments, such as "inner-reflection" (neixing 内省) from Confucianism, "quiet observation" (jingguan 靜觀) from Daoism and "mind transmission" (chuan xin 傳心) from Chan Buddhism, that have helped consolidate miaowu as a unique artistic thinking. Sandwiched between the discussions are the reflections on the Chinese language. Here I not only look at the language by itself or as an artistic medium that has fashioned literary thought, but I go beyond the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and demonstrate how Chinese philosophical assumptions with regard to language make literary presentation and interpretation the ways they are.

Chapter Three, Four and Five are demonstrations of how the characteristics of
*miaowu* manifest themselves in the three literary undertakings of writing, reading and literary criticism. Although *miaowu* as artistic thinking is an organic process and manifests itself as such in each of the three phases, I emphasize that more than any of the other two "subjectivity" can be best observed in writing, "ambiguity" in reading, and "holisticity" in the practice of literary criticism.

Throughout the dissertation my discussion of *miaowu*, both at literary and cultural levels, is assisted by cross-reflections on Western literary phenomena and cultural relevants. No where, as the results will show, are the differences between the East-West literary traditions seen better than in the comparisons of their literary thoughts. By this I do not mean that Chinese literary thinking is exclusively intuitive and that the West's only analytical. Exceptions always exist, and I by no means claim uniformity on this matter however strongly I make the case for a self-sufficient cultural critique of classical Chinese poetry and poetics.
CHAPTER I
SETTING THE TERMS

In the title and the dissertation proper, I use the word "intuition," or its adjective form "intuitive," to refer to the age-old, unique artistic thinking in classical Chinese poetry termed miaowu. The reason for using this word is two-fold. First, as Filmer S. C. Northrop has remarked, "to determine the relation between diverse things it is necessary to express each in terms of a common denominator." Although this dissertation is not intended to be a comparative study of East-West theories of intuition, a discourse of this kind, i.e., writing about a relevant phenomenon in the East using a language of the West, necessitates the use of a term with a common denomination. Second, it has so happened that in most contemporary studies on miaowu in China, the phrase zhijue ("direct apprehension") is used to describe the term miaowu. The former is a Chinese translation from the English word "intuition" based on its most common interpretation. But what is interesting is that the term is often used without explanation as to its relation to miaowu as if critics have found in it an exact equivalent to the concept the latter denotes. Whatever is the reason, accustomed as I am to the convention, I find myself using the term zhijue, or,


"intuition," if I write in English, with the same freedom and convenience as most Chinese scholars have done.

However, my use of the term is only out of convention and expediency, and this preliminary chapter is devoted to an inquiry into the relation between the English word and what is considered to be its Chinese counterpart. For, again, as Northrop has stated, "the technical philosophical meaning which a common-sense term has in one philosophical system is usually different from what it has in another system."3 Thus, although a common denominator is found in the word "intuition," what is understood by the term in the West may differ from what it signifies in the East. If Chinese scholars have no hesitation using the word, thinking as they do that they simply use a modern Western term to designate a perennial native phenomenon, their juxtaposition of the two terms might misguide people in the West, especially those who have little knowledge about the Chinese phenomenon. It is especially the case with such an ambiguous term as "intuition," which is controversial even in its own philosophical tradition. Therefore, before preceding with the discussion of the use of "intuition" in classical Chinese poetry and poetics, it is important to make clear what is understood by the term in the present study, and to do so, a discussion of miaowu is necessary.

1. The term "intuition" in Western philosophy

First, we should briefly look at the word "intuition." In the West, intuition as a way of knowledge means many things to many people. There are philosophical intuitions, religious intuitions, aesthetic intuitions, ethical

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3 Northrop, 169.
intuitions, business intuitions, mathematical intuitions, etc. Cutting across the disciplines are procedural and methodological issues as to how intuitive knowledge is possible and accessible to us. We are told that there are direct experience identical to sense-perception, judgment of "pure intuition," judgment of direct knowledge or "self-evident" truths, instinctive knowledge, extrasensory perception, hunch, and, lastly, mystical or trans-empirical intuition. The Western-oriented *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* lists four principal meanings of "intuition:" (1) Intuition as unjustified true belief not preceded by inference (i.e., "hunch"); (2) Intuition as immediate knowledge of the truth of a proposition; (3) Intuition as immediate knowledge of a concept; (4) Intuition as nonpropositional knowledge of an entity--knowledge that may be a necessary condition for but is not identical with, intuitive knowledge of the truth of propositions about the entity. Despite the range of the uses and the diversity as to the process of intuition, there are some common threads that run through the scattered notions of the term, and these are, clearly, "apprehension" and "immediacy." We find a clear definition for these words in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

"Apprehension" is used to cover such disparate states as sensation, knowledge, and mystical rapport. "Immediate"... may be used to signify the absence of inference, the absence of causes, the absence of the ability to define a term, the absence of justification, the absence of symbols, or the absence of thought.

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4 For a discussion of these categories of intuitive knowledge, see Herbert Feigl, "Critique of Intuition According to Scientific Empiricism," *Philosophy East and West* 8, nos. 1 & 2 (April, July 1958): 2-7.


6 Ibid.
Clearly, intuition is a knowledge that yields insight into the essence of things. It enables us to know reality which cannot be known through other means. It is a direct apprehension because it is not conditioned by the categories of understanding. It is not mediated through rational concepts, and its knowledge is not the result of any process of inference.

Etymologically, the word "intuition" means "looking into," that is, it is knowledge obtained not by looking outside one's self but by looking inside one's self. It is a mental inspection in which a direct revelation is made to the mind without external causes. In this connection, the word "intuition" has strong a priori characteristics. It stands for knowledge that is given, underivative and absolute. We find the word used this way in the writings of Descartes and Locke to designate the apprehension of general truths which are self-evident and need no proof. Richard Price apparently used the word in this sense in his ethical theory when he was asserting "an immediate perception of morality without any deductions of reasoning."\(^7\) The suprasensory, underivative and absolute nature of intuition also captures Kant's definition of the term.\(^8\) Kant distinguishes sharply between, on the one hand, perception and introspection, which he calls "empirical intuitions" and, on the other hand, (what we are calling) intuition, which he calls "pure intuition." His account of "pure intuition" conceives of intuitive awareness, not as a causal effect of an external event, but


\(^8\)However, Stocks states that after Kant, the word "intuition," which originally meant the conceptual framework supplied by the mind from its own resources, was extended to include sensation forced on the mind from without. He argues that the English word "intuition" as an equivalent for Kant's *Anschauung* is inadequate. In the English word the non-sensuous or not-purely-sensuous application is primary, and the sensuous application is secondary or non-existent, while in Kant's use the application to the sense field is primary and all other applications derivative from it. Ibid., 5-6.
as the effect of an internal construction. While Kant maintains that "intuition without conceptions are blind" (Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind), Henri Bergson contends that intuition is the primary source to grasp the continuum of reality which he terms *duree*. Whatever pertains to life and spirit falls under intuition because, according to Bergson, we can find and experience *duree* chiefly in our inner world. To know the world or to acquire intuition, we must therefore start with an inspection of our self, which is nothing but a flux of life, coming from the *Elan Vital*, the almighty ontology of matter and spirit. It is this immense, ever-moving and ever-evaporating *elan* that is the source of intuition. Thus, in Bergson intuition is an instinct of life. It is an innate cognitive mechanism plunged into action by the impulsion of life or, simply, passion.

Like Bergson, Edmund Husserl also closely links intuition with self and stresses its autonomy. However, Husserl's self differs from the life-imbued self of Bergson in that his is a pure intellectual being, called by him "cogitatio," that transcends individual thought and self and thus has nothing to do with life. It is the source of all cognition and is, above all, self-evident and absolute. This self-given cogitatio can only be accessed through intuition, which to him is neither sense-perception nor intellectual abstraction, but a direct and faultless "seeing" of pure phenomena. Hence, the chief characteristics of Husserl's intuition are self-evidence, transparency and absoluteness, as he himself explains:

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9 He presents his conception of the nature of "pure intuition" in his discussion of the relation between philosophical and mathematical knowledge. "Philosophical knowledge," he says, "is the knowledge gained by reason from concepts; mathematical knowledge is the knowledge gained by reason from the construction of concepts. To construct a concept means to exhibit a priori the intuition which corresponds to the concept. For the construction of a concept we therefore need a non-empirical intuition. The latter must, as intuition, be a single object, and yet none the less, as the construction of a concept (a universal representation), it must in its representation express universal validity for all possible intuitions which fall under the same concept." L. E. J. Brouwer, "Intuitionism and Formalism," in P. Benacerraf and H. Putnam, eds., *Philosophy of Mathematics: Selected Readings* (Englewood Cliffs: Prenticehall, Inc., 1913), 69.
The existence of the cogitatio, more precisely the phenomenon of cognition itself, is beyond question; and it is free from the riddle of transcendence. These existing things are already presupposed in the statement of the problem of cognition. The question as to how transcendent things come into cognition would lose its sense if cognition itself, as well as the transcendent object, were put in question. It is also clear that the cogitations present a sphere of absolutely immanent data; it is in this sense that we understand "immanence." In the "seeing" pure phenomena the object is not outside cognition or outside "consciousness," while being given in the sense of the absolute self-givenness of something which is simply "seen."  

Like intuition in Bergson's account, Husserl's intuition is also couched in mysticism. In this statement as in those by Kant and Bergson, one hears the echoes of Plato. In fact, these assumptions all come down from one great tradition forged by the Greek philosopher and are all informed by the philosopher's own ideas about mystic "inspiration:"

The epic poets, all the good ones, have their excellence, not from art, but are inspired, possessed, and thus they utter all these admirable poems. So is it also with the good lyric poets; as the worshipping Corybantes are not in their senses when they dance, so the lyric poets are not in their senses when they make these lovely lyric poems. No, when once they launch into harmony and rhythm, they are seized with the Bacchic transport, and are possessed—as the bacchants, when possessed, draw milk and honey from the rivers, but not when in their senses. So the spirit of the lyric poet works, according to their own report... a poet is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him.  

According to Plato, poets write poetry when they are inspired by a divine force. At such moment, they are not in their senses but are possessed and beside themselves. The reason they write good poetry is because they are driven by a

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divine force and write in accordance with the mystic report they are imparted with. Plato's assumptions of inspiration is marked by two things: one is that inspiration is a state of "madness," and the other is that inspiration is derived from God. It is given and as such absolute, out of the poet's own control. Plato's argument of inspiration laid the foundation for the assumptions of philosophical and aesthetic intuition in the West. From Kant's Anschauungen, Bergson's mystic intuition to Husserl's cogitation, the traces of Plato are all too obvious. Some common cores string together the assumptions of the philosophers and these are "mystic vision" and "direct apprehension," whose knowledge is given, immediate and self-evident.

2. The term miaowu in Chinese literary criticism

We now turn to look at miaowu in the Chinese philosophical and above all critical tradition. We are faced with no less a difficult situation than when we dealt with intuition. For, in addition to miaowu, we find various other names used by critics in their discussions of the concept. Moreover, few, if any, critics talk intelligibly about miaowu, let alone systematically theorizing over it. Their expression of the concept is often brief, equivocal and sometimes even mysterious. Perhaps the assumption is that miaowu is a mythical, existential experience, and as such it defies expression in words. Be as it may, we as modern rational beings cannot resist the temptation to inquire into this mysterious field, however difficult it would be.

1) The historical development of miaowu

Miaowu as a critical diction is derived from Canglang's Discussions of Poetry (Canglang shihua) by Yan Yu (ca. 1195-ca. 1245). James Liu has translated the term as "miraculous awakening," which, evidently,
emphasizes the "result" of a spiritual enlightenment. However, the word wu 悟 can also be translated as "contemplation," which stresses the "process" of the enlightenment. Thus, wu contains both the meanings of "sudden enlightenment" (dun 愣) and "gradual cultivation" (jian 赖), the latter being instrumental of the former. Also, the word miao 妙, usually rendered as "wonderful" or "subtle," can be translated as "intuitive" in the sense that contemplation and awakening involve activities that defy rational explanation. Lastly, because Daoist philosophers tend to address things that can only be intuited miao ("wonders," "subtleties"), and the ultimate truth in Buddhism is often referred to as miaodi ("subtle truth"), the term miaowu can also be understood as wu miao 悟妙, or "awakening to subtleties." If in the former the emphasis falls on the word wu, the process, in the latter it is on miao, the goal of that process, and both phrases stress an intuitive perceptive thinking whose ultimate goal it is to arrive at some ineffable truth that cannot be obtained otherwise.

The use of the term miaowu to describe the artistic thinking in poetry began with Yan Yu and his contemporaries. Yet, wu both as a way and an assumption of thinking has been present in Chinese thought ever since the beginning of the Chinese philosophical tradition. It finds first articulate expression in Daoist philosophical texts. It is called by Lao Zi 老子 xuanlan 玄览 or xuanjian 玄鉴, which can be translated as "mystic observation" and "mystic judgment" respectively. Heshang Gong 河上公, a famous

12 James Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 38.
13 James Liu himself has translated the word miao into "intuitive." Ibid., 35-6.
14 Gao Heng 高亨, anno., Lao Zi zhenggu 老子正诂 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 24. Liu has translated the term xuanlan as "mystic vision" and its verbal form "to observe its
commentator of Lao Zi in the Western Han period (206 B.C.-25 A.D.), annotated the term, saying: "The mind, located in a mysterious place, observes the thousands of things in the world." In other words, by *xuanlan* Lao Zi emphasizes inner reflection or a trans-empirical knowledge, and the goal of such a knowledge is to know not only the object but also the cause behind it, namely, Dao. To Lao Zi, the prerequisite for "mystic observation" is an empty and still mind (*xujing* 虛靜), hence his phrase of *dichu xuanlan* 洗除玄覽. By the phrase *dichu*, or, literally, "wash away," is meant the preparatory act of eliminating the mind of its dust and dirt, for only in a clear and flawless state can the mind contemplate and commune with Dao. Thus Lao Zi says:

Doing my best to attain emptiness, single-mindedly I sustain my stillness; when ten thousand things arise together, I contemplate their cycling of life.

Zhuang Zi 莊子 (369?-286? B.C.) developed Lao Zi's idea of *xujing* and proposed the notion of *xinzhal* 心齋, or "mind's abstinence." In the fourth chapter of his book, he explains:

Don't listen with the ear, but listen with the mind; [better still], don't listen with the mind, but listen with the spirit [*ch'i*]. The ear stops at listening, the mind stops at matching [things with concepts], but the spirit is empty and receives all things. Only the Tao will gather where emptiness is, and emptiness is what is meant by "mind's abstinence."
The word xin 心 in the passage refers to the faculty of thought, and the word qi 气 denotes lingqi 靈氣, that is, the "spiritual mind." Zhuang Zi here distinguishes three modes of knowing: sense-perception, conceptual thinking and what James Liu calls "intuitive cognition." To Zhuang Zi, the highest mode of knowing is intuitive cognition that suspends both sense-perception and conceptual thinking. Zhuang Zi calls this absolutely free state of mind youxin 游心, or "wandering mind." Thus he describes its journey:

The spirit spreads forth on all sides and there is no point to which it does not reach. It attains to the heaven above and embraces the earth beneath. Influencing all creations, its form cannot be portrayed. The traveling of the mind to the infinite is also called by Zhuang Zi zuochi 坐騁, or "sitting and galloping." The Qing scholar Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-92) interpreted the term and said: "The body sits squarely but the spirit travels to the six limits (lluxu 六虚);" "[he] sitting concentrated, the four seasons (siying 四應) gallops around him." Like Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi also holds that the cognition of Dao is a pure spiritual activity. It is trans-empirical because it does not rely on sense experience for recognition of Dao. It is also trans-temporal-spatial, extending as it does in all directions to the infinite.

Xun Zi 荀子 (?313-238 B.C.), a Confucian scholar contemporary with Zhuang Zi, also espoused the idea of a quiet and still mind in cognition. He advanced the notion of xu yi er jing 虛壹而靜 ("empty, unified and still"), which

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18 Chinese Theories of Literature, 33.
19 Zhuang Zi, 3:544.
20 Ibid., 1:150.
he regarded as the *sine qua non* for the perception of ultimate truth.\(^{22}\) He argues that "the eye, to be perceptive, must not see two ways; the ear, to be vigilant, must not hear two directions,"\(^{23}\) and that "if mind remains still, one does not observe the black and the white in front of him and does not hear the drums and storms sounding beside his ears."\(^{24}\) Xun Zi, more than did Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, emphasized the role of external objects in rousing and evoking the working of the mind.\(^{25}\) He termed the process *jinghe ganying* ("correspondence of spirits"),\(^{26}\) which Yang Liang, his commentator in the Tang dynasty (618–907), explained: "By *jinghe*, [Xun Zi] meant the fusion of the spirit of the eye and the ear with the object in sight, and by *ganying* the response [of the mind] to the inspiration of the external object."\(^{27}\) Clearly, Xun Zi stressed both the subjective initiative of the mind and the objective determinant of things, and his theory greatly influenced the formation of the aesthetics of *miaowu* in Chinese poetics, as we shall see shortly.

Both Daoist and Xun Zi's assumptions about intuitive cognition shaped Chinese artistic thinking that started to develop in the Wei and Jin periods (220–

\(^{22}\)Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1918), anno., *Xun Zi jijie* 荀子集解 (Taipei: Shijie shuju chubanshe, 1955), 264.

\(^{23}\)Ibid., 5.

\(^{24}\)Ibid., 258.

\(^{25}\)Daoist assumptions have been, for decades, criticized for their transcendentalist tendencies by Chinese "Marxist" critics. However, as I shall discuss in next chapter, Daoist transcendentalism is grounded on the assumption that to know the world it is sufficiently enough to know the self, an assumption that is embedded in the root concept of "the unity between man and nature" (*tian ren he yi* 天人合一). For a discussion of Daoist transcendentalism and its influence on artistic thinking in Chinese literature, see Qi Xubang 齊桂林, *Daojia xiangyang yu Zhongguo gudai wenxue jilun* 道家思想與中國古代文學理論 (Beijing: Beijing shifan xueyuan chubanshe, 1988), 36–60.

\(^{26}\)Xun Zi, 274.

\(^{27}\)Ibid.
Lu Ji (261-303) is said to be the first who dwelled on the subject and his theory was founded precisely on Daoist and above all Xun Zi's ideas. In his "On Literature" (Wen fu 文賦), Lu Ji wrote:

Taking his position at the hub of things, [the writer] contemplates the mystery of the universe; he feeds his emotions and his mind on the great works of the past.

Moving along with the four seasons, he sighs at the passing of time; gazing at the myriad objects, he thinks of the complexity of the world.

He sorrows over the falling leaves in virile autumn; he takes joy in the delicate bud of fragrant spring.

At first he withholds his sight and turns his hearing inward; he is lost in thought, questioning everywhere.

His spirit gallops to the eight ends of the universe; his mind wanders along vast distances.

He sees past and present in a moment; he touches the four seas in the twinkling of an eye.

Several things need to be pointed out. First, Lu Ji introduces into the literary field the Daoist assumption of xuanlan as an essential concept for artistic thinking. He applies the notion to literary writing, positing an exquisiteness of the literary mind in the creative process. Artistic thinking, like the cognition of Dao, is also trans-empirical, trans-temporal-spatial, for it "gallops to the eight ends of the universe."
ends of the universe and wanders along vast distances." A quiet and empty mind is of crucial importance, hence the poet must "withhold his sight" (shou shi 收视) and "turn his hearing inward" (fan ting 反听). Second, Lu Ji, following Xun Zi, attaches great importance to external objects as the stimuli of artistic thinking. If, in operation, the literary mind transcends time, space, and even objects, the process itself is launched into operation by the poet's sensitive response to nature. This initial stage of artistic thinking is known as ganwu 感物, or "responding to things," which, after Lu Ji, formed a classic notion in Chinese literary criticism. Lastly, Lu Ji holds that artistic thinking is a process of creation. The ultimate goal of xuanlan is not to view the object per se but to identify with the "spiritual truth" (shenli 神理, i.e., Dao) that transforms it. Lu Ji describes the process as "taxing Non-being to demand Being" (ke xuwu yi ze you 課虛無以責有) and "knocking on silence to seek sound" (kou jimo er qiu yin 呷寂寞而求音), and to do so it requires an intuitive apprehension of the object on the part of the poet.

Lu Ji's assumptions about creative writing were echoed by Liu Xie (ob. ca. 523) in his monumental book entitled The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons (Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍). To do Liu Xie justice, Lu Ji drew heavily on the previous philosophical texts for ideas and even terminology, whereas Liu Xie, apart from borrowing immediately from Lu Ji and distantly from Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi and Xun Zi, employed a new term shensi 神思, often translated as "spiritual thinking," to illustrate artistic thinking in creative
writing. He thus defined the nature of "spiritual thinking," alluding overtly to a statement in the *Zhuang Zi*:

An Ancient said: "One may be on the rivers and sea in body, but his mind remains at the palace gate." This is what I mean by *shen-ssu*, or spiritual thought or imagination.32

The traces of Daoist ideas are most explicit in the following passage where Liu proceeds to discuss the traits, conditions and goals of "spiritual thinking:

One who is engaged in literary thought travels far in spirit. Quietly absorbed in contemplation, his thinking reaches back one thousand years; and with only the slightest movement of his countenance, his vision penetrates ten thousand *li*; he creates the music of pearls and jade between his poetic lines, and he witnesses the rolling of wind and clouds right before his brows and lashes. These things are possible because of the work of the imagination. Through the subtlety of the imagination, the spirit comes into contact with external things. The spirit resides in the mind, and the key to its secret is controlled by both the feelings and the vital force. Physical things reach our minds through our ears and eyes, and the key to their apprehension is the skilled use of language. When the key works smoothly, there is nothing which will not appear in its true form; but when its operation is obstructed, the spirit loses its rationale. For this reason, vacancy and tranquillity are important in the development of literary thinking: the achievement of this state of vacancy and tranquillity entails the cleansing of the five viscera and the purification of the spirit.33

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31 The term, however, was not coined by Liu Xie. Before Liu Xie, Zong Bing 宗炳, a fourth-century painter, had proposed the concept of *shensi* in his "Hua shanshui xu" 畫山水序. In the essay, Zong argues that the ineffable meaning of artwork cannot be obtained through sense-perception, so he postulates the "attainment by mind" (*xingu* 心取), that is, "spiritual perception." He insists that "thousands of meanings proliferate with spiritual thinking" (*wangu rong qi shensi* 万象融其神思), meaning that when spirit travels with objects, their quintessential meanings start to rise. Included in Shen Zicheng 沈子丞, ed., *Lidai lun hua mingzhu huibian* 歷代論畫名著彙編 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1982), 15.


33 Liu Xie, 2: 493. The English translation is from Vincent Shih, 216.
Clearly, the statement regarding the traits of "spiritual thinking" that "his thinking reaches back one thousand years" and "his vision penetrates ten thousand li" is well informed by Daoist assumptions of youxin and zuochi. Besides, Liu also points out the vacancy or tranquillity of the mind as the prerequisite for spiritual thought. He argues that the poet must "cleanse his five viscera" (shuyue wuzang 疏瀹五藏) and "purify the quintessence of his spirit" (zaoxue jingshen 澤雪精神) in order to concentrate and control the "keys and locks" of the creative process. As for the goal of "spiritual thinking," Liu postulates the identification of the mind with the object. Only when "the spirit comes into contact with external things," he later continues, can "all possible vistas open up before it," and

Rules and principles become mere formalities and there is not the least trace of carving or engraving. When one ascends mountains [in such an inspired state], the whole mountain will be tinged with the coloring of his own feelings; and when his eyes rove over the seas, the seas will be saturated with his ideas. He can roam as companion of the wind and the clouds according to the measure of his talents.34

As with Lu Ji, Liu Xie also stresses the importance of objects as the cause of artistic thinking. His assumptions about spiritual thinking in creative writing presuppose the poet's sensitive response and careful observation of nature. He argues elsewhere that "emotion is inspired by things" (qing yi wu xing 情以物興)35 and that "emotion is led by things (qing yi wu qian 情以物遷).36 Here is seen the influence of Xun Zi's notion of "the correspondence of spirits" on early Chinese literary criticism.

34Ibid., 2: 493-4. The English translation is from Vincent Shih, 217.
36Ibid., 2: 693.
Before proceeding to Yan Yu, we should consider briefly Wang Changling 王昌龄 (?698-756), a Tang dynasty poet-critic that was particularly preoccupied with the problem of creative thinking. In the "Precepts of Poetry" (Shi ge 詩格) attributed to him, we find the following passage:

To express one's feelings and write a poem, one should concentrate his thinking. Seeing an object, he should strike it with heart and penetrate deep into its world. It is like climbing on to the peak of a mountain and looking around over the object as if it were in the palm. To see the object this way, one has a full picture of it and should use it thereupon. Wang Changling regards creative writing as a process of correspondence between mind and object. Artistic thought is given rise by the object and in the object it finds its nurture. The same idea is expressed in the following paragraph in which Wang discusses the way a poem comes into being:

Poetry has three precepts. The first is called letting thoughts arise. When one has employed the most subtle thinking for a long time without joining idea and image, so that one's energy is spent and wisdom exhausted, then one stills this profound thinking so that the mind can spontaneously reflect the world, which will suddenly come into being. The second is called responding with thoughts. One seeks out the flavor of words that have come before, hums and chants ancient models, and thoughts will arise in response. The third is called selecting thoughts. One examines images, the mind enters the world, and the spirit unites with objects, which are then attained by the mind.

The passage focuses on image-making in the creative process and thus captures vividly the artistic mind at work. Wang depicts three ways that an image, both external and internal, sensuous and intellectual, comes into being, and in any case the image is produced by the mind's actively responding to the external world. Therefore, object (xiang 象) in both narrow and loose senses, is

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37 Cited in Kukai 空海 (774-835), Wenjing mifu lun 文鏡秘府論 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1975), 129-130.

38 Guo Shaoyu and Wang Wensheng, Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan, 2:89. The English translation is taken from Pauline Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition, 185.
assigned with a more decisive role in the creative process by Wang Changling than by Lu Ji and Liu Xie. Without examining or reflecting on the object, thought can never spring into operation in whichever way prescribed.

With the appearance of Yan Yu, the term miaowu became the catchword for artistic thinking in Chinese literary criticism. Yan Yu summed up the previous assumptions about artistic thinking and presented them from an entirely different perspective. The term appears in his *Canglang's Discussions of Poetry* as follows:

In general, the way [tao] of Ch'an lies in miraculous awakening, and so does the way of poetry. Moreover, Meng Hsiang-yang [Meng Hao-jan] was far inferior to Han T'ui-chi [Han Yu] in learning, and the reason why his poetry nevertheless surpassed the latter's was nothing but his complete reliance on miraculous awakening. Only through awakening can one "ply one's proper trade" and "show one's true colors."39

As is made clear, miaowu is a concept of Chan Buddhist origin, and Yan Yu borrows it to postulate spontaneous workmanship and a subtle, exquisite mind in literary writing. Yan Yu is known for his discussion of poetry in terms of Chan. Such a practice, commonly referred to as *yi Chan yu shi* 記佛喻詩, was not only popular among poets and critics in his own time, but the incorporation of Buddhist ideas into poetry writing can be traced back to the scholars in the Wei and Jin periods when Buddhism was beginning to develop on the Chinese soil. The question whether Yan Yu and other critics used Chan as a metaphor for poetry or whether they considered artistic endeavor to be identical with religious attainment is a complicated one, but they certainly discerned some commonalities between the two types of experience and thus found in Chan a

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convenient analogy in talking about poetry.\textsuperscript{40} Yan Yu differed from other critics in that he advocated expression of "nature and emotion" (xingqing 性情) and based his discussions of poetry on "inspired feelings" (xingqu 興趣). In this connection, his theory of miaowu smacks less of religious Chan Buddhism and comes closer toward an aesthetics of artistic thinking. According to Richard John Lynn, miaowu in Yan Yu means essentially two things:

> In formal terms enlightenment (wu) meant the achievement of perfect intuitive control over the poetic medium, but in psychological or spiritual terms it meant the attainment of a state of being where subjective self, medium of communication, and objective reality became one.\textsuperscript{41}

It is the second aspect of enlightenment, i.e., its psychological or spiritual dimension, that is the focus of our present discussion, though, as Lynn also points out, "intuitive control and intuitive cognition seem to be opposite sides of the same coin."\textsuperscript{42} The most Chan-imbued and theoretical part of Canglang's Discussions of Poetry is the first section entitled "An Analysis of Poetry" (Shi bian 詩辯). After saying that the way of poetry lies in miraculous awakening, Yan Yu gives his rationale by proposing two critical notions, biecai 別材 and biequ 別趣:

\textsuperscript{40}The question has puzzled many scholars (see Guo Shaoyu, Canglang shihua jiaoshi, 15-23, 38-40), but in my opinion, Yan Yu, unlike other critics such as Lu Benzhong 呂本中 (1084-1145) and Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206), personally was not very interested in Chan and thus simply used Chan as an analogy in his discussion of poetry, as he himself made clear in the poetry-talk under discussion.


\textsuperscript{42}The `coin,' Lynn says in another article, is "the poem in toto, the fusion of a spontaneous and effortless poetic 'act' with a poetic medium that can perfectly articulate immediate 'pure experience'." Richard John Lynn, "The Sudden and Gradual in Chinese Poetry Criticism: An Examination of the Ch'an-Poetry Analogy," in Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1987), 406.
Poetry involves a separate kind of talent, which is not concerned with books; it involves a separate kind of meaning which is not concerned with principles.43

The "separate kind of talent" (biecai) refers to the unique talent of the poet, namely, his ability of intuitive cognition (wu); and the "separate kind of meaning" (biequ) means the special meanings (i.e., miao) of literary writings. Yan Yu distinguishes three types of poetic enlightenment:

There are different depths and different scopes of enlightenment. There is thoroughly penetrating enlightenment (t’ou-ch’e), and there is enlightenment that only achieves partial understanding (i-chih pan-chieh). The Han and the Wei are indeed supreme, for they did not have to depend upon enlightenment at all! Poets beginning with Hsieh Ling-yun and including the masters of the High Tang possessed thoroughly penetrating enlightenment; although there were others who might have achieved enlightenment, it was never that of the first order.44

Obviously, the "natural enlightenment" (bujia wu) and the "enlightenment that only achieves partial understanding" (yizhi banjie zhi wu) are not Yan Yu's topics of concern. What occupies the critic is the "thoroughly penetrating enlightenment" (touche zhi wu) which he identifies with the "first order" (diyi) of Buddhism. Yan Yu characterizes the highest attainment of miaowu as something that "enters spirit" (ru shen):

The ultimate attainment of poetry lies in one thing: entering the spirit. If poetry enter the spirit, it has reached perfection, the limit, and nothing can be added to it.45

The term ru shen occurs frequently in the writings of Chinese poets and critics, both before and after Yan Yu's time. As James Liu and Richard Lynn have

43 Yan Yu, 26.
45 Yan Yu, 8.
pointed out, the phrase can be interpreted as "entering the marvelous or divinely-inspired realm of perfect, intuitive artistry" or "entering into the life of things, intuitively apprehending their essence and spirit."\(^{46}\) However, whether shen is taken to mean the "spirit" or "essence" of things or the "divinely-inspired realm" of artistry, entering shen entails a penetration into the appearances of the material world to reach the Dao immanent in all things. This highest realm of miaowu has nothing to do with books and principles (li 理). In this state of being one has freed oneself from the limitation of reason and judgment, hence Yan Yu's famous dictum "not touching the path of reason nor falling into the trammel of words" (bu she liu, bu luo yanquan 不涉理路, 不落言筌).\(^{47}\)

However, by saying that "poetry involves a separate talent" that has nothing to do with books, Yan Yu does not imply that books and study are unnecessary. On the contrary, to attain to the highest realm of miaowu, one must prepare himself by going through a laborious process of self-cultivation. Yan Yu proposes several ways and methods for the acquisition of miaowu, and they include, in general, "study" (xue 学), "distinction" (shi 識), "recitation" (shu du 熟讀), and "meditation" (shu can 熟参). According to Yan, one's ability to distinguish between superior and inferior, orthodox and deviant, writings is very crucial. Thus, the student must "find the right entrance" and "maintain a high ambition." He should model on the poetry of the Han, Wei, Jin, and High Tang (8th cent.) periods, and refrain from reading the poetry since the times of Kaiyuan (639-741) and Tianbao (742-755). To possess the ability of judgment, one should recite and thoroughly meditate on the poetry of previous times:

\(^{46}\)Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 37-38; translation from Richard Lynn, "The Sudden and Gradual in Chinese Poetry Criticism," 406.

\(^{47}\)Yan Yu, 26.
First, one must thoroughly recite the Ch'u-tz'u [Elegies of Ch'u, third century B.C. and later], singing them morning and night so as to make them his basis. When he then goes on to recite the Nineteen Ancient Poems [Han Dynasty], the four sections of music bureau ballads, the five-syllabic verse of Li Ling [d. 74 B.C.], Su Wu [ca. 143-60 B.C.], and the other poets of the Han and the Wei, he must do them all from beginning to end. After that, he will take up the collected poems of Li [Li Po] and Tu [Tu Fu] and read them until, lying on top of one another, they become his pillows, just as it happens when the people of today study the Classics. Next, he will take up all the famous masters of the High T'ang, and after he has allowed all of this to ferment in his bosom for a long time, he will become enlightened spontaneously (tzu-jan wu-ju).

Yan Yu does not explain what the student is actually supposed to do in the act of reading other than suggesting the analogy of Chan. To him and other critics, the truth of Chan and the miraculousness of poetry are learned or acquired in similar ways. The process of acquiring poetic enlightenment is the same kind of process of acquiring religious enlightenment. The aims of these two processes may not have anything in common, but the processes or stages that the student goes through in both undertakings are similar, namely, from conscious learning to assimilation and finally to sudden enlightenment.

Through Yan Yu's efforts, the aesthetics of miaowu, a theory of artistic thinking in Chinese literature, was finally formulated. Yet, as with any other theory in Chinese poetics, it was subject to explication, amplification and modification by critics of ensuing ages. Wang Fuzhi, for example, argued against Yan Yu as to the source of artistic thinking. In his opinion, artistic thinking, rather than nurturing on the poetry of the previous times, is based on the poet's real-life experience and is spurred into operation by the immediate natural objects in front of him. He wrote:

[48]Ibid., 1. The translation is from Lynn, 402-403.
Poetry must deal with what you have seen and experienced personally. This is a firm requirement. It is a requirement that you cannot afford to disregard even when you are describing scenes on a big scale in the manner of the lines "In sun and shade the ravines differ" and "Here night and day all earth, / Heavens remain afloat." You will never be able to say "The flat wilderness runs into the ancient provinces of Qing and Xu" by consulting the map; the vision is one that would present itself if you would go up some storied building and see for yourself.49

Wang captured the intuitive characteristics of artistic thinking and used another term xianliang 純量, or "thisness," to describe them:

The story about "The monk knocks on the door by moonlight" is pure fantasy, like the recounting of someone else's dream. Even if one of the two renderings is closer than the other, the choice between them must be totally irrelevant. If my point is understood, the poet should be left alone to torture himself with the question whether the monk "knocked on" the door or "pushed" it "open." If the actual scene is to merge with the emotions, then surely the monk can only have either "knocked on" or "pushed open" the door. Further ado is uncalled for as the best and liveliest of poetry comes from adhering to the visual and emotional experience. A line like "Above the great river an orb of a lowering sun" is written with no visual detail opted for before-hand, and "Across the river I inquired of the wood-gatherer" does not come from speculation prior to composition. They are rather examples of the kind of "thisness" (xian liang) that the Zen Buddhists talk about.50

Like miaowu, xianliang is also a term of Buddhist origin. It denotes a way of thinking in which any mediation of thought is suppressed so that things are perceived in their thusness. According to Wang Fuzhi, the best poetry are those composed without deliberation either before or after writing, and whose poetic world is formed in the instant of enlightenment when the transient becomes the constant and the accidental becomes the inevitable. The immediate and unmediated nature of artistic thinking also interested Wang Shizheng 王士禛.

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50 Ibid. The translation with modification is from Siu-kit Wong, 65.
(1634-1711), who expounded it from the perspective of what he called *shenyun* "spirit and tone". Wang Shizhen was a fervent advocate of Yan Yu's assumptions such as "the antelope hangs by its horns" (*lingyang gua jiao* 羚羊掛角), "the image in the mirror" (*jing zhong zhi xiang* 鏡中之象) and "the moon in water" (*shui zhong zhi yue* 水中之月). By the notion of "spirit and tone" Wang argued for a poetic world marked by the qualities of purity, profundity and transcendence. Such a poetic world dwells, as it were, in a suprasensory realm and can only be encountered in the moment of spiritual enlightenment which Wang termed *xing hui shen dao* 興會神到:

It is known that Wang Wei painted the banana tree in snow. In the same vain he wrote his poetry. For example, the poem that begins with the lines "Several times the maple on the Jiujiang turns green, / A stretch of white is the five lakes around Yangzhou," uses in a stretch several names that do not belong together, such as "Linglan Town," "Fuchun Village," "Shitou City" and so forth. In general, the poets in the old times write and draw only by encountering with inspiration and spirit. If he carves the edge of the boat to seek the sword, he will lose the essence of his art.\(^{51}\)

The poet Wang Wei gathers in his poem the names of the places that are not related to one another. He does not take into account their geographical locales but simply uses them as his spirit encounters them. The allusion to Wang Wei's painting of banana in snow was first made by Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031-1095) in his *Notes from Mengxi* (*Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談). Most people thought that the painting was faulty because of its blind juxtaposition of banana, a tropical plant, with snow. Shen Kuo, however, remarked: "The painting was done in a moment of spiritual encounter. It thus renders principle into the

Wang Shizhen gave Shen Kuo his full assent with regard to this statement.

2) The characteristics of *miaowu*

From the outline of its historical development, *miaowu* as a way of thinking existed in Chinese thought from the very beginnings, though the assumption was not systematically proposed as theory of artistic thinking until by Yan Yu in the Song period (960-1279). The notion in its crude form evolved from the Daoist and Confucian texts and was consummated in the practice of Chan Buddhism. It was first a philosophical, religious assumption and was later borrowed into properly literary fields. It has, in short, undergone several stages of development, given different names in the course of time by different philosophers and critics: *xuanlan* and *youxin* by Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, *xu yi er jing* by Xun Zi, *shensi* by Liu Xie, *miaowu* by Yan Yu, *xianliang* by Wang Fuzhi, and, lastly, *xing hui shen dao* by Wang Shizhen. Despite the evolved development over some two thousand years, certain basic features of the notion have remained unchanged. In the remainder of this chapter I shall attempt a delineation of them, following an examination of the process of *miaowu*.

Upon a close look at the assumptions of Chinese critics, *miaowu* as artistic thinking stresses at once subjective thought and objective sense-experience. It is a cognitive process characterized by an intimate interaction between the aesthetic subject and the object of its study. Critical discussions of it do not concentrate exclusively on the subject, neither the object, but on the point where the subject and the object fuse with each other and where artistic

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52Shen Kuo, *Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談 (Guoxue jiben congshu ed.), 244:107.
enlightenment is given to rise. Viewed from the interaction of the subject and the object, or, the mind and things, the process of miaowu can be viewed as composed of three consecutive stages, each being contingent upon the other:

a. "Interaction between the mind and the object" (xin wu gan ying 心物感應). This marks the beginning of the artistic thinking of miaowu. It begins with the poet's intense observation or sensitive response to the external object (hence the stage can also be termed guan wu 観物 or gan wu 感物), be it a tangible entity from nature or literary writings of previous times. Hui Hong 惠洪 (1071-1128), a monk and scholar, summed up the whole process of miaowu as "miraculous observation and imaginative thought" (miao guan yi 妙觀臆想), which testifies to the importance of this preliminary stage. The "imaginative thought," which is the quintessence of artistic thinking, begins inevitably with a "miraculous observation of the object." Sensitive response to the object is extremely important because it stirs the heart, unbalances the psychological built and stimulates thought with powerful incentives, as is expressed in a statement from the "Records of Music" (Yue ji 樂記):

Music is produced by the stir of the heart, which is brought about by the object. Responding to the object, [the heart] stirs and expresses itself in music.

Music is produced by the "stir of the heart," made possible by the external object from nature. Without the stimulus from the object, man cannot be aroused, whereas without the rising of the heart, aesthetic activity can never start its operation. Lu Ji and critics after him realized the contingence of the object on


the stir of the heart and consequently on artistic thinking, hence their stress on sensitive response to the object prior to writing.

The stir of the heart incurred under an external stimulation is described as *xing* 興, or "stimulation," by Chinese poets and critics. Thus the Song scholar Li Zhongmeng 李仲蒙 (fl. 12th century) wrote: "Seeking the object in order to arouse feelings is called 'stimulation,' wherein the feelings are moved by the object." The Qing scholar Wu Qiao 吳喬 (ca. 1660) also stated that "stimulation is what is aroused by responding to the object." Clearly, by "stimulation" is meant a series of emotional reactions, truncated as follows, as a result of responding to the object. First, the rise of emotion. In observing the external object, a feeling of empathy with nature arises in the heart. Since, as Liu Xie has said, "emotion is led by the object," at this moment the mind is preoccupied with the object in front of it. On the strength of the emotive force from within the subject, a centripetal movement between the mind and the object is under way. Next, the rise of emotion evolves into the rise of thought. Wang Shizhen related the momentum, saying, "upon being aroused through an association with the object, emotion comes and spiritual encounter ensues, all in leaps and bounds." In the contemplation of the object, all images rise in proliferation. The mind opens up for reception or recreation, and thereupon artistic thinking begins its spiritual journey.

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55 Cited by Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223-1296) in *Kun xue ji wen* 㝷學記聞, anno. Weng Yuanqi 翁元圻 (Si bu beiyao ed.), 3. 4a.

56 Wu Qiao, *Weilu shihua* 維爐詩話, included in Guo Shaoyu and Fu Shousun 福壽 ром, eds., *Qing shihua xubian* 清詩話續編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), 1:479.

57 Wang Shizhen et al., *Shiyou shi zhuan lu* 詩友詩傳錄, included in Ding Fubao, *Qing shihua*, 1:128.
b. "Forgetting both the self and the object" (wu wo liang wang 物我兩忘)

As the previous stage makes it clear, artistic thinking proper is grounded on "observation," understood both literally and metaphorically. It is metaphorical in that besides observing the object by the physical eye, the poet (and, in the case of reading, the reader also) should encounter it with spirit so as to "travel together with it spiritually." This is the observation on a higher level, where the observation of the eye becomes the observation of the mind and the external sense experience is replaced by the internal cognition. We call the observation by mind "internal observation," which is defined by Wang Changling: "Placing the self in the world (jing 境) and examining the world from within,"58 by Fu Zai 符载 (fl. Tang dyn.): "The object is located in the heart (lingfu 靈府) and not exposed to the eye and the ear,"59 and by Zhuang Zi: "Not to see with the eye but to encounter with the spirit" (shen yu 神遇). 60 Paradoxically, to "observe internally" in Chinese philosophy often means not to observe at all. Lu Ji, for example, has shown us that the poet in the creative process often "withholds his sight and turns his hearing inward." Li Shan 李善 (?630-689) interpreted the phenomenon, saying: "To withhold the sight and turn the hearing inward is neither to see nor to hear."61 This is because the ultimate goal by observing the object is to realize the Dao immanent in it, and to do so one should transcend any concrete sight and hearing. He should, in other words, suspend

58"Shi ge," included in Guo Shaoyu and Wang Wensheng, Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan, 2:89.


60Zhuang Zi, 1:119.

61Li Shan, anno., Wen xuan Li Shan zhu 文選李善注 (Si bu beiyao ed.), 17. 2a.
his sense-perceptions and observe perfect emptiness and stillness of the mind. Only in this state of no consciousness and of no mind can one have another vision and another hearing. "He can," as Zhuang Zi assures,

see where all is dark. He can hear where all is still. In the darkness he alone can see light. In the stillness he alone can detect harmony.62

One way to observe the emptiness and stillness of the mind is to practice what Zhuang Zi called "sitting in forgetfulness" (zuo wang 坐忘).63 The person should first of all forget the object, the very object that has stimulated his thought in the beginning. This is important because the object, sensuous and correlative, shares the utilitarian interest of man and therefore hinders an unbiased observation. Moreover, located in a specific time and space, it constricts the trans-temporal and trans-spacial wandering of the mind. Still more importantly, an object with an specific contour, it prevents the mind from seeing what Lao Zi called the Profound Image (daxiang 大象),64 the formless, soundless, invisible and inaudible ultimate truth. Therefore, by forgetting the object, the mind abstracts it from the pragmatic world to be sought as an aesthetic object, from the individual posture to observe its cosmic spirit, and from the specific time and locale to reflect upon its immortality. This is what is called by Chao Buzhi 慕補之 (1053-1110) "discarding the object so as to reflect upon it" (yi wu yi guan wu 遺物以觀物).65 For, as Li Rihua 李日華 (1565-1635) put it, "only with no single object in mind do smoke, clouds and

63ibid., 1:284.
64Lao Zi, 96.
65"Ba Li Zunyi hua yu tu" 瘋李遷易畫魚圖, in Jibei Chao Xiansheng jilei ji 濟北晁先生雜叢集 (Si bu congkan ed.), 3.20a.
beautiful colors piece together with the spirit of heaven and earth and the marvelous and the mysterious evolve from under the pen."66

While being oblivious to the external object, the person should in the meantime forget himself, a more difficult requirement in the discipline. Zhang Yanyuan 张彦遠 (fl. 9th cent.) wrote: "Concentrating spirit and letting go of imagination, [he] miraculously contemplates [the essence of] nature; forgetting both the object and the self, [he] parts with his body and discards his wisdom."67 By forgetting the self, the mind not only elevates itself above mundane ideas and sentiments but also eliminates conceptual knowledge so that it sees the object in its true nature. This is what is referred to by Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) as "the world without an I" (wu wo zhi jing 無我之境).68 In this state of no-self, the object looks at me and me at the object, both being fused in one continuum. This is also what is often referred to as "to look at the object through the perspective of the object," not knowing what is "I" and what is the object. Like Zhuang Zi's dreaming of the butterfly, the "I" and the object are transformed into each other. In the "world without an I," the perspective of the subject disappears. The self being resolved into thousands of things, it gains insight into the Profound Image, participates in the cosmic operation, and nourish on the eternity of the universe.

c. "Fusion of the self and the object" (wu wo he yi 物我合一). The momentum of miaowu comes with wu miao, i.e., the realization of the ultimate

66 Li Rihua, quoted in Shen Zicheng, Lida luen hua mingzhu huibian, p. 228.

67 Zhang Yanyuan, Lida minghua ji 歷代名畫記 (Congshu jicheng chubian ed.).

68 Wang Guowei, Renjian cihua 人間詞話, anno. by Xu Diaofu 徐詞孚 and collated by Wang Youan 王幼安, included in Huiying cihua, Renjian cihua 晦陰詞話, 人間詞話 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984), 191.
reality or essence of the artwork. This happens in a sudden enlightenment of
the mind, in the transient fusion of it with the external object. The moment is
described by Lu Ji "the encounter of the inspiration" (ying gan zhi hui
應感之會), ⁶⁹ and by Wang Fuzhi "the perfect communion" (miaohé wuyin
妙合無垠). ⁷⁰ Sudden and swift as it is, the moment comes out of a gradual
process marked by an active thinking of the tranquil mind.

To begin with, the aforesaid "forgetting both the self and the object" is not
to quit thinking on the part of the subject. Indeed, underlying the serene
forgetfulness is an active thought that is central to the miaowu process. By
forgetting, in fact, the subject seeks being out of non-being and movement out of
quietude. Outwardly it is non-thinking and non-remembrance, but inwardly
there is nothing that it does not think of or that it does not recall. The empty and
still mind is not an abyss void of activities. It provides boundless space for
imagination and, more precisely, thought of the unconscious. Several traits can
be discerned from the unconscious thought. ⁷¹ The first is its "attentiveness," for
which the empty and still mind has prepared the ground. In fact, in the mind of
Chinese poets "sitting in forgetfulness" and "concentration" are miraculously
united. In the stillness of the mind, the subject concentrates on the object,
whereas the intense concentration adds to the stillness of the mind.
Observation is conducted in stillness, and stillness augments in observation,

⁶⁹Lu Ji, 174.

⁷⁰Jiangzhai shihua, in Ding Fubao, Qing shihua, 1:11.

⁷¹The unconsciouness concerned here is not identical with the Freudian
subconsciousness, which is principally characterized by its identification with the sensual life,
libido, ruled by an automatic reaction, though we cannot deny that there is a vital communication
and interaction between our unconscious or preconscious and the Freudian subconscious. But
the unconscious or preconscious with which we are concerned here is much more profound and
spiritual, and it is here that the aesthetic intuition or miaowu is born.
thereby aesthetic experience evolves onward. The second trait of the unconscious mind is the "remoteness of thought." The emptiness of mind produces psychological distance and the concentration of spirit incurs the upsurging of thoughts. In the infinity provided by the empty mind, the subject observes heaven and earth, scans the ancient and the contemporary, reaching a state where nothing can escape his (in)sight. This is what Zhuang Zi meant by "traveling" (you), or, more precisely in the words of Ji Kang (223-262), "traveling to the Profound" (you xin taixuan). The "exquisiteness of insight" is the third trait of the thought of the unconscious. Although the universe appears perplex and inexplicable, the mind in tranquillity and concentration not only travels afar to capture the most distant cosmic spirit but also penetrates deep into the phenomena to grasp the essence of life in the most scrupulous manner. This is depicted by Sikong Tu as "dwelling in quietude and perceiving the mysterious subtleties" (su chu yi mo, miao ji qi wei). The enlightened moment that crowns the process of miaowu occurs wantonly and instantaneously. Lu Ji describes the momentum, saying:

As for the interaction of stimulus and response, and the principle of the flowing and ebbing of inspiration,
You cannot hinder its coming or stop its going.
It vanishes like a shadow, and it comes like echoes.
When the Heavenly Arrow is at its fleetest and sharpest, what confusion is there that cannot be brought to order?
The wind of thought bursts from the heart; the stream of words rushes through the lips and teeth.
Luxuriance and magnificence wait the command of the brush and the paper.

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72 Ji Kang, Ji Kang ji jiaozhu (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1962), 49.
73 Guo Shaoyu, Shi pin jijie (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1965), 5.
Shining and glittering, language fills your eyes; abundant and overflowing, music drowns your ears.\(^74\) Zhong Hong 鍾嶧 (fl. 483-513) termed the transient and wanton happening of enlightenment *zhixun* 直尋, or "direct pursuit." He argues that the best poetry up to his time all possess the quality of "direct pursuit."\(^75\) Sikong Tu depicts the inspired moment as swift as the twinkling of an eye: "Meeting by chance, it seems easy of access; seeking, we find it hard to secure. / Even if it resembles, it shifts against our will the moment we grasp."\(^76\) Because of the wanton occurrence of inspiration, the poet should seize the moment promptly, as Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) said: "Writing poetry is like chasing in the urgent fire, / Once lost the fresh scenery is hard to imitate."\(^77\)

The three stages of the process of *miaowu* may be recapitulated in terms of a famous saying from Chan Buddhism:

Thirty years ago before I was initiated into Chan, I saw mountains as mountains, rivers as rivers. Later when I got an entrance in knowledge, I saw mountains not as mountains, rivers not as rivers. Now that I have achieved understanding of the substance, mountains are still mountains, and rivers still rivers.

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\(^74\)Lu Ji, 174. The translation is by Achilles Fang, 20.

\(^75\)The line, " says Zhong Hong, "[by Hsu Kan (170-217)] 'Thinking of you is like flowing water' merely relates what struck the eye. [Ts'ao Chih's line] 'The high terrace—much sad wind' simply states what was seen. [The line by Chang Hua] 'In the clear morning I climb Lung Peak' makes no use of allusion. And as for [Hsieh Ling-yun's line] 'The bright moon shines on the piled snow,' could this have been derived from a canonical or historical text? Examine the best expressions past and present; the majority of them are not patched or borrowed. They all derive from the direct pursuit of the subject." *Shi pin* 詩品, included in He Wenhuan 何文燁 *Lidai shihua* 歷代詩話 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1974), 8. The English translation is from J. T. Wixted, "The Nature of Evaluation in the *Shih-p'in* (Gradings of Poets) by Chung Hung (A.D. 469-518)," in Susan Bush and Christian Murck, ed., *The Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 240.

\(^76\)Ibid., 6.

In the initial stage when the poet first responds to nature, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers. There is a perfect correspondence between his sense-perceptions and the physical features of the objects. When in the second stage the poet is oblivious of both nature and his own self, he see mountains not as mountains and rivers not as rivers, the objects being transformed in the quiet contemplation and reflection of the poet. In the third stage when the poet achieves a sudden enlightenment and becomes one with the eternity, mountains and rivers are restored to their original features. Outwardly, the mountains and the rivers in this final stage seem to have changed little, but they have undergone the most subtle and profound contemplation on the part of the poet and therefore cannot be identified with those in the first stage. The process of miaowu, therefore, is a process of transformation on the part of the subject.

The observation of the process of miaowu makes it clear that, despite the Chinese translation zhijue, miaowu as artistic thinking in Chinese poetry at once resembles and differs from the intuitive knowledge as the latter is understood in the West. It resembles the latter in that, obviously, it stresses on vision and direct apprehension of it without reasoning, judgment and other conceptual activities. The resemblance, however, stops here and what we are faced with is differences in some fundamental terms. First, intuition as is understood in the West is of a mystic origin. In the accounts of Kant, Bergson and Husserl, as in that of Plato, intuition stands for a priori knowledge that is either imparted by a divine force or self-evident and self-originative. It is a pure mental state in which sense experience is secondary or non-existent, hence the words "mystic intuition," "extrasensory perception," "hunch," etc. In contrast, miaowu is a way of thinking where sense-perception or sense-experience plays an important role. It is given to rise by the enticement of the object and the
mind's sensitive response to it, escalates in the vacancy but in fact active reflection of the mind, and finally consummates in the unity of the mind and the object. Without the sensory object and the sense perception and experience on the part of the subject there can never be the type of the knowledge of miaowu.

Second, intuition is a given. Whether "pure intuition," "impulses of life," or "cogitatio," as a way of knowing it is innate in, and not acquired through postnatal efforts by, an individual. Miaowu, on the contrary, depends heavily on cultivation and even arduous disciplinary training. As has been already said, miaowu both stresses sudden enlightenment and gradual contemplation. The latter is more important because the final awakening is contingent upon the preparation of the previous stages. Preparation for miaowu can be understood in two ways: before the actual process of miaowu it is study, the accumulation of knowledge. Liu Xie emphasized that one must acquire learning in order to maintain a store of precious information, and to contemplate the nature of reason so as to enrich his talents; he must search deeply and experience widely in order that he may exhaustively evoke the source of light; he must master literary traditions in order to make his expressions felicitous and smooth.78

Lu Benzhong also said that "enlightenment must be obtained through efforts and not by chance" and that "the principle of enlightenment lies between assiduity and indolence."79 In the process of miaowu preparation refers to the vacancy and tranquillity of the mind. Yan Yu states that "brewing long in the bosom one will naturally become enlightened" (wu ru 悟入).80 To become enlightened, the poet must suspend all thoughts, concentrating on the things

78Liu Xie, 2:493. The translation is from Shih, 216-7.

79Cited by Hu Zi 胡仔 (1147-1167) in Tiaoxi yuyin conghua qianji 茗溪派隱囊話前集 (Si bu beiyao ed.), 49. 1b.

80Yan Yu, 1.
gathered in his mind. Apart from these dissimilarities, there are some other characteristics that may capture intuition to a certain degree but define miaowu quintessentially.

First, miaowu is marked by a holistic grasp of the object. As artistic thinking miaowu is imbued with a profound cosmic consciousness. It is seen, in operation, "gallop to the eight ends of the universe" and "wander along vast distances." It is the so-called "great-man-travelling-in-the-universe" mode of thinking (daren you yuzhou 大人游宇宙), or a thinking with, in Carolyn Bloomer's words, "an imagined viewpoint well above the earth." It is a cosmic vision, operating on strength of the mind's inner perception rather than the out-stretching of the eye. It is a cognitive means that the poet employs for a totalistic mastery of the universe. The poet's cosmic vision is, further, informed by an awareness of the dynamics of nature's life. In the poet's mind, nature is an organic structure, or, in the words of Qian Mu, an "animated, merry and mirthful whole." The poet feels the thriving of its life in his spiritual wandering. He submerges in it, nurtures his soul in it, and achieves unity with it through his artwork. As Zong Baihua has remarked, the phrase qiyun shengdong 氣韻生動 (literally, "spirit, rhyme, vigorous") means "the rhythms of life" (shengming de ludong 生命的律動). This phrase popularly used in the Wei and Jin periods.

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81 The phrase is derived from Sima Xiangru's description of the mind of the fu writers. See Note 28.


83 Qian Mu 錢穆, Xiandai Zhongguo xueshu lunheng 現代中國學術論衡 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1984), 242.

84 Zong Baihua 宗白華, Yi jing 意境 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1987), 114. The phrase qiyun shengdong is by Xie He 謝赫 (fl. 479-502) from his "Guhua pin lu" 古畫品錄, included in Shen Zicheng, 17.
to describe the best quality of an artwork well indicates the sense of life on the part of critics. According to Zong, the essential characteristic of Chinese art is its "suspended perspective," or its "heavenly eye" (tianyan). The artist looks at the world macroscopically as if from a suprasensory realm. Yet, his sense of life and, what is more, his participation in it enable him to appreciate the innate vitality of things, penetrate into the core of their life and express the originality of nature and the profound meaning of human life in his most spontaneous and harmonious art form.

Second, miaowu entails vague experience. Partly for the cosmic vision and partly for the aesthetic ideal of Chinese poets, miaowu as artistic thinking aims at a vague experience rather than a distinct understanding of the object. The cosmic consciousness of Chinese poets decides that their way of cognition is totalistic and comprehensive. It gives no heed to details but rather strives to master the "atmosphere," "mood" and "contour" of the object. Moreover, the aesthetic object, the aforesaid Profound Image, sought by Chinese poets is formless and invisible. Thus, Chinese poets, wandering in their spiritual thought, do not seek to emulate the form (xing) of the object but rather to identify with its spirit (shen), hence the phrase shensi. The aesthetic object thus contemplated and presented by Chinese poets is not a precise match-up of colors or lines but an organic whole teeming with emotion and life. To apprehend such an artwork, the reader must likewise rely on vague and yet sensitive experience as does the poet in writing.

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85 The phrase is from Wang Wei's poem "Xiai guo Qinglongsi ye Cao Chanshi" 夏日遇青隆寺曹禅師. Wang Youcheng ji jianzhu 王右丞集箋注, anno. Zhao Diancheng 趙殿成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 1:129.
Third, *miaowu* gives rise to subjective understanding. The elasticity of holistic cognition and vague experience makes it inevitable that different images and emotive moods are contracted from the same object. In addition, if in conceptual thinking there is an one-to-one relationship between the object and the impression received, in intuitive reflection the emotion communes emphatically with the object, causing the latter to transform under its impact. The impression thus perceived is no longer a faithful reflection of the object, but a newly formed entity filled with the wanton perceptions of the subject. Here, the sense of vision fuses with the sense of hearing, and so do the senses of touch and taste. The sound of *pipa* can become the visual "big and small pearls dropping on the jade plate," and the blossoms of the apricot may well cause hubbub to the ear.\(^{86}\) This is what is called "false impressions," which are, obviously, the results of the projection of the subject's own consciousness. In Chinese poetry and painting such "false impressions" occur frequently, where the invisible becomes visible, the inaudible is audibly heard, and the objects that do not belong together are all juxtaposed. Underlying all these "false impressions" is the subjective mentality of Chinese artists lost in the contemplative and meditative thought of *miaowu*.

\(^{86}\) These are famous lines from Bai Juyi's (772-846) poem "Pipa xing" 琵琶行 and Song Qi's (998-1061) "Tune: Yulouchun" 玉樓春 respectively.
CHAPTER II

*MIAOWU AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE THOUGHT*

*Miaowu* as artistic thinking in particular and the thought process of the Chinese in general can be best understood from the perspective of Chinese culture. Generally speaking, anthropologists agree that people's thought processes are intimately related to the culture in which they are raised and in which they live. Some anthropologists have asserted a cause-and-effect relation between cultural institutions and cognitive processes. They contend that cognitive differences imply the underlying cultural differences, and vice versa. Hence, the study of human thought is, in a very broad sense, the study of culture.¹

¹The cosmology of *tian ren he yi* 天人合一

From the discussions in the previous chapter, *miaowu* as artistic thinking is a holistic, intuitive cognitive process. Such a thought process comes close in many ways to the primitive thinking in the early stages of human development.²

²In fact, some scholars have gone as far as to directly relate Chinese traditional thought to primitive mentality. Levy-Bruhl, for example, believed that the Chinese and Indian world pictures exemplified primitive thought. See his *How Natives Think*, trans. L. A. Clares (London: Allen & Unwin, 1926), 380-381.
According to Levy-Bruhl, the hallmarks of primitive thought are the belief that human affairs and natural phenomena are influenced or directed by occult supernatural beings and powers, and the failure of the primitive to see differences between things that, to the modern mind and perceptions, are absolutely distinct and often not even related. Levy-Bruhl names these two characteristics "mystic causation" and "mystic participation," and has coined the term "prelogical" to characterize the rules by which ideas in the primitive are formed. The primitive thinking described by Levy-Bruhl was true alike of the Chinese, Indians, and Westerners when they were in the primordial stages of their cultural histories. However, as human history advanced, as the "collective presentations" in each of the three parts of the world began to change, their cognitive processes set upon different paths of development toward refined mentality. What happened in the East was that the primitive thinking by way of analogical induction and intuition was refined and rendered more dependable, yet Western thought moved away from these "crude" ancient methods towards what was believed more dependable and more responsible procedures. Governing the separation of Chinese and Western thoughts were the changed collective representations in each of the two cultural traditions.

The concept of "mechanical causation" rather than "mystic causation" in world views marked the break of Western thought from primitive mentality. Using reductive methods, it probed into the underlying principles that were thought to be the causes of the physical world. The earliest attempts were made by such ancient Greek philosophers as Thales, Anaximenes, and Heraclitus, who defined

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4 Levy-Bruhl maintains that every culture is characterized by a set of general beliefs, which he calls "collective representations." Ibid., 37.
the physical reality as one basic element such as water, air and fire.® Then
came the theory of four-elements of Aristotle. Although Aristotle developed the
organic aspects of the world-picture by adding biological traits to each of the four
elements including water, air, fire, and earth, he nonetheless tried to reduce the
world to the cause of one primordiality. Philosophers and scientists from the
seventeenth century onward discarded the Aristotelian four elements and
recommended earnestly the "mechanical hypothesis of corpuscles" that resulted
in the classic mechanics of the Newtonian universe. The establishment of the
atomic theory in the nineteenth century represents the consummation of the
formal thought of Western culture. The central procedure of the atomic theory is
such that it takes the "hypothesized" and "absolute" spaces as the background to
place each dispersed atom. By doing so it shows that if a particle of matter
occupies a particular point in space-time, it is because another particle has
pushed it there.

At the time people in the West engaged themselves in the search for the
mechanical cause of the physical world, the Chinese envisaged an organic
picture of the universe and developed from it a holistic thinking process. The
concepts of Yin and Yang and Five Agents (wu xing 五行), often referred to as
the scientific or pre-scientific ideas of the Chinese, were the points of departure
for Chinese holistic thinking.® The words yin 陰 and yang 陽 stand for the
sexual distinctions of man and woman in the human world and by projection they
are believed to be the two fundamental principles or forces in the universe. Five

®See Bruno Snell, The Discovery of the Mind: the Greek Origins of European Thought,

®The word "agent" is a better translation than "element" because, in addition to the
meaning of "elements," wuxing indicate the patterns of the transformation of the physical world as
well as their influence on man.
Agents include metal (金 jin), wood (木 mu), water (水 shui), fire (火 huo) and earth (土 tu), and are believed to comprise all the substances and, above all, all the patterns of change in the universe. Both the concepts of Yin and Yang and Five Agents involved a holistic approach of the universe, but they were later incorporated into a larger and more magnificent world-picture, namely, the doctrine of qi ("air" or "breath"). At the lowest level of thinking, qi can be understood as an object. But, unlike the rigid, space-bound atoms, it permeates everywhere, embracing and conjoining all things within one all-inclusive unity. More importantly, qi indicates the change and the movement of things that are not governed by any rigid causation. It, in other words, stands for a physical world that is not subject to any force from outside, but is self-sustained and self-motivated.

While the atomic theory of modern Europe presents a more precise and more detailed account of the physical reality than the Aristotelian four elements, the theory of qi is more holistic and impressionistic than the concepts of Yin and Yang and Five Agents. Such a holistic thinking is founded on a conscious belief of the world as one with human beings, just as the concept of "mechanical causation" in Western thought has stemmed from the ontological dualism that germinated in the philosophical conflicts between Heraclitus and Parmenides and...

7There are numerous discussions of the characteristics of qi in Chinese philosophy. Zhuang Zi, for example, wrote: "Qi conjoins all things under heaven" (Zhuang Zi, 3:733). The Song dynasty scholar Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077) said: "Qi is the noumenon of the absolute (taixu)" (Zhang Zi quanshu 張子全書 [Guoxue jiben congshu ed.], 45:23). Wang Fuzhi extended Zhang's idea, saying "The void (xukong) is nothing but qi... except which there are neither other things nor spaces" (Zhang Zi Zengmeng zhu 張子正蒙注 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975], 8, 11).

8According to Xu Shen 許慎 (30-124), the word qi is a pictograph originally written as 會. The pictograph indicates such elusive forces as wind, cloud, smoke or mist, and therefore emphasizes the movement and transformation of things. Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1815), anno., Shuo wen jie zi zhu 說文解字注, anno. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 20.
was established in its final form by Plato. In his *Republic*, Plato divides the world into two parts: the concrete, historical realm in which man lives and the transcendental, eternal world above or beyond it. The physical world here is but the shadow or representation of the suprasensory world, and the objective of human effort is to identify the truer and better world out there. This dualistic view of the universe was later confirmed by the concepts of God and man, heaven and hell and so on, in the religion of Christianity, though the Christian world-view is said to be less disjunctive than the Platonic.9 Due to the ontological dualism, people in the West developed a detached intellectual curiosity, a reflective motivation that sought to lay bare the hidden principles of the reality. It is believed that everything in the world is created by or transformed from the primordiality of the world such as "God," "monad," "atom," "molecule," "matter," and so forth. It is therefore characteristic of Western philosophy and theology to seek "the first mover," to prove, for example, that God is the creator of all things on earth. The stipulation of the relation between cause and effect thus becomes a basic method of thinking for Western philosophers and theologians. This accounts for the formal thinking that developed along the lines of "deduction," "the chain of being," "linear evolution" and so on.10

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9According to Holly Wallace Boucher: *In the Platonic conception the spiritual truths are shadowed by the unreal visible world. But to Christianity the unbridgeable gap between Creator and creation has been bridged by the Word made flesh. Creation itself becomes part of God's truth, because God has become part of concrete experience. The visible world does more than represent truth, it partakes of truth." See Boucher, "Metonymy in Typology and Allegory, with a Consideration of Dante's Comedy," in Morton W. Bloomfield, ed., *Allegory, Myth, Symbol* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 135.

10As Joseph Needham has also noticed, the trend of modern Western science seems to be moving towards a rectification of the mechanical Newtonian universe by a better understanding of the meaning of natural organization. Whitehead is the greatest representative of this trend philosophically, but the trend runs through all modern investigations in the methodology and the world-picture of the natural sciences. For a discussion of this move of modern Western science, see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. 2, *History of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: the Cambridge University Press, 1956), 291.
In contrast to the ontological dualism in Western thought, the indigenous
Chinese philosophy holds a fundamentally monistic view of the universe. The
cosmic principle, or Dao, may transcend the physical phenomena, but it is totally
immanent in this world, and there is not a suprasensory world that lies beyond, is
superior to, or is different in kind from the world of physical beings. This
ontological monism was responsible for a view of the world as a vast organism, a
perception of all things as self-containing and self-transforming. Things behave
in particular ways not because of any prior actions (God, atom, etc.) or impulsion
of other things, but because their positions in the ever-moving cyclical universe
are such that they are endowed with intrinsic natures which make their behaviors
inevitable for them. As Joseph Needham describes it,

It was a universe in which this organization came about, not because of
fiats issued by a supreme creator-lawgiver, which things must obey
subject to sanctions impossible by angels attendant; nor because of the
physical clash of innumerable billiard-balls in which the motion of the one
was the physical cause of the impulsion of the other. It was an ordered
harmony of wills without an ordainer; it was like the spontaneous yet
ordered in the sense of patterned, movements of dancers in country dance
of figures, none behind, but cooperate in a voluntary harmony of wills.11

Dao is the all-inclusive name for this order, yet it is not a creator, for nothing in
the world is created. Thus, in the Chinese organic thought system, things are
connected rather than caused, and the idea of interdependence replaces the idea
of causality. Hence, instead of probing into the original cause or the final nature
of things, Chinese philosophy heeds more the correlations among things under
one colossal pattern. Or, rather, it is the "inductance," so to speak, or
"resonance" among things that is considered the cause for all the movements
and changes in the world.

11Ibid., 286-287.
Harmony is the keynote of the inductance among cosmic objects and human relations. Not only in human society but also throughout the physical world there is a give and take, a kind of mutual courtesy rather than strife among inanimate powers and processes.\(^\text{12}\) Central to the harmony of the universe is the notion of the unity of the human world and the world of nature. This is expressed in such familiar notions as "the unity of heaven and man," "the give and take of heaven and man" (tian ren xiang yu 天人相與), and "the resonance of heaven and man" (tian ren gan ying 天人感應). Chinese philosophy attaches great importance to the harmonious relation between man and nature. Despite the differences in their philosophical stands, motives and goals, philosophers of different schools join their efforts in seeking the means for harmony between man and his natural environment. For example, a chapter in the Guan Zi 管子 contends that "when man is attuned to the harmony of nature, beauty is born of heaven and earth."\(^\text{13}\) Confucius and his school postulated the commonality between man and heaven, insisting that rituals and music should be molded on heaven and earth and education established on basis of the principles of spirits (shenli 神理). Stressing more emphatically the order of heaven, Xun Zi 孫子 said: "To establish the order of heaven and implement it."\(^\text{14}\) Daoists, especially Zhuang Zi 墨子, argued strongly against man-made regulations and advocated man's harmonious unity with the cosmic principle Dao. They maintained that only in this

\(^{12}\) As Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (176-104 B.C.) said: "The Yin and the Yang move parallel to each other, but not along the same road; they meet one another, and each in turn operates as the controller." Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露 (Zhongguo zixue mingzhu jicheng zhenben ed.), 12. 4b-5a.

\(^{13}\) In Zhuzi jicheng 諸子集成 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1983), 5:242.

\(^{14}\) Xun Zi, 211.
way will man return to nature, transform with things and ultimately become one with Dao.

The harmony between man and nature resolves the opposition between subject and object and makes impossible man's attempt to dominate the physical world. Thus, Chinese philosophy began with a rejection of man's efforts to analyze the physical world through his own intellect. It detests the premise, so characteristic of Western metaphysics, that the structure of nature is the same as man conceives it. All human efforts in ordering it will result in superficial structures, thus distorting the original nature of the universe. As Zhuang Zi wrote,

The understanding of the men of ancient times went a long way. How far did it go? To the point where some of them believed that things have never existed—so far, to the end, where nothing can be added. Those at the next stage thought that things exist but recognized no boundaries among them. Those at the next stage thought there were boundaries but recognized no right and wrong. Because right and wrong appeared, the Way was injured.\textsuperscript{15}

Since all imposed orders are forms of distortion, we must give nature back its original forms. We must understand that "the duck's legs are short, and to stretch them means pain; the crane's legs are long, and to shorten them means suffering."\textsuperscript{16} Each form of being has its own nature and exists in its own place. Man is but only one being out of millions of others and therefore has no right to impose his viewpoint upon others as the right viewpoint. The extinction of the tension between man and nature engendered the notion of "approaching the object from the perspective of the object," a classic concept central to Chinese


\textsuperscript{16}Zhuang Zi, 2:317.
philosophy and the cause for the analogical thinking of traditional Chinese thought.

2. The mechanisms of analogical thinking in the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*)

   The detached intellectual curiosity caused the rise of rational procedures in Western thought, whereas the ontological monism in Chinese philosophy produced the concept of reciprocal correspondence that in turn bred an analogical, intuitive-associative thought process. H. Wilhelm and others refer to this thought process as "coordinative" or "correlative" thinking, quite unlike the "subordinative" thinking of the West.\(^1^7\) The concept of Five Agents, for example, differs from the theory of four-elements in that the latter intends to find the root from which the universe is derived, whereas the former heeds more the relations of mutual constriction and transformation among things.\(^1^8\) They represent not only elements or attributes but patterns of motion and above all their impact on man. More interestingly, while no one in ancient Greece found earth the primordial element due to its sundry ingredients, earth is regarded as the "head of the Five Agents" (*wuxing zhi shou* 五行之首) just because of its complexity.\(^1^9\) The fortune and misfortune of earth in Chinese and Western philosophies represent the entirely different thought systems underlying the two traditions.

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\(^1^7^\) See Needham, 280.

\(^1^8^\) The earliest important discussion of the concept of Five Agents is recorded in the chapter entitled "Hong fan" 洪範 of the *Book of Document* (*Shang shu* 尚書), where they are listed at the head of the nine categories of the methods the Sages used to manage the country, and all refer to the reciprocal relationships of man and his natural environment.

\(^1^9^\) Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu*, 278.
The intuitive-correlative thinking of Chinese thought manifests itself in two specific ways: one is what is called "conceiving images from objects" (guan wu qu xiang 親物取象), and the other "reasoning from analogy" (leibi tui li 類比推理). We find both of the thought processes, or, two procedures of the same cognitive process, clearly at work in the Book of Changes. In "The Commentary on the Appended Phrases" (Xici zhuan 係辭傳) it is written:

In the ancient times, when Pao-hsi ruled over the world, he lifted his head and contemplated the signs in heaven; he bent down and contemplated the orders on earth. He contemplated the patterns [wen] on birds and beasts, and the suitabilities of the earth. He drew [ideas] from his own person, and from objects in distance. Thereupon he invented the Eight Trigrams.20 Although this is but legend about the origin of the Chinese script, it represents the cognitive process and psychic conditions with which the ancient Chinese perceived the world around them. To contemplate heaven, earth and the patterns on birds and beast is to conceive images out of objects, and to draw ideas from his own person and objects in distance is an analogical thinking that proceeds from near to distance and from distance to near. The aim of both the thought processes is to "identify with the virtues of spirits" (tong shenming zhi de 通神明之德) and to "emulate the feelings of ten thousands of things" (lei wanwu zhi qing 類萬物之情).21 They are the thought processes that evolve from empirical observation to conceptual apprehension, and from superficial classification to the mastering of the quintessence.

Ren Jiyu has remarked that "conceiving images out of objects" is one of the basic concepts of the Book of Changes.22 It is at once the method and the

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20 Gao Heng, anno., Zhou yi dazhuan xinzhu 周易大傳新注 (Shandong: Qilu shushe, 1979), 558-559. The English translation is from James Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 18.

21 Ibid., 559.
thought process in which the book is written. A glance through the book reveals that not only the concepts of Yin and Yang but also the invention of the Eight Trigrams (bagua 八卦), the sixty-four hexagrams and the three hundred eighty-four lines (yao 紙) that comprise the trigrams and hexagrams all stem from this basic procedure. Even the composition of the explanatory words for the hexagrams and the composing lines (guaci 卦辞 and yaozi 註辭) is the result of the same analogical thought process. The so-called guan 觀 and qu 取 represent two stages of the procedure: the object of guan is a concrete event of life or object from nature, and the image of qu is the symbol formed at the result of the emulation of that event or object. The entire procedure thus includes the emulation of objects through an empirical observation of them and the construction of various symbols whose divinatory or philosophical significances are the final goal of the whole process.

The formulation of the concepts of Yin and Yang best evidences the working of the process. Both the concepts resulted from the ancients' direct observation of the contradictory and yet complementary phenomena in the world. In the eyes of the ancients, all phenomena in life such as heaven and earth, male and female, day and night, heat and cold, success and failure, etc., carry with them conflicts that inevitably put them in opposition to each other. Based on this direct and somewhat crude observation, the ancients divided all the complex things or concepts of the universe into Yin and Yang categories, represented each by two seemingly abstract lines: the line "-" stands for objects in the Yin category, and "-" for objects in the opposite category. Many speculations exist as to why the two signs instead of others were selected. According to Guo

22Ren Jiuyu 任繼愈, Zhongguo zhexue shi 中國哲學史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1963), 1:17.
Moruo, they are the symbols of the reproductive organs of man and woman.\textsuperscript{23} Gao Heng contends that they stand for the shapes of the two types of bamboo used by the ancients in divination.\textsuperscript{24} Despite the controversy, it is commonly agreed that the formation of the concepts of Yin and Yang is grounded on the contemplation by the ancients of the thousands of objects in the physical world.

The Eight Trigrams, the sixty-four hexagrams, and the three hundred eighty-four lines that comprise the hexagrams are all constructed out of these two basic lines. Each trigram, each hexagram, and even each line of the hexagrams stands for something concrete and abounds in symbolic meanings. The Eight Trigrams represent eight basic elements from the physical world, such as heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain, and marsh. They are written as $\equiv$, $\equiv$, $\equiv$, $\equiv$, $\equiv$, $\equiv$, $\equiv$, and $\equiv$, and called qian 乾, kun 坤, zhen 震, sun 磁, kan 坎, li 离, gen 艮, and dui 兑 respectively. The observation on which the trigrams of qian and kun are based is that the air of Yang ascends and forms the sky, whereas the air of Yin descends and gathers together to form the earth.\textsuperscript{25} The sixty-four hexagrams, formed later at the duplication of the eight trigrams, are conceived in a like manner. Take the hexagram jin 升 for example. The hexagram $\equiv$ means “ascending” and is structured in such a way that the trigram of kun (“earth”) is placed underneath the trigram of li (“fire”). By drawing on the morning sun rising magnificently in the east, the hexagram signifies an object or event in a stage of prosperity. In

\textsuperscript{23}Guo Moruo 郭沫若, Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu 中國古代社會研究, in Moruo wenji 沫若文集 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1963), 14:34.

\textsuperscript{24}Gao Heng, Zhou yi zilun 周易雜論 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1979), 4-5.

\textsuperscript{25}Su wen Wang Bing zhu 素問王冰注 (Si bu beiyao ed.), 2.1b.
direct contrast to the hexagram is the one entitled *mingyi* 明夷. Meaning "the extinction of light," the hexagram 明夷 is formed in an opposite way so that the trigram of *li* is found underneath the trigram of *kun*. Through the fact that the sun sets in the west, it implies an object or event falling out of prosperity into a hopeless situation. From the two examples, both the constituent trigrams and the hexagrams themselves amplify truth by drawing on concrete sensory objects. The same is said of the combination of the three hundred eighty-four lines that form the sixty-four hexagrams as well as the explanatory statements attached to the hexagrams and the composing lines.

In the explanatory statements for the hexagrams and the individual lines the method of "conceiving images out of objects" is refined so that what is suggested by the statement is no longer limited to the specific object or event represented by the hexagram but is extended to cover all the objects or events falling into the same category. In other words, the thought process in the *guaci* and *yaoci* has evolved from simple observation of objects to reasoning through analogy, hence another characteristic of Chinese intuitive-correlative thinking. For example, the hexagram *jin* 金 mentioned in the above is modeled on the sun rising prosperously above the horizon, whereas the phenomenon depicted in the *guaci* is that "the virtuous ruler is met by Heaven many times during the day in his massive cart granted by the latter."26 The procedure is clearly such that the author, based on the observation of a natural phenomenon, comments on a human event in analogy to it. This is what is often referred to as "to apply natural phenomena to human events" (*yi tianshi lun renshi* 以天事論人事) which is quintessential to the entire book of the *Book of Changes*.27 Just as Zhu Xi 朱熹

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(1130-1200) put it: "The images in the *Book of Changes* all have bases to derive from and can all be applied to other things when used in analogy."

From the demonstration in the above, Chinese correlative thinking as manifested in the *Book of Changes* is an analogical thought process that goes from one individual object or event to another. It is a process of comparison and judgment whose goal it is to relate two objects on basis of any similarity between them. The process starts with an empirical observation and is followed with conceptional activities. On the one hand, it does not stop at the initial observational stage but evolves toward conceptional analysis through analogical reasoning, and, on the other hand, it retains sensory experience even in conceptional reasoning and therefore differs from the purely abstract thinking of Western philosophers. Correlative thinking was not only the basic procedure of the divination of the primordial times, but it had been the fundamental thought process of the Chinese people up until the Qing dynasty. No matter how abstruse and abstract things presented themselves, the Chinese were able to give vivid concrete accounts using this analogical procedure. Further, derived as it was from divination, the method was extended to be used in almost every field. The concepts of Yin and Yang and Five Agents, for example, provided the basis perspectives from which the Chinese approached the cosmos and society. It is said in the *Book of Changes* that "one Yin and one Yang form Dao."\(^\text{28}\) Based on the notion, Lao Zi remarked: "Dao gives birth to one, one to two, two to three, three to thousands of objects."\(^\text{29}\) By way of an analogy, Lao Zi here draws a

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\(^\text{27}\)The *Book of Changes* is an ancient document for divination. The so-called *yi* 甲 is to study the changes in the natural world so as to recognize and forestall the changes in the human world.


\(^\text{29}\)Lao Zi, 96.
picture of the universe with Dao as its ultimate origin. Dong Zhongshu's structure of the universe as the unity of heaven, earth, and man, and Zhou Dunyi's picture of taiji ("the great ultimate") that argues that the movement of taiji causes the production of Yin, Yang and thousands of things are all assumptions derived from this analogical thinking. With regards to the evolution of human society, Zou Yan (350-270 B.C.) explicated the replacement of one dynasty by the other from the time of Huang Di (ca. 2500 B.C.) through Xia (ca. 2100 B.C.-1600 B.C.) and Shang (ca. 1600 B.C.-1000 B.C.) to Zhou (ca. 1000 B.C.-771 B.C.) in terms of the concept of Five Agents.30 Dong Zhongshu, in addition to his cosmological theory grounded on the concepts of Yin, Yang and Five Agents, demonstrated the rationales of the Confucian ethics of the "Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues" (san gang wu chang 三纲五常) in terms of the same concepts.31 Besides these cosmological, social and ethical issues, many assumptions or notions from other fields such as music, art, literature, etc., are all direct or indirect consequences of Chinese analogical thought process.32

3. The intuitionalistic attributes of the Chinese language

30 He contended that Huang Di belonged to earth and Xia to wood. Because wood is superior to earth, Xia replaced Huang Di accordingly. Shang belonged to metal, which is superior to wood, and therefore Xia was replaced by Shang, and so on. See Hou Wailu 侯外盧 et al., Zhongguo sixiang tongshi 中國思想通史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1957), 1:649.

31 Chunqiu fanlu, 310-311. The "Three Cardinal Guides" are that ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife. The "Five Constant Virtues" are benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity.

32 For instance, the notions of Eight Sounds (ba yin 八音) and Six Bamboo Pitch-pipes (liu lu liu lu 六律六吕) come from the winds of the eight directions and the twelve earthly branches (shier chen 十二辰) respectively; the internal structure of an article is often compared to that of the organs of a human body; stylistic characteristics of literary works are expressed by means of such concrete objects as "wind" (feng 風), "bone" (gu 骨) and "air" (qi 氣), etc.
The correlative thinking of traditional Chinese thought is also reflected in the morphology of the Chinese language. In fact, language itself has often been conceived of as an instance *par excellence* of culture and readily used as powerful tools by anthropologists in approaching a given culture or, more precisely, the thought processes of that culture. According to Edgar A. Gregersen, these anthropologists and linguists emphasize certain essential properties of language as also occurring in the total culture. The "linguistic relativity" or "linguistic determinism" is best articulated by Benjamin Whorf in the following much-quoted statement:

> It was found that the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock and trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar, and differs, from slightly to greatly, between different grammars. We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate in world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic system in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and describe significances as we do, largely because we are party to an agreement to organize in this way—an agreement which holds in the pattern of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory; we can not talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees.

We shall start with the discussion of the Chinese script, because, obviously, the most characteristic features of the language lies in its written

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33These traits include: (1) selectivity of a small number of potential actualizations in any given language or culture; (2) unconscious patterning; and (3) unique configuration. For a discussion of the linguistic ideas adopted in general anthropology, see Edgar A. Gregersen, "Linguistic Models in Anthropology," in William C. McCormack and Stephen A. Wurm, eds., *Language and Thought: Anthropological Issues* (Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1977), 87-97.

characters. As is known, Chinese characters, each an integrated visual structure of lines or strokes, are pictograms and ideograms suggestive of the objects or concepts they denote. Whatever the principles of formation, a look at the etymology of Chinese characters displays that they all contain two basic elements: pictograms and ideograms.\(^{35}\) The legend about the origin of the Chinese script goes that Cang Jie 仓颉, historiographer to the legendary Huang Di, traced the footprints of birds and beasts and thus invented writing.\(^{36}\) Another legend, which has been cited previously, records a similar story.\(^{37}\) Both the legends show that unlike the arbitrary signs in Western languages, the Chinese script was brought about at a result of cosmic revelations. They originated from within human mind but did so in response to the inspirations from the phenomenal world. For convenience, Chinese characters can be grouped into three categories: simple characters, complex characters, and compound characters. By simple character is meant an unanalyzable unit that is self-sufficient in expressing an object or concept, and is, at the same time, a building block for other types of characters. For instance, "horse" is written as 马 in the Shang inscriptions, and becomes 駟 in Zhou inscriptions. In 小篆, 35

\(^{35}\)Traditional Chinese etymology postulates six principles known as liu shu 六書 regarding the formation of characters. They are: (1) xiangxing 象形 ("imitating the form"), zhishi 指事 ("pointing at the thing"), huiyi 慧意 ("understanding the meaning"), xingshen 形聲 ("harmonizing the sound"), zhuanzhu 轉注 ("mutually defining") and jiajie 假借 ("borrowing"). The earliest systematic interpretation of these six categories was given by Xu Shen, although the definition and the correct order of the six principles have been subjects of controversy among Chinese scholars for centuries. Words formed on the basis of the six principles all contain either pictogram(s) or ideogram(s) or both. Although James Liu argued that not all Chinese characters are pictographic or ideographic and that most characters contain a phonetic element, he nonetheless realized that the phonetic element itself is either pictographic or ideographic. James Liu, The Art of Chinese Poetry (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 3-7.

\(^{36}\)The legend was mentioned in Lu Shi chunqiu 呂氏春秋 in Baizi quanshu 百子全書 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1984), 17. 2b.

\(^{37}\)From the Book of Changes. See Note 20.
the style of characters in the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.), it is 鋼 and in "lishu" 鋼, the style in the Han dynasty, it is 鋼, which is very close to the current form 鋼. It is obvious that the earlier in history, the more the character resembles the corporeal object it represents. A simple character not only refers to a certain concrete object but also denotes abstract concept. This can be seen in such ideogram as 鋼 ("above"), 鋼 ("beneath"), 鋼 ("long"), etc. By complex character is meant a character that is composed of at least one simple character and a symbol that is not in itself a character. For instance, 鋼 means "fruit." 鋼 resembles the shape of a fruit, but itself is not a character. When combined with 鋼, which means a "tree," its meaning becomes distinct. Compound characters refer to a character that is composed of two or more characters of either one (or both) of the former two types. This type of characters constitutes over ninety percent of the Chinese script and is much more sophisticated. Through the combination of two or more simpler units, even very abstract ideas can be expressed. An illustration can be found in 鋼, which means "to open." 鋼 is the concrete image of a gate, i.e., a pictogram. When it is barred, the ideogram for it is 鋼, which is a complex character meaning "is barred" or "to bar." In order to open it, one has to remove the bar. 鋼 is a complicated picture indicating the action of two hands removing the bar.38 The three forms of Chinese characters show that the Chinese script is composed of either pictograms that point outwardly to the objects in the world or ideograms that refer inwardly to human mind. Or in terms of the genesis, each Chinese character is an image that is produced by human mind responding to the physical world in which it finds itself.

In terms of syntax, Chinese is marked by a paradigm of simplicity. Indeed, it is so simple that many scholars have claimed that Chinese possesses no grammar in the true sense of the word.\(^{39}\) First, although there seems to be a subject-predicate distinction in a sentence, the connection between the two parts is often loose compared with that in English. In fact, in classical Chinese either the subject, the pronouns such as wo 我 ("I"), \(ni\) 你 ("you") and \(ta\) 他/她 ("he" or "she"), or the verb itself is omitted. And although they may be both present in a sentence, they can be inverted. Related to this loose syntax is the omission of sentence connectives, especially in classical Chinese poetry. Words or sentences are stringed together with no prepositions and conjunctions, and yet this does not affect the meaning of the poem. We may cite a poem by Ma Zhiyuan 马致遠 (1270-1330) for an illustration:

Withered vines, aged trees, twilight crows.
The little bridge, the cottage, the flowing river.
The ancient road, west winds, a lean horse.
The evening sun setting in the west,
A broken-hearted man is at the end of the earth.\(^{40}\)

The poem is stripped of all the grammatical connectives, and yet it is neither offensive nor awkward in the eyes of native Chinese readers. In fact, the omission of the connectives is all the more effective in conveying an atmosphere of desolation and sadness, which is the meaning of the poem. This is so because in Chinese the formation of a sentence is not governed by grammatical rules, the "langue," but rather by semantical factors, the "parole." In other words, the grouping of words into phrases and phrases into sentences is not grammatical but semantical. As long as they are harmonious to each other in

\(^{39}\)See, for example, James Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry*, 39.

semantical terms, words can be grouped in any way that appeals to the poet. This is the so-called yihe fa 意合法, or "the principle of grouping based on intent," and the sentences composed by this principle defy the approach of grammatical analysis. Secondly, Chinese has done away with almost all inflections and conjugations. There are no tenses, no cases, no genders, no numbers, and in classical writings, even no punctuations. "A thousand mountains--no bird's flight. / A million paths--no man's trace." Because of the absence of the tense for the verb fei 飛 ("flight"), we are not sure whether the birds have all fled away (past) or there are no birds at this historical moment (now). The same is true with the second sentence, where the ambivalence of the verb mie 落 ("disappear") renders it unclear whether there is no man walking around or the traces of man have been wiped out by the snow. In addition to the lack of tenses in Chinese, the same word with absolutely no change of form may function now as noun, now as verb, now as adjective, now as adverb, and so on, depending on context. Context, indeed, rather than grammatical rules, constitutes the most important factor in determining the function of the Chinese language. It decides not only syntactically its figure of speech but semantically its signification as well.

From the above observation of Chinese on lexical as well as syntactical levels, we may conclude two characteristics of the language that correspond with the intuitive-correlative thinking of Chinese thought. The first is the visual concreteness and the second, its necessary result synchronic presentation. As has been shown, Chinese characters are pictographic and ideographic, referring as they do to objects or concepts. This renders to the language a strong visual appeal that almost conceals its other appeals such as auditory effect. Chinese differs from an alphabetic language in that it is "spatial" and "three dimensional,"
whereas an alphabetic language is "temporal" and "one dimensional". In an alphabetic language words are spelled propositionally, and the diachronic tendency of intellect takes the upper hand; in a pictorial language such as Chinese words are pictographic and multidimensional, and so the synchronic tendency of vision plays the most active role. In his study on Chinese regulated poetry, Wen Yiduo discusses the "spatial" characteristics of Chinese. He states that the Chinese language is pictographic and that at least fifty percent of the impression that a Chinese reader receives in reading a literary work is acquired through the eye.41 With the spatial and synchronical effects of characters, the dimensions of meaning are easily formed. Any educated reader from Chinese culture will easily detect or form a "world" from such poetic lines as "On the great desert, a lone straight column of smoke; / Above the long river, the setting sun is round;" and "Moondown: crows caw; frost, a skyful. / River maples, fishing lamps, sad drowsiness." Unlike reading a Western poem which relies on sounds to reveal its pictorial effect, a reader of Chinese does not have to read a poem in order to realize its beauty, for the moment he sees a line, he envisions a vivid picture and experiences the essence of the poem thereby. Perhaps it is because of the pictographic nature of Chinese characters that calligraphy is one of the most important art forms in Chinese culture. The fact that the same piece of poetry written in different forms, e. g., type-set, handwritten, and so on, will have different aesthetic appeal indicates the importance of the pictorial quality of Chinese poetry in the experience of reading.

The second characteristic of Chinese is its semantic ambiguity and totalistic comprehension. If the dimensions of meaning are concrete and clear in

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41 Wen Yiduo quanjì 閻一多全集 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1982), 3:415.
the sense that they are perceptible through visual experience, they are ambiguous and indeterminable in semantic terms. Paradoxical as it is, the fact is that Chinese, born out of symbols and pictures, is based on a perception of the object in a direct, imaginative, and above all totalistic manner, quite unlike an alphabetic language founded on conceptual analysis and prescriptions. In other words, Chinese characters are totalistic symbolization of objects or ideas rather than precise representation of them. They are not concerned with the details of the objects they describe, but set to suggest the contour of their spirit or mood. Compare the Chinese word yue 月 with "men" in Greek and "luna" in Latin. Of the latter two words for "moon," the former refers to the temporal aspect of the moon and the latter the brightness. In comparison, the Chinese word yue represents the shape or the appearance of the moon under normal circumstances and thus lacks in preciseness and clarity but features in intuitive, totalistic presentation. Or it may be said that the Chinese word yue contains everything about the moon in it, and yet it does not explain anything clearly. As for the other names for "moon" in Chinese, most of which occur in literary writings, such as bingpan 冰盤, yupo 玉魄, guanghan 廣寒, changong 蟾宮, change 嫦娥, chanjuan 嫦娟, guilun 桂輪, yutu 玉兔, etc., they are more impressionistic, more symbolic of totality, and more ambiguous than their prototype.

4. Arguments from Philosophers

If the ontological monism and the unique patterning in the Chinese language have shaped the analogical mechanisms of Chinese thought, the conscious call from Chinese philosophers for the use of intuition rather than intellect in cognition contributes equally significantly to Chinese intuitive-
correlative thought process. Let us start with the philosophers' attitudes toward language, the medium for, if not the constraint of, thinking. In the West, language has been considered a faithful tool of representation whose referential function has not been questioned until recently. To illustrate this traditional view of language in Sausseurian terminology, language in the West has been seen as a system made up of signifiers and signified. It is the function of signifiers to reflect signifieds, and there is a harmonious one-to-one set of correspondences between the two levels of entities. This belief in the transparency of the sign underlies the classical philosophies of representation and realism. In the ideology of representation or realism, words are felt to link up with thought or the object in essentially right and incontrovertible ways: the word, indeed, becomes the only proper way of viewing this object or expressing this thought.42

Standing in sharp contrast to this firm belief in the referentiality of language is a cynicism that marks typically the Chinese philosophical tradition. From the very beginning, Chinese philosophers regard language as limited in reference to yi 理, translated into English as "intent" or "mind."43 This attitude is

42This traditional belief in the logical nature of language has been seriously challenged by the linguistic discoveries of the twentieth century that reveal language not as a closed-system with logical correspondence between signifier and signified, but as a complex interaction of signifiers without obvious end-point. These discoveries have, interestingly, engendered several modern schools of philosophy with varying outlooks on language. On the one end of the spectrum is the "pessimistic" theory of deconstruction that views language as the ruin of all reference, the cemetery of communication, and on the other is the ordinary language theory, advanced by such well-known figures as John Wisdom, Gilbert Ryle, John L. Austin, et al., that argues for the eligibility of the ordinary speech as a philosophical language. Underlying both the arguments is, clearly, the same epistemological importance that traditional Western metaphysics has attached to language. The "love for words" (Fritz Mauthner, Beitrag zu einer Kritik der Sprache [Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1922-23], 1:713) has not dwindled, as it seems to be, but resurfaced in a different form under a new historical context.

43As can be seen from the previous discussion, the Chinese philosophical tradition also conceives an one-to-one relationship between what is called in its own terms ming 名 ("name") and shi 物 ("stuff"). Moreover, unlike the signifier and the signified in Western philosophy where they are considered two separate entities, in Chinese philosophy ming is not regarded as a separate entity independent of shi but rather inseparably bound up with it. The signifier in the system of Chinese does not simply reflect the signified, but it stems from the signified and to the signified it returns. However, it is interesting to say that despite this kindred relationship between
developed together with their conception of Dao, the ultimate reality of the physical world. In Chinese philosophy Dao as the ontological root is a dynamic one. It is not a static concept or entity, like Plato's Ideas or Christian God, but an ever-evolving process through which all beings emerge. Since Dao consists, as Abraham Kaplan has put it, "not of fixed substances with attributes which can be abstracted and ordered into some logical system, but of concrete affairs and interactions exhibiting constant changes," any linguistic attempt at capturing the attributes of Dao is doomed to failure. Moreover, as has been previously demonstrated, language in Chinese philosophy is seen as intimately linked to things in the world. They are symbiotic. There are distinctions among things in the phenomenal world, so there are distinctions among names in language. But Dao, integrative and whole, is where all the phenomenal distinctions are obliterated. Since Dao is all-encompassing and, as Zhuang Zi puts it, "has never had boundaries," language loses its utility in describing Dao.

The skepticism toward the efficacy of language is a central topic in the Daoist philosophical texts. The traditional edition of the Lao Zi opens with the statement that "the Dao that can be spoken of is not the constant Dao; the name that can be named is not the constant name." This statement recurs in various forms throughout the book. One typical variation in Chapter 56 is that since Dao can not be spoken of, "one who knows does not speak; one who speaks does not

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*ming* and *shi* in Chinese, Chinese philosophers do not regard language (yán 言) as capable of representing ideas or mind (yi). *Ming* is isomorphic with *shi*, the thousands of things in the phenomenal world, but *yen* is not isomorphic with *yi*, the sum total of metaphysical meanings including inward experience and the outward physical reality.


45Lao Zi, 1.
Zhuang Zi developed Lao Zi's idea and dealt with the limitation of language with greater length. The following much-quoted passage best represents Zhuang Zi's idea:

What the world values as speech are books. Books are nothing more than words; words have something that it valued. What is valued in words is meaning; meaning is derived from something. That from which meaning is derived cannot be transmitted in language. Yet the world, because it values language, transmits books. Although the world values them, I shall still think they are not worth valuing, because what the world values is not valuable. Therefore, what can be seen when one looks are forms and colors; what can be heard when one listens are names and sounds. How lamentable that people of the world should think that forms, colors, names, and sounds are adequate to capture the natures of things! If indeed forms, colors, names, and sounds are not adequate to capture their natures, then one who knows does not speak and one who speaks does not know. Yet how could the world know this?

In Zhuang Zi's opinion, books are written in words, which are not valued for themselves. What is valued in words is meaning derived from Dao. Since Dao defies expression by words, words fail accordingly to exhaust the meaning derived from Dao.

The assumption that "words do not exhaust meaning" (yan bu jin yi 言不盡意) paved the way for the famous argument about language and meaning in the Wei and Jin periods. As is known, the purpose of the metaphysics in the Wei and Jin periods was to rectify the meticulous attitudes of the Han dynasty Confucianists in their study of the classics and advocate instead an interpretation of the classics in a simple, terse and implicit style. Among the

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46 Ibid., 119.
48 Gao Heng, Zhou yi dazhuan jinzhuan, 541.
scholars who radically postulated Daoist ideas is Xun Can 荀燾 (fl. 400). Thus, he is described:

Can was styled Fengqian. The Can brothers gathered together and chatted about Confucian principles. Can was the only one who liked to talk about Dao. [He said] that Zi Gong compared Confucius' sayings to the words of Heaven that are hard to hear. However, although the Six Classics still exist, they are no more than the chaffs of the sages. His brother Hou criticized him, saying "The Book of Changes also says that the sage established images to exhaust meaning and appended phrases to exhaust words. How come the subtle words cannot be comprehended?" Can replied: "The subtle meaning cannot be made obvious by images. The so-called 'to establish images to exhaust meaning' is not to lead toward the meaning beyond the words, and 'to append phrases to exhaust words' is not to state what beyond the appended phrases. Therefore, the meaning beyond the object and the ideas beyond the appended phrases are implicit and cannot be expressed." 49

Xun Can's statement that "although the Six Classics exist, they are no more than the chaffs of the sages" is directly derived from Zhuang Zi's parable about the wheelwright. 50 Xun quoted from Zhuang Zi not only to voice his discontent with the over elaborate scholarship of the Han Confucian scholars, but, more importantly, to advance the idea that subtle meanings cannot be fully expressed by means of language.

After Buddhism was introduced and assimilated into Chinese thought, the assumption that "words do not exhaust meaning" became a central notion of Chinese philosophy. In spite of the fact that Buddhism, upon its introduction into China around the first century A.D., was described to have "thousands of scriptures with billions of words," 51 it shares with native Chinese philosophy

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50 Zhuang Zi, 2:490-491.

some basic views toward language. As with Daoism, Buddhism holds that the ultimate truth, or "paramartha satya," is absolute and cannot be described in concrete words. This is what is called in Buddhist terminology "unspeakable words and untraceable mind" (yanyu dao duan, xinxing mie chu 言語道斷心行滅處). A more articulate denial of language was to be found in Chan Buddhism that flourished in the Tang and Song periods. Chan is said to have originated from the legend about Sakyamuni's wordless communication with his disciple Kasyapa.52 The latter's smile of instant understanding of his teacher founded the principles for Chan practitioners to follow, namely, "not establishing words, pointing directly to the human mind, and revealing one's nature to achieve Buddhahood."53 Chan principle of not relying on words for enlightenment indicates its serious distrust of language, which is considered at best impotent and at worst an impediment to enlightenment.

Because language is considered limited in expressing ideas or meaning, Chinese philosophers postulate "forgetting words" (wang yan 忘言) and advance instead "intuitive contemplation" (yi zhi 意致) in cognition. Traditionally, intuition in the West is regarded as an invalid method, because it lacks the precision of formal logic favored by Greek philosophers and appears incapable of being checked in any of the ways required by modern Western empirical science. As Peter Munz has stated, the West contributes significantly to the theoretical component in our knowledge of the world and yet the role which pure intuition of the given has played is very small. People have been given to speculation, and although their assumptions are never, or rarely, contradicted by

53 Ibid., 75.
observable facts, they owe comparatively little to pure observation and a great deal to theoretical systematization.\textsuperscript{54} In contrast to this lowly position of intuition in Western philosophy, intuition in Chinese thought is considered a sound and, indeed, the most perfect way of obtaining knowledge. The favor of intuition over theoretical systematization not only stems from the contemptuous attitudes toward language, but it is also a result of the entirely different concern of Chinese philosophy than that of the West. As has been discussed, the ultimate goal of Chinese philosophy is to identify with Dao, both in Confucianist moral or Daoist cosmological sense. To obtain integration with Dao both through self-understanding and inner transformation is a process that involves actualization and realization of an existential kind. It is an "act" and not "cognition" alone in that it requires experience, in the form of the unification of everything in one's personality. The use of intellect and its tools in such a practice is limited and, as a matter of fact, treacherous, for it is always ready to use its rationalizing power to block the process and maintain, if it can, the status quo. Therefore, despite the variety of schools, Chinese philosophers all postulate experiential or existential means in cognition of Dao. Generally speaking, Confucianism focuses on "inner reflection" (neixing 内省) as the most effective way to obtain self-knowledge, whereas Daoists and Chanists adopt contemplation (tiwu 體悟) for their respective purposes. When, however, in the Song period Confucianism assimilated Daoist and Chanist ideas into its philosophical system and developed into Neo-Confucianism, the method of contemplation was also incorporated as part of its practice.

\textsuperscript{54}Peter Munz, "Basic Intuitions of East and West," \textit{Philosophy East and West} 5, no. 1 (April 1955): 44.
Confucianism postulates human ethics with the chief objective of instructing people in their behaviors. To use the generalization of *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), the goal of Confucianism is to obtain such a state of mind that is "inwardly sagacious and outwardly king-like" (*nei sheng wai wang* 内聖外王), and to do so, one must adopt as his primary concerns "investigation of things, realization of knowledge, sincerity, honesty, self-cultivation, managing the family, governing the country and unifying the world" (*ge wu, zhi zhi, cheng yi, zheng xin, xiu shen, qi jia, zhi guo, ping tianxia* 格物, 致知, 誠意, 正心, 修身, 齊家, 治國, 平天下). The method of inner reflection was emulated and postulated by the successors of Confucius. Well-known in the history of Chinese philosophy is the story about Yan Hui's (*521 B.C.–490 B.C.*) cultivation of his inner self, from which results the famous phrase of "mind's abstinence." 

This is an ethical reflection, but it is in the meantime a process of cognitive contemplation. Once reflection is properly carried out, comprehensive understanding or sudden awakening would occur, and a new truth would be unfolded. The method of inner reflection was emulated and postulated by the successors of Confucius. Well-known in the history of Chinese philosophy is the story about Yan Hui's (*521 B.C.–490 B.C.*) cultivation of his inner self, from which results the famous phrase of "mind's abstinence."
"I am good at developing vast and mighty spirit" renders another example of inner reflection. The so-called "vast and mighty spirit" (haoran zhi qi 浩然之氣) refers to a mental state that fears nothing and is full of energizing spirit. Such a mental state can only be achieved through a gradual cultivation, which is a process of inner reflection. By his famous saying of Xu yi er jing, Xun Zi also advanced inner reflection and intuitive cognition. According to Xun Zi, the word Xu 虛 is not to let the already acquired knowledge hinder the reception of new knowledge, yi 一 not to distract concentration on this object by knowing other objects, and jing 靜 not to prevent normal procedure of thinking by fantasies and other imaginary thoughts. Despite his affiliation to the Confucian school, Xun Zi comes closest to Daoists in advocating an empty and still mind in thinking.

Daoism is primarily concerned with cosmic patterns and operations and their impact on man. The ultimate goal of Daoism is to identify with the Dao immanent in the physical reality, for only through such an identification can human society progress in a proper way. Concerning the cognition of Dao, Daoism rejects both conceptual and perceptual modes of knowing. They are considered limited, incomplete, unable to apprehend the Dao that transcends both intellect and sense-experience. Daoist philosophy especially condemns the attempt to recognize Dao through rational procedures, for as Zhuang Zi says, "when judgment are passed, Dao is destroyed." Because human concepts are abstract, incomplete, in danger of dissecting Dao, both Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi

58 Meng Zi zhushu 孟子注疏, in Ruan Yuan, Shisan jing zhushu, 2:2685.
59 Xun Zi, 264.
60 Zhuang Zi, 74.
reject them and advocate instead a kind of intuitive cognition. Contemplation, in place of inner reflection, is postulated as the best possible way for the purpose. Like inner reflection, contemplation is also an intuitive, introspective thought process. It is a direct, irrational, and holistic comprehension of the object, whose experience can only be understood intuitively and not conveyed through verbal means.

Both Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi draw for us a rather illusive and mysterious picture of Dao:

As a thing the way is shadowy, indistinct. Indistinct and shadowy, yet within it is an image; shadowy and indistinct, yet within it is a substance.61

The Way has its reality and its signs but is without action or form. You can hand it down but you cannot receive it; you can get it but you cannot see it. It is its own source, its own root. Before Heaven and earth existed it was there, firm from ancient times.62

Immanent as it is in this physical world, Dao transcends all sense-perceptions. Such an "object" can only be "mysteriously observed" because it is embodied in "the shape that has no shape" and in "the image that is without substance." To the sense faculties Dao is non-existent, but to the faculty of mind it is clearly visible and definable. Lao Zi magnifies the role of the mind in recognition of Dao while having reservations about sense-perception. In his opinion, quiet contemplation with doors shut is the best way to know the reality:

Without stepping outside one's doors, one can know what is happening in the world; without looking out of one's windows, one can see the Dao of Heaven. The farther one seeks, the lesser one knows.63

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61Lao Zi, 52.

62Zhuang Zi, 1:246-247. The English translation is from Watson, 77.

63Lao Zi, 103.
Zhuang Zi stresses more emphatically the trans-empirical nature of cognition. He advances that the relation between subject and object is not one of knowing and known but they are equal and mutually conceivable. It is the embrace and dissolution of the object by the subject, and what remains of this process is the prevailing of a pure self. Hence, to Zhuang Zi, to be unaware of things is the consummation of knowing and "not to associate with them is the essential."^6^ He develops Lao Zi's idea of *xujing* and proposes the notions of *xinzhai* and *zuo wang*. By seeing nothing and sitting in forgetfulness, one will encounter Dao in his spirit, as Zhuang Zi told us:

> He can see where all is dark. He can hear where all is still. In the darkness he alone can see light. In the stillness he alone can detect harmony.^6^

"Not establishing words, pointing directly to the human mind" is what the philosophy of Chanism is all about. As an independent sect, Chan differs from the orthodox Buddhism in that it attaches great importance to human mind and looks at it as the sole origin of Buddhahood. To Chan masters, especially those from the Southern School, to attain Buddhahood, one should not seek within the Scriptures but should instead understand his mind and see the original nature. This reaching deeply to the core of one's being bears close resemblance to Confucianism and, especially, Daoism, as D. T. Suzuki said:

The most distinctively characteristic hallmark of Zen is its insistence on the awakening of prayatmajna... an inner perception deeply reaching the core of one's being (hsin or hridaya). This corresponds to Chuang Tzu's "mind-fasting" or "mind-forgetting" or "clear as the morning" (chao-che).^6^

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^6^ Zhuang Zi, 3:542.

^6^ Zhuang Zi, 2:411.

Like Daoism, Chanism stresses absorption in one's thought and recommends that one ignore whatever that bears the earmark of intellect. Contemplation or, more precisely, sitting in meditation (zuo Chan 坐禅) is focused upon as the method in understanding the mind. Originally, meditation was a practice common to Indian Buddhism and all Indian religions (the so-called Dhyana), but Huineng 慧能 (638-713), influenced by Chinese indigenous thought, explained it in such a way that it acquired new facets of meaning pertaining to Chanism:

What is sitting for meditation? In our school, to sit means to gain absolute freedom and to be mentally unperturbed in all outward circumstances, be they good or otherwise. To meditate means to realize inwardly the imperturbability of the Essence of Mind.67

The Dhyana of India emphasizes sitting in meditation and Samadhi,68 but what Huineng emphasizes by meditation is the understanding of the mind and the awakening to the original nature. In the Changuan cejin 檢關策進, we find a vivid depiction of Chan meditation:

[The practitioner] fixes his heels and straightens his back. Without distinguishing day and night, [he meditates] until he loses his sense of direction as if a dying person with a remaining breath. His mind transforms with the world, and, sensible upon touching, he forgets all about his thoughts and gives up all the intellect of knowing.69

The phrase "forgetting all about his thoughts" describes the oblivious state of Chan in which man is senseless of his own intent and feelings, and "giving up all

67The Sutra of Hui Neng (Hong Kong: Buddhist Book Distributor Press, 1982), 52.

68The Sanskrit word Samadhi is translated into Chinese as ding 定 or dinghui 定慧. Huineng gives a vivid depiction of the word when he says: "Dhyana means to be free from attachment to all outer objects, and Samadhi means to attain inner peace . . . Our Essence of Mind is intrinsically pure, and the reason why we are perturbed is because we allow ourselves to be carried away by the circumstances we are in. He who is able to keep his mind unperturbed, irrespective of circumstances, has attained Samadhi." Ibid.

69Cited in Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, Chanzong yu Zhongguo wenhua 禪宗與中國文化 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1986), 139.
the intellect of knowing" highlights the Chan endeavor to do away with all logical activities, grasping the world through inner perception or intuitive apprehension.

If Daoist thought shaped the ways and characteristics of Chanism, its impact on Neo-Confucianism, direct or indirect through Chanism, was equally significant. Neo-Confucianism, which flourished in the Song and Ming dynasties, drew from Daoist and Chanist world views and epistemologies to redefine the ethical philosophy of the classical Confucianism, and through an incorporation of their intuitive thought processes also, it aimed at a harmonious fusion with nature and a perfect return to the original nature of man. In addition to inner reflection of the ancient Confucianism, Neo-Confucianists adopted the method of sitting in meditation from Chanism.\(^\text{70}\) The road of personal cultivation in Neo-Confucianism took a new direction, for it tended to be more quietist and introspective. Zhou Dunyi stated that "calmness is the way to set up a human standard,"\(^\text{71}\) and Cheng Hao's (1032-1085) advice as to how to remain quiet in activity or inactivity is to forget that there is inside or outside to mind.\(^\text{72}\)

For a Confucianist living in this world, being oblivious to the separation of the internal from the external as far as mind is concerned is the path to calmness. If one becomes unconscious of or unconcerned about whether "this" is inside one's

\(^{70}\)As Wu Yi has stated, there was no method of meditation in Pre-Qin Confucianism. Although there was mention of meditation in the first chapter of the Great Learning, it did not draw much attention from Confucianists before the Song dynasty. After having been influenced by Chan Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism learned sitting in meditation and adopted it as its practice for self-cultivation. To establish a difference from the latter, Neo-Confucianists took the first chapter of the Great Learning as their point of departure, and claimed that the purpose of their meditation was to make mind sincere rather than to become a Buddha. For a detailed discussion of the influence of Chan on Neo-Confucianists, see Wu Yi, "On Chinese Ch'an in Relation to Taoism," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (June 1985): 131-154.

\(^{71}\)Zhou Dunyi, *Lianxi xuean* 联系学案, in Huang Zongyi 黄宗義 and Quan Zuwang 全祖望, eds., *Song Yuan xuean* 宋元学案 (*Wanyou wenku huiyaoed*), 4:96.

mind or "that" is outside one's mind, one would respond naturally to whatever to come. He will then be able to reason and obtain truth by intuition, the highest attainment a philosopher can aspire.

The Neo-Confucianists were always interested in sitting in stillness. Zhu Xi, for example, wrote:

Mingdao teaches people sitting in stillness, and Mr. Li also teaches people sitting in stillness, because if one's mind is not firm, one cannot find a place to cultivate Dao and virtue.

Wang Yangming (1472-1528) practiced sitting in stillness with his students. He instructed them over the meaning of the practice, saying:

Since we are always confused by things and affairs, and do not know how to cultivate ourselves, we practice this in order to complete the effort which can take our wandering mind back.

Wang Yangming is from the so-called School of Mind in Neo-Confucianism, commonly acknowledged to have a closer relationship with Chan Buddhism. He postulates that "there is no matter outside mind; there is no affair outside mind; there is no principle outside mind; there is no righteousness outside mind; there is no goodness outside mind." Zhu Xi, on the other hand, is considered an adherent of the School of Knowledge, for his mind is analytical and he is eager to know. Despite his contention to seek knowledge outside of mind, Zhu Xi does not forget the importance of concentration of mind. The same is said of the Neo-Confucianists as a whole. In general, Neo-Confucianism advocates "investigation of things and realization of knowledge." Yet, by the phrase

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73 Zhu Zi yu lei 朱子語類 (Guoxue jiben congshu ed.), 46:72.

74 Wang Wencheng Gong quanshu 王文成公全書 (Si bu congkan chubian ed.), 84:910.

75 Ibid., 84:178.
"investigation of things" is not meant observation or experiment with things in scientific terms but the reflective practice of sitting quietly and cultivation of the mind.

From the above discussion, it is clear that while the correlative thinking of the Chinese brought about by the organic view of the world works by analogical reasoning, the emphasis on inner reflection and contemplation in Chinese philosophy renders Chinese thought even more oblivious toward the physical world. Any one who is familiar with Chinese culture would agree that Chinese thought is not motivated toward nature, in the sense of discovering nature that Western people are noted for. The seamless connection between man and world, between subject and object, enables the Chinese to take the objective world for granted. What the West has credited to discovery through formal reasoning or empirical inductive reduction is to the Chinese pre-established. The idiomatic expression "not perplexed by what is beyond the form" (bu wei xingshang suo huo 不為形上所惑) is often used to describe Chinese philosophers. To them, truth is self-evident and all obvious. It exists everywhere and is exposed to anyone who is willing to see, hence the phrase mu ji dao cun 目擊道存 ("Dao exists where you cast your eye"). Exempt from the obligation to inquiring into the physical objectivity, the Chinese turn their attention inward.

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76 Northrop contends that there is a revolutionary tendency in the West coupled with a frame of mind which sets high value on innovative change and discovery. (The Meeting of East and West: An Inquiry Concerning World Understanding [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946], 294-300), and Christopher Dawson has said much the same that "Western civilization has been the great ferment of change in the world, because the changing of the world became an integral part of its cultural ideal... It is only in Europe that the whole pattern of the culture is to be found in a continuous succession and alternation of free spiritual movements." Christopher Dawson, Religion and the Rise of Western Culture (London: Sheed & Ward, 1950), 10.
toward the refinement of human society, hence the "introversive" tendency of the Chinese cultural tradition.77

The implications of the introversive tendency of Chinese thought on Chinese literature and art are far-reaching, so are those of the "extroversive" dispositions of Western thought on the Western literary tradition. Not only the poetics of shi yan zhi 詩言志 ("Poetry express intent") and mimesis, the founding theories of the two literary traditions, are predicted on the fundamentally different world views, but the entire range of the characteristics and tendencies of the two literatures toward truth versus aestheticism, precision versus ambiguity, discourse versus lyricism and so on, can only be explained in these cultural, philosophical and anthropological terms. Ever since Plato, Western poetics has remained hung up on truth or objectivity. The rational propensities mark alike classicism, realism, romanticism, naturalism, and, as Gurbhagat Singh has rightly demonstrated, even deconstruction.78 The Coleridgean imagination is haunted by a "metaphysical presence,"79 and a poem in John Crowe Ransom's framework is "a logical structure having a logical texture."80 In contrast to

77Many scholars have recognized this introversive tendency of Chinese culture. Arthur Waley, for example, remarked: "All Chinese philosophy is essentially the study of how men can best be helped to live together in harmony and good order" (The Way and Its Power [New York: Grove Press, 1958], 64), and Feng Yu-lan: "Chinese philosophy... is directly or indirectly concerned with government and ethics... All [its branches] are connected with political thought in one way or the other." A Short History of Chinese Philosophy (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1951), 163.


79According to Coleridge, a poem is an act of the secondary imagination which "dissolves, diffuses, in order to recreate." It echoes the primary imagination, which is "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (Biographia Literaria, ed. John Shawcross [Oxford, 1907], 1:202). Obviously, by echoing the primary imagination linked with the divine source, secondary imagination remains originary. It functions in such a way that it reflects the cosmic order through diffusions and synthesis.
Western poetic sign, poetry in Chinese literature is free from any logical responsibility. Poetry is not bound by any metaphysical inquiries and the credibility of poetic presentation as argued by Aristotle and all the subsequent Western critics has never attracted any serious attention. Chinese poetics stresses beauty rather than truth or credibility, affective experience rather than interpretation or intellectual cognition. Thus, in writing it aims at a vague presentation of "mood," "spirit" and "world," the so-called "the image beyond images" (xiang wai zhi xiang 象外之象) and "the scene beyond scenes" (jing wai zhi jing 景外之景), and in reading and even literary criticism it emphasizes contemplative experience and intuitive apprehension, as we shall discuss in the following three chapters.

CHAPTER III
MIAOWU IN POETIC WRITING

1. Lyric writing, discursive or evocative expression?

In his programmatic essay on Romanticism, Wordsworth stated that "poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." This famous diction not only prescribed Wordsworth's own writings and those of other Romantic poets, but it captures the essence of lyric productions from other literary traditions as well. However, as Yip Wai-lip has revealed in his study on Romantic and Chinese nature poetry, there exists a fundamental difference in the literary thinking, or, to use Yip's own words, the "perceptual-expressive procedures" of Romanticists and Chinese nature poets. Yip compares and analyzes the following two poems, the first by Wordsworth and the second by Wang Wei:

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur. - Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see

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These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notices, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

Man at leisure, Cassia flowers fall.
Quiet night. Spring mountain is empty.
Moon rises. Startles—a mountain bird.
It sings at times in the spring stream.

In Wordsworth's poem, a bucolic and peaceful scene from nature is vividly captured. However, Yip argues that the poem is not nature-oriented as it might appear to be. For, despite the heavy presence of sensory objects, the focus of the poem is not so much on nature as on the poet himself. Natural objects are not described for their own sake but used as means for the explication of the poet's own mind. Wordsworth undoubtedly reveals a strong feeling for natural objects, but he "can not come to an unconditional acceptance of them." His disclosure of the objects is guided by his own perception. They are given to us "in terms of how he comes upon them, in a sort of linear progression." The situation is quite different in the second poem by Wang Wei. The poem likewise depicts a peaceful scene from nature, but the poet does not intrude upon the scene. Mountain, moon and birds speak for themselves, and "there is little or no subjective emotion or intellectuality" to disturb their immediacy and spontaneity. Free from the poet's mediation, the objects come to us both synchronically and diachronically, in their full vitality.

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3 Ibid., 226.
4 Ibid., 214.
The egocentric tendency of Romantic poetry has been recognized by some Western critics and literary theorists. A book has been published with articles directing at the egocentric, intentional Romantic consciousness. Harold Bloom states, perhaps to the surprise of the general public, that "Romantic nature poetry... was an anti-nature poetry, even in Wordsworth who sought a reciprocity or even a dialogue with nature, we found it only in flashes." Geoffrey Hartman comments on Wordsworth's self-consciousness, saying: "There is some confrontation of person with shadow or self with self... Wordsworth cannot find his theme because he already has it: himself." Paul de Man focuses his attention on the "intentional structure" of Wordsworth's image. His study reveals the poet torn between his sense experience and pure intellectual perception, and the final success of the latter in conquering the former on the strength of the mind's intentional power.

Viewed in light of the Chinese critical tradition, the subjective and the objective approaches to nature in Wordsworth and Wang Wei's poems can be summed up by two central concepts, you wo zhi jing 有我之境, or "the world with an I," and wu wo zhi jing ("the world without an I"), as so classified by Wang Guowei. Wang defines the two concepts as follows:

In the world with an I the poet views the objects from the perspective of himself and everything is thus couched in his own coloring. In the world without an I the poet views the objects from the perspectives of the objects and so he cannot distinguish himself from the objects.

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8 See Note 28 of Introduction.

In "the world with an I" the poet looks at the world around him from his own perspective. There is a distance between himself and the objects of his perception. The poet's thought is in the foreground, whereas the objects of nature are backgrounded and serve as a foil when necessary. On the other hand, the poet in "the world without an I" does not come to the front of the scene. Here objects of nature become primary and the poet's thought secondary. The poet lets nature speak for itself, and its voice does not bother him because he has attained a perfect union with it.

Obviously, Wordsworth's poem belongs to the first category of "the world with an I," and Wang Wei's poem to the second, i.e., "the world without an I." In her study on the use of scene in Chinese and English nature poetry, Cecile Chu-chin Sun uses the word "discursive" consistently in her discussion of the egocentric and expository tendency in Romantic poetry. It is interesting to note that the word "discursive" is listed by Webster as the antonym of the word "intuitive." While the latter means a direct grasp of the physical reality, the former denotes a way of thinking that involves reasoning or other logical activities.

In fact, the discursive tendency not only characterizes the writings of Romanticists but also English poetry in general. In a sweeping generalization, C. K. Stead summarized the direction that English poetry has taken up to Eliot:

The English poetic tradition has always occupied a middle-ground between pure discourse and pure image. At times it has striven hard towards Image; at others it has been content to be scarcely distinguished from prose except by its metrical form. At any point where it became pure discourse it ceased to be poetry. On the other hand the number of

10 Sun Cecile Chu-chin, "A Sense of Scene: Depictions of Scene as Expressions of Feeling in Chinese and English Poetry" (Ph. D. diss., Indiana University, 1982).
occasions on which it has become pure Image are so few that no
generalization can be made about them.\footnote{C. K. Stead, \textit{The New Poetic} (London: Hutchinson \& Co. Ltd., 1964), 177.}

It can be correctly inferred from this passage that English poetry for the most part
has tended toward the discursive. Romantic poetry is often considered a poetry
where nature and image are primary, but, as Cecile Sun has observed, the
discursive tendency manifests itself most prominently when human mind itself
becomes an object of contemplation.\footnote{Sun, III-46.}

Wordsworth seemed to have made this
very clear when he said that "minds that have nothing to confer / Find little to perceive."\footnote{The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940-49), 2:35.}

His mistrust of natural objects is nowhere more clearly revealed
than in the following observation:

Objects derive their influence not from properties inherent in themselves,
but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are
conversant with or affected by those objects. Thus, the Poetry, if there be
any in the work, proceeds whence it ought to do from the soul of Man,

It has often been assumed that Imagism that occurred in the early twentieth
century was a right antidote to the discursive tendency of Romantic poetry. Ezra
Pound, the spokesman of the movement, was disappointed at the development
of English poetry and forged a new style of writing, termed by him "Imagism," to
counterbalance the discursive practice. The prescription is, in F. S. Flint's words,
"absolutely accurate presentation and no verbiage,\footnote{F. S. Flint, "History of Imagism," \textit{The Egoist} 2, no. 5 (May 1915): 71.} a style that "presents" and
not "states." Imagism is not of an immediate Chinese origin, but classical Chinese poetry, with its juxtaposition of images and orientation toward evocation, has always been the guidelight for the movement. However, despite the Imagists' purposeful imitation of Chinese poetry, the traces of discursive elements are still evident. Take one of T. E. Hulme's poems for an illustration:

A touch of cold in the autumn night
I walk abroad
And saw the round moon lean over a hedge,
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to talk, but nodded;
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.

Hulme seems to have presented in the poem a mixture of feelings of warmth and chill he had experienced on an autumn night. The sensation, or, to use Pound's term, the "luminous detail," is conveyed by the correlation of two images, those of the chilly "round moon leaning over a hedge" and the warm friendly "red-faced farmer." The two images, however, are not examples of simple collocation but are rather linked together by the word "like" that indicates the mediation of the reasoning faculty. According to Cecile Sun, the traces of the discourse tendency in Imagist poetry can be identified as three kinds: one is the presence of grammatical links, such as the copulas, as in Hulme's poem, and the other two are more subtle involving the use of punctuations or the visual arrangement of the verse lines. Clearly, Imagism was at best a stylistic movement. The discursive tendency of the traditional literary thinking was challenged but yet

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18Cecile Chu-chin Sun, IV-29.
remained unchanged. In fact, the cause for the early abortion of the movement lies partly in the constriction of the English language and partly in the way of thinking behind the act of image-making. As Williams Carlos Williams has stated in one of his famous poems that "unless the mind changes . . . the line will not change." Or, conversely, as he continues subsequently, "unless there is a new mind there cannot be a new line."19

2. *Miaowu* as *hanxu* 蕭 in classical Chinese poetics

To say that discursive tendency arises when feeling itself becomes the focus of presentation does not mean that feeling is unimportant in Chinese poetry. Quite the contrary, expression of feeling is the raison d'etre of Chinese poetry as with any other lyric traditions. The question lies more in the ways that feeling is presented. In the "world without an I" that captures the majority of classical Chinese poetry, the poet's consciousness is lost in its union with the objects of nature. It is absent in explicit terms but exists implicitly in its communion with the physical world. The poet's feelings are not presented directly but indirectly through the suggestion and the evocation of natural scenes or objects. Hence, even when the reader responds to the scenes or objects in his own way, he is gaining access to the poet's feelings implicit in them. The sense of leisureliness in Wang Wei's poem, for example, conveys the inner tranquillity of the poet living in harmony with the world.

Although Confucian views of the social function of poetry greatly contributed to the reticence of the poet in lyric expression, the poet's concealed

style is derived predominantly from the intuitive contemplation of the physical reality postulated by Daoist, Chanist and even Confucian philosophers. As has been previously discussed, the ultimate goal of poetry is to "enter spirit," i.e., to enter the life of things and identify with their essence. It is in this identification with things that the poet finds his satisfaction, and it is also in his fusion with nature that the poet's satisfaction is fully expressed. To "enter spirit," the poet must "stop his seeing and turn his hearing inside." He must, in other words, forego his judgment and suspend all other conceptual activities. According to Zhang Shaokang, the object of miaowu to Yan Yu is "inspired feelings" (xìngqu), the ineffable beauty of poetry. Wang Shizhen substituted the term miaowu with shenyun, stressing emphatically the subtlety and exquisiteness of poetry as the object of poetic contemplation. Hence, the poet brackets his own emotion and thought in obtaining "spiritual encounters" with reality. In the same subdued voice he writes his poetry to provoke the reader's imagination so that the latter apprehends the subtleties of his poetry in a like manner.

Classical Chinese poetry thus abounds in overtones that resist direct interpretation. Efforts have been made in the past to account for, in James Liu's words, the "indeterminacy" of classical Chinese poetry. Mei Tzu-lin and Kao Yu-kung, for example, captured this phenomenon in their linguistic study of Tang

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20 In the early days of China, the primary social function of poetry was to inform and admonish the rulers. Hence the writing of poetry was governed by a decorum so that "the speaker will not offend while the listener can correct himself" ("Shi daxu" 詩大序, Maoshi Zheng jian 毛詩鄭箋 [Si bu beiyao ed., 23. 6b]. The poems collected in The Book of Poetry (Shi jing 詩經) are all good examples. Thus, Confucius said that a man would not know how to speak unless he had studied The Book of Poetry. Qian Mu, anno., Lun yu xinjie, 412.


poetry. They attributed the cause to the unique syntactic features of the Chinese language.\textsuperscript{23} Drawing on Empson's \textit{Seven Types of Ambiguity}, Zhu Ziqing probed the problem from the perspectives of modern semantics.\textsuperscript{24} Although studying poetry by examining its linguistic features is undoubtedly a legitimate approach, for poetry is, if anything, the art of language, we cannot replace the study of poetics with lexical, syntactic, or even semantical research. In other words, while the aforesaid studies have cast invaluable light on the "indeterminacy" of classical Chinese poetry, these studies are not studies conducted from properly literary or aesthetic perspectives. It should be pointed out that by the so-called "indeterminacy" in classical Chinese poetry is not meant "ambiguity" or "equivocalness," as the word might be used as such by James Liu, but "circumlocution" in expression and its ultimate goal "proliferation" of meaning. And the motive for circumlocution can be best understood through an examination of Chinese intuitionalist or evocative poetics.

Scholars have agreed that Chinese intuitionalist poetics started with Zhong Hong's "The Gradings of Poetry" (\textit{Shi pin}), where it is said that "words have ended and yet meanings are lingering" (\textit{wen yì jìn ér yì yóu yù 文已盡而意有余}).\textsuperscript{25} Liu Xie described this type of poetry as "concealed," or, in Vincent Shih's translation, "recondite" (\textit{yǐn 隱}) in expression and explained its characteristics:

\begin{quote}


25 Zhong Hong, 7.
\end{quote}
The recondite, as a form, suggests ideas which are beyond linguistic expression and are comprehended indirectly through abstruse overtones, which unobtrusively reveal hidden beauty.26 Liu Xie discusses \textit{yin}, the concealed significance, together with \textit{xiu}, the ostentatious excellencies, found side by side in a literary work. While the quality of \textit{xiu} attracts the eye but does not bear too much rumination, that of \textit{yin} always offers food for digest or new vista for exploration because of its supralinguistic expression. Despite his juxtaposition of the two, Liu evidently thinks that concealed expression is better than ostentatious presentation which appeals to the eye but in which the traces of workmanship are evident.

The critic who first actually used the phrase \textit{hanxu} ("concealment") in arguing for an concealment in expression is the Tang dynasty monk Jiaoran (730-799). In his "Styles of Poetry" (\textit{Shi shi 詩式}), he defined \textit{si} ("thought"), one of the nineteen styles of poetry he espoused, that "the qi rich in reconditeness is called \textit{si}."27 By the word \textit{qi}, Jiaoran means \textit{qixiang} 氣象, i.e., the subtle meaning of a literary work.28 The sentence thus can be taken to mean that the meaning of a poem should be recondite and profound. It is like painting a picture. In addition to the individual mountain or river, the artist should render into it the momentum of thousands of mountains and rivers. In this way the picture will convey the big by the small and the distant through the near. Elsewhere, Jiaoran advances the concepts of "the idea beyond language" (\textit{wen wai zhi zhi 文外之旨}), "obtaining the marvelous beyond the image" (\textit{cai qi yu xiang wai 采奇於象外}), "emotion beyond meaning" (\textit{qing zai yi wai 情在以外}).

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item[26]Liu Xie, 2:632. The English translation is from Vincient Shih, 304.
\item[28]He said: "Poetry contains profundities, called \textit{qixiang}, which are deeply hidden in the structure." Ibid., 18.
\end{itemize}
Jiaoran's assumptions about indirect and evocative expression were elaborated by Sikong Tu. In his "The Twenty-four Modes of Poetry" (Ershisi shipin 二十四詩品), Sikong Tu identifies twenty-four styles of poetry and among them are hanxu and weiqu 委曲 ("circumlocution"). As Du Songbo has stated, Sikong Tu's twenty-four modes of poetry present and embody what Wang Changling described as "world" (yijing 意境). Sikong Tu's own presentation of the twenty-four styles exemplifies this. Instead of describing various styles in abstract verbal terms, Sikong Tu implies them within concrete, evocative images. The critic does not explicitly talk about poetry, but the images he uses suggest the mood or the contour of the poetic style in his mind. Through such a practice, Sikong Tu clearly indicates that concealed expression is not unique to the style so named, but is rather the common feature of all poetic writings. He thus presents the concept of hanxu:

Without setting down a word,
All the spectrum of romance is attained.
The words do not relate to the self,
Yet the sorrow is already hard to endure.
Herein lies the First Cause,
With which we sink or rise.
As wine in the container swells to the brim,
As flowers blossom in the returning cold of autumn.
Like dusts drifting in the air,
And bubbles flowing in the ocean.
Shallow and deep, gathered and dispersed,
You grasp ten thousand and select one.\(^{30}\)


\(^{30}\)Sikong Tu, 21.
The first two lines were frequently quoted by critics and poets. Sun Liankui 孫聯奎 (fl. 1851) commented on it and said: "By 'not setting down a word' is meant beating around the bush without one word briefing the real intent." Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733-1818) annotated the phrase, saying: "The so-called 'not setting down a word' is, in fact, to conceal all things." Sikong Tu argues that to write a poem in a concealed style, one should not use abstract terms, but should instead couch his ideas in concrete objects of nature. For instance, one has no need to state in sheer verbal form how hard it is, for the grief, couched in images, is already beyond endure. This is so because when reading the poem, the reader enacts the images using his imagination and thus perceives their hidden meanings.

Sikong Tu also discussed evocative expressions of poetry in his correspondence with his friends. For example, in his letter to a Master Li, he wrote:

Prose is difficult, yet poetry is even more difficult. From antiquity to the present there have been many comparisons for this, but I believe that only when one distinguishes flavors can one talk about poetry. South of the Yangzi and the five mountain ranges [i.e., in southern, "barbarian" China], of all these condiments that enhance palatability, if they are pickled, it is not that they are not sour, but they stop at sourness and that is it. If they are salted, it is not that they are not salty, but they stop at saltiness and that is it. People of China [proper] will sate their hunger and stop eating, for they know that these lack what is beyond saltiness and sourness, an exquisite beauty.

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33 "Yu Li sheng lun shi shu" 與李生論詩書, included in Guo Shaoyu and Wang Wensheng, Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan, 2:196. The translation is from Pauline Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition, 209.
The use of "flavor" (wei 味) to discuss poetry, a popular practice in Chinese criticism, can be traced back to Zhong Hong. Here, by "the flavor beyond the taste" (wei wai zhi zhi 味外之致), Sikong Tu refers to an aesthetic satisfaction that lies beyond the physical attraction of poetry. To help the reader obtain this satisfaction, the poet should use a concealed mode of presentation, a mode that is neither overly descriptive nor emotional, yet for this reason all the more subtle and suggestive. Thus, "words have ended, and yet meanings are lingering." The same is said of the notions of "the image beyond images" and "the scene beyond scenes" that he advanced in his another famous letter.34

Sikong Tu's assumptions about concealed expression greatly influenced the critics and poets in the Song dynasty. Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002-1060), for example, said that poetry must "represent scenes difficult of depiction as if they were at present, and imply endless meaning that is seen beyond the words."35 This is in fact an extension of Sikong Tu's famous "beyonds" discussed in the above. As to what is "the endless meaning beyond the words," Mei cited a couplet by Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (ca. 812-870): "Sound of the cockcrow, the moon over the thatched inn; / Someone's footprints, the frost on the wooded bridge," and argued that the asperity of the trip and the traveler's sad feelings are seen beyond the words. Evidently, Wen's poem does not overtly talk about the traveler's sadness, but the images it uses to convey it strongly point to this direction. Zhang Jie 張戒 (fl. Song dyn.), another Song dynasty poet-critic, also advocated concealment in expression. He argued that poetry should embody "feelings beyond the words" (qing zai ci wai 情在詞外) and that the perfection

34 "Yu Jipu shu" 與極浦書, Ibid., 2:201.

35 Cited by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) in his Liyi shihua 六一詩話. He Wenhuan, Lidai shihua, 158.
of poetry lies in "relaxation and reconditeness" (bu puo bu lu 不迫不露). 36

However, of all the Song dynasty critics, Yan Yu gave the notion of hanxu the most incisive and pictographic expression. In Canglang’s Discussions of Poetry, he wrote:

Poetry is what sings of one’s emotion and nature. The poets of the High Tang [8th century] relied only on inspired feelings [hsing-ch’u], like the antelope that hangs by its horns, leaving no traces to be found. Therefore, the miraculousness of their poetry lies in its transparent luminosity, which cannot be pieced together; it is like sound in the air, color in appearances, the moon in water, or an image in the mirror; it has limited words but unlimited meaning. 37

The so-called "sound in the air, color in appearances, the moon in water, or an image in the mirror" point out the discrepancy between a poetic image and the original physical object and the fact that artistic truth is not equivalent to the physical reality. The "moon" in a poetic image is no longer the moon in the sky and the "flower" no longer the flower in the physical environment, for they have undergone the selection or abstraction by the poet and are thus incorporated with the poet’s emotive purport. The moon and the flower thus processed naturally contain “the lingering meanings” and foods for imagination. Compared with Sikong Tu's notions of "the scene beyond scenes" and "the image beyond images," Yan Yu’s assumptions are more specific and perceptual, and therefore more sophisticated and profound.

The Qing dynasty was marked by another renaissance in literary criticism and assumptions about concealed expression abounded. We may single out Wang Shizhen as a representative, whose notion of "spirit and tone" has


37 Yan Yu, 26. The English translation is from James Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 39.
appeared in our discussion several times. Wang defined the meaning of "spirit and tone" by citing the following lines: "In Baixia, mountains are all surrounding the city walls; / At Qingming, there are no travelers that are not homesick;" "Spring days are numbered in Baixia; / How many turns the Yellow River [has made] on the moonlit night?" "At Guabu, the river is empty and trees are scarce; / In Moling, sky is afar and autumn is not fit." From these examples that Wang cited, it is clear that the so-called "spirit and tone" refers to the reconditeness and profundity of poetry, which is cast in the same vein as Sikong Tu's "beyonds" and Yan Yu's "moon" and "flower," as Weng Fanggang told us:

"Spirit and tone," traced back and further back, can be attached to almost all the sources. The so-called "the antelope hangs by its horns, leaving no traces," "the flower in the mirror, the moon in water and the image in the air" are all the right meanings of "spirit and tone."  

Among other Qing dynasty critics who espoused concealed expression, Li Yu 李漁 (1611-1680?) said: "Generally speaking, attachment is not as good as departure, intimacy is not as good as distance; to reveal everything without reservation is not as good as to provoke endless imagination." Fang Dongshu 方東樹 (1772-1851) argued that poetry should contain "the sound beyond the strings, and the flavor beyond flavors," and Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1798) put it straightforwardly: "Poetry that does not have meanings beyond words is as tasteless as chewing wax." All these arguments point to one central fact, namely, "the ultimate perfection of poetry lies in concealed expression."
3. Techniques of *hanxu* in classical Chinese poetry

In his "Gradings of Poetry," Zhong Hong advanced the famous notion of *ziwei* 味 or "flavor." He argues that of all the literary forms popular at the time the five-character poetry (*wuyan shi* 五言詩) possesses most the quality of "flavor," and the reason for it lies in the use of *fu* 賦 ("description"), *bi* 比 ("comparison") and *xing* ("stimulation"), the three tropes of poetic expression in *the Book of Poetry*. These three tropes, Zhong contends, are the keys to "the consummation of poetry," for, when "reinforced by one's own personal style and one's artistic sense, the reader finds pleasures unbounded in one's writing and is profoundly moved at heart." 43

The terms of *fu*, *bi* and *xing* first appeared in the *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhou li* 周禮) along with *feng* 風 ("air"), *ya* 雅 ("ode"), and *song* 歌 ("hymn") as the Six Song-Methods (*liu shi* 六詩), 44 and resurfaced in "The Major Preface" (*Shi daxu*) as the Six Principles (*liu yi* 六藝) of poetry. 45 *Feng*, *ya* and *song* are commonly considered as poetic forms and *fu*, *bi* and *xing* techniques or modes of expression. 46 While scholars since the Han dynasty have all agreed that *fu* is the "descriptive" or "narrative" mode, *bi* and *xing* have long been subjects of

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46 Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (674-648) stated clearly that "*fu*, *bi* and *xing* are techniques and *feng*, *ya* and *song* are forms." *Mao shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (*Si bu beiyao* ed.), 1. 7a.
controversy, especially with regard to the distinction between the two. Zheng Zhong (?-83) interpreted *bi* as "taking an object for example" (*bi fang yu wu*) and *xing* "entrusting something to an object" (*tuoshiyu wu*). Zheng Xuan defined *bi* as "saying it by selecting a categorical analogy" (*qu bileiyiyan zhi*) and *xing* "admonishing it by selecting a good situation" (*qu shanshi yuquanzhi*). Clearly, both *bi* and *xing* involve the act of comparison or analogy despite the fact the literal meanings of *xing* are "rise," "exalt," "rouse," and "evoke." Liu Xie, however, offered a distinction between *bi* and *xing*, which has won the agreement of some of the most sensitive and discerning critics:

*Pi* involves reasoning by analogy, and *hsing* response to a stimulus. When we reason by analogy, we group things by comparing their general characteristics; and when we respond to stimuli, we formulate our ideas according to the subtle influences we receive. The *hsing* is the result of our responding to a stimulus, and the *pi* a consequence of reasoning by analogy. Formally, the *pi* is a linguistic expression charged with accumulated indignation, and the *hsing* is an admonition expressed through an array of parables.

We may correctly infer from the observation that *bi* is the mode of expression in which the poet makes a comparison between an object and what he tries to express based on the principle of similarity, and *xing* is that in which the poet expresses himself by responding to a natural object based on the principle of correspondence. Previously, Liu has stated that "*bi* is obvious and *xing* obscure," and Kong Yingda, a Tang commentator of the *Five Classics*, argued to the same effect. Yet, both of the modes, rather than a direct expression, use

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49. Kong Yingda, Mao shi zhengyi, 1. 6b.
objects of nature to evoke, suggest or set off by contrast the poet's ideas or feelings. The same is said of the technique of *fu*. Despite that *fu* was commonly interpreted by Confucian exegesists as "direct narration or description" (*pu chen qi shi* 鋪陳其事), in literary practice the poet using the technique nonetheless relies on objects of nature for expression. Liu Xie thus defined *fu*: "It signifies arrangement of the patterns that give form to literature, and expresses the feelings that conform to objective things."50 Liu Xizai (1813-1881) argued: "*Fu* contains *bi* and *xing* in it simultaneously. It expresses the weighty meaning beyond words by focusing on factual description within the words . . . Otherwise, if the object of depiction is the object itself, what is the use [of *fu]?"51 The use of object for expressing emotion in *fu, bi* and *xing* was best observed by Li Zhongmeng:

> The way of expressing feeling by depicting object is called *fu*, in which both feeling and object are expressed fully; the way of searching for object to embody feeling is called *bi*, in which feeling is attached to object; the way feeling is aroused upon coming to object is called *xing*, in which feeling is moved by object.52

Hu Yin 胡寅 (1098-1156), a Song dynasty scholar, remarked that "there are many interpretations of *fu, bi* and *xing* in both the ancient and the modern times, but of them all, Li Zhongmeng's is the best."53 Li's interpretation differs from those of the other scholars in that it approaches *fu, bi* and *xing* from the angles of the relations between emotion and object. Thus, we discern in all the three modes an interaction between emotion and object, though in each mode the way

50 Liu Xie, 1:134.
53 Ibid.
the two referents are related is different. In terms of the sequence of the two referents, in the mode of \( fu \), object is depicted for its own sake, and there is no overt exchange between object and emotion; in the mode of \( bi \), there is human emotion first and object is sought to body forth that emotion; and in the mode of \( xing \), there comes first object and then emotion is aroused under its impact and expression ensues.\(^{54}\) Tu Kuo-ch'ing has remarked that these three modes should include all the possible modes of poetic expression,\(^{55}\) and Mou Shijin has also stated that \( fu, bi \) and \( xing \) exhaust all the relationships that could possibly exist between emotion and object.\(^{56}\)

The purpose of concealed expression is to render into poetry "flavor" or "lingering meanings," and the "intrigue for doing so," as Shen Xianglong (Qing dyn.) put it, "is nothing but ji yan 寄言 ("entrusting words"):

Profundity and unlimitedness are the secret of \( ci \).\(^{57}\) By "concealment" is meant that meaning should not be shallow and words do not exhaust all.

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\(^{54}\) As with \( bi \) and \( xing \), the use of \( fu \), since its appearance, underwent a substantive change from simplicity to sophistry. In Xie Lingyun's (385-433) poetry, for example, the use of \( fu \) manifests as a formula of three steps, from narration to depiction of scene and finally to expression of feelings, object and emotion being separated as two entities. In Tang poetry where the technique is used, depiction of scene or object is in the meantime an expression of feelings. Poetry becomes more concealed and is filled with more "embodied meanings" (\( xingji^{*} \)), as we shall see shortly.


\(^{56}\) Mou Shijin, 48. Mou said that the relationship between emotion and object in literary writings cannot exceed two: one is that emotion depends on object for expression (\( qing fu wu \) 情附物) (i.e., \( bi \)), and the other is that object arouses emotion (\( wu dong qing \) 物動情) (i.e., \( xing \)). As for the relation between the two referents in \( fu \), it either falls under the category of the latter or that of the former.

\(^{57}\) One form of Chinese classical poetry. Germinated in the Southern Dynasties (420-589) and becoming popular in the Song period, the poems in the \( ci \) form could all be originally sung with music, hence they were referred to as \( qu \) 歌 ("songs") in the Tang dynasty.
There is lingering flavor in the sentence and resonance of meaning in the poem. The intrigue for doing this is nothing but entrusting words. The so-called "entrusting words" refers to the use of *fu*, *bi* and *xing*. The author does not state but entrusts his ideas or feelings in the objects of depiction and thereby produces resonance and reverberations. The modes of *fu*, *bi* and *xing* thus provide three archetypal means with which concealed expression is effected. Or, in other words, in classical Chinese poetry we identify three modes of concealment based on the concepts of *fu*, *bi* and *xing*. We may designate them as "pictorial," "comparative" and "associative" modes respectively, but, in the order of the degree of presence of intellect, let us start first with the comparative mode.

1) The comparative mode

The mode is derived from the technique of *bi*, where the poet "searches for object to body forth his feelings" (*suo wu yi tuo qing*). In practice, the poet in this mode expresses himself by projecting his feelings to an external object, which, having been invested with the emotive tenor, is strongly expressive of the poet's emotion. The interactive process between emotion and object in this mode evolves from the former to the latter, or in Chinese, *you xin ji...*

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59 James Liu has discussed what he calls "the three worlds" of Chinese poetry (*Journal of Oriental Studies* 3 [1956]: 278-90), and Cecile Sun has also identified three principal ways in which scene is used in classical Chinese poetry. Although they do not overtly mention it, their distinctions are obviously based on the use of *fu*, *bi* and *xing*. After all, the three techniques are the "right sources of poetics and standard criteria of principle" (*shixue zhi zhengyuan, fadu zhi zhunze*) (Yang Zai 杨载 [1271-1323], *Shi jia shu* 詩法家數, in He Wenhuang, *Lidai shihua*, 470). This being the case, what I am going to present in the following may overlap with their discussions in certain respects. I am certainly indebted to Cecile Chu-chin Sun for the discussion of the associative mode.
Therefore, emotion plays an important role: it imparts life, so to speak, to an inanimate object in nature, thus transforming the physical entity into a poetic image. The simplest testimony of the power of emotion is that the same physical object incorporated with different sentiments will assume different nuances, and thus form as different images. For example, among the images made up of clouds, *guyun* 孤雲 ("solitary clouds") is symbolic of a poor scholar's aloofness from politics and material pursuits, as in Du Fu's 杜甫 (712-770) poem: "Even solitary clouds drift in flocks, / Spiritual beings all belong somewhere;"*61* *nuanyun* 暖雲 ("warm clouds") indicate the warm feelings one experiences in spring as in Luo Yin's 羅隱 (833-909) poem entitled "To Xu Congshī in Weibei" (Ji Weibei Xu Congshī 寄渭北從事): "Warm clouds and willow twigs hang languidly, / Mr. Xu on horse-back passes the bridge over the Wei;"*62* and *fuyun* 浮雲 ("drifting clouds") usually implies one's lonesome feelings as a traveler: "Drifting clouds, a wanderer's mood, / Setting sun, an old friend's feelings." These well-known lines from Li Bai's 李白 (701-762) poem "Seeing Off a Friend" (*Song youren* 送友人) serve as a good example.*63*

Empathy is the marked feature of the mode. The poet looks at the world around him in light of his own emotion so that the scenes or objects he depicts are all colored with his own sentiments. Typical of this technique is the poetry of

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*60* I came across the phrase, together with the other two, *you wu jì xīn* 由物及心 and *ji wu ji xīn* 即物即心, in Yeh Chia-yīng's 葉嘉瑩 article "Zhongguo gudian shige zhong xingxiang yu qingyi zhi guanxi lishi" 中國古典詩歌中形象與情意之關係例說 (Gudai wenxue lilun yanjiu congkan 6 [1982]), from which the discussion in this particular section has benefited a great deal.

*61* "You ren" 你人, *Du Fu quanji* 杜甫全集 (Hong Kong: Guangzhi shuju, 195-), 29.

*62* *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 7552.

*63* Li Bai, *Li Taibai quanji* 李太白全集 (Hong Kong: Guangzhi shuju, 19--), 406.
Li Shangyin 李商隐 (813-858). In the following poem, by projecting his own emotion to the external objects, he expresses his grief over the departure of his girl friend:

Meeting is hard. Harder, separation.
East wind now powerless, all flowers wither.
Spring silkworms' thread ends with their death.
Candles will not dry their tears until they turn ashes.
Before morning mirrors: sad that cloud-hair may fade.
Chanting poems at night: feel the moonlight's chill?
Penglai's fairyland is not too far.
Blue Bird, be attentive, sound out the way.64

In the first line the poet states explicitly that parting is hard. However, rather than continuing the expository statement, the poet contrives in the second line two images, those of "the east wind" and "the hundreds of flowers," comparing the former to himself and the latter to his girl friend. Thus, like the east wind too weak to protect the flowers from fading, he is also too powerless to prevent her from leaving. The images in the next two lines are chosen with precision: just as the silkworm does not stop producing silk till its death and the candle does not extinguish till it is consumed to ashes, so the poet's love for his girl friend will not stop till the end of his life. Without further analyzing the poem, we see how these images are selected and interwoven into one coherent picture that helps convey the poet's passionate frustration.

As images in this mode are molded by the poet to suit his expression, the mode best reveals the traces of the workings of the poet's mind. Analogy between emotion and scene is the base upon which the poet's imagination rests. Sometimes things may be treated as persons, and, conversely, persons may be

64 "Wu ti" 无题. Quan Tang shi, 6168. The English translation is from Yip Wai-lim, trans., Chinese Poetry: Major Modes and Genres (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 297. Whenever possible, I shall use the English translations of Chinese poems from this book, because, I think, they are the most imagistic and therefore closest to the Chinese originals.
sometimes compared to things. A good example is from Du Fu's poem "Spring Scene" (Chun wang 春望):

All ruins, the empire; mountains and rivers in view.
To the city, spring grass and trees so thick.
The times strike. Flowers break loose tears.
Separation cuts. Birds are startled.
Beacon fires continued for three months on end.
A letter from home is worth thousands of gold pieces.
White hair, scratched, becomes thinner and thinner,
So thin it can hardly hold a pin.65

The poem skillfully interweaves the images from the world of nature and those from the world of man. The first half generally focuses on the former and the second half on the latter, but the third and fourth lines link elements from both of the realms. Facing the shattered country, the poet is filled with grief. In his painful sadness, the flowers and the birds are transformed into human beings, shedding tears and responding sympathetically to the devastation.66 Although the poet does not employ one word indicative of his grief, it yet comes through powerfully through the use of these personified objects. The same is said of such well-known lines as: "Flowing are the waters of Bian and flowing the waters of Si, / To the ancient ferry in Guazhou they flow, and the Mountain of Wu is grieved every spot;"67 "The candle, with a heart, is sad over the separation, /

65 Du Fu, 120. The English translation is from Yip, 259.

66 There is a more common interpretation of the couplet that the poet, grieved over the passage of time and separation from his family, shed tears on the flowers and startled at the sight of the birds. This couplet is in fact among the best examples to show the multiplicity of meaning of classical Chinese poetry.

67 Bai Juyi 白居易, "Chang xiangsi" 长相思, Quan Tang shi, 4814.
Shedding tears for the human beings till dawn;*\(^68\) and *Clung together, the red lotus are turbid as if drunk, / Speechless, the white bird must be sad by itself.*\(^69\)

2) The associative mode

The technique of *xing* is the prototype of this mode, where the poet "expresses himself by responding to an external object" (*chu wu yi qi qing* 触物以起情). In its most pristine form, the poet using this mode usually starts with a depiction of a natural scene or object, and then shifts his focus from that scene or object to a human situation. This is the reverse of what happens in the first mode: the interplay between emotion and object, instead of evolving from the former to the latter, is seen moving the other way round, or, in Chinese, *you wu ji xin*. Therefore, rather than emotion, natural scene or object takes the initiative here: it provokes the poet and arouses all sorts of feelings in his heart. The following poem by Li Bai illustrates this:

> Tonight, Changan is moonlit,  
> From ten thousand houses, the washers' mallets are heard pounding.  
> What the autumn wind cannot blow away,  
> Is the feeling for the Jade Gate Pass.  
> Oh, when will the Tartars be conquered  
> And my husband quit the campaign afar?\(^70\)

The poem begins with a depiction of natural details and ends with an expression of human emotion. Throughout the poem there is not a single word that overtly expresses grief, but it is suggested powerfully by the scene depicted. Lines 1-4

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\(^68\) Du Mu 杜牧 (803-852), "Zeng bie" 赠别, *Quan Tang shi*, 6028.

\(^69\) Xin Qiji 辛弃疾 (1140-1207), "Tune: Zhegu tian" 誓竭天, from Tang Guizhang, ed., *Quan Song ci* 全宋词 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 3:1873.

\(^70\) "Ziye Wu ge" 子夜吴歌, in Li Bai, 171. The translation is from Cecile Sun, III-9.
describe a scene of Changan on a quiet night: the city is bathed in the cool light of the autumnal moon; the wind is gently blowing, and the washer's mallets are sounding from everywhere. This evocative scene arouses the complaints of a woman expressed in Lines 5-6, whose husband is away fighting the Tartars on the frontier. The scene is evocative because the poet uses several objects that are rich in associations. The moon in the first line, for example, is traditionally associated with thoughts for someone that is absent. Thus, the moon light, which "refuses to be folded up in the curtains of the boudoir and crawls onto the cloth-pounding slate again after being wiped off,"\(^7\) provokes the woman pounding clothes for the soldiers. The autumn wind in the third line is another associative image of this kind. With the autumn wind gently blowing, the woman can no longer check her anxiety and openly questions when the Tartars would be conquered and her husband come back safe and sound.

Compared with the first mode where intellect is involved in search for object to body forth emotion, in this mode object occurs, and is presented as such, instantaneously and intuitively without any logical judgment. The absence of logical activity in this mode captures, in Cecile Sun's words, "the most natural and pristine moment of lyric expression."\(^7\) It is that moment when, again in Sun's words, "man is suddenly inspired by the world around him, but not yet ready to surrender his intuition to the scrutiny of the intellect."\(^7\) However, to say that thought or emotion arises with object is not to suggest that it does not exist before its encounter with the object. In other words, emotion arises with object, but it already exists with the poet in an unconscious form. When provoked by an

\(^7\) The lines are from Zhang Ruoxu's 张若虚 (fl. 711) famous poem "Chunjiang huaye yue" 春江花夜月. Quan Tang shi, 1183-84.

\(^7\) Cecile Sun, III-42.
external object, the poet's heart stirs like a pool of bustling water and emotion breaks out henceforce. We may cite another example for this:

> All over the mountain are the red blossoms of the mountain-peaches, 
> Flapping the mountain is flowing the spring water of the Shu River. 
> Like the red flowers the man's passion is easy to fade, 
> Like the flowing water your grief is infinite.\(^7\)

The first two lines describe a scene typically located in the south of China. They introduce the next two lines where human feeling is expressed. Apparently, the ideas that "a man's passion is easy to fade" and that "a woman's grief is infinitely permanent" are not impromptu but have existed subconsciously with the poet. The encounter with a "correlative scene," the quickly fading flowers on the banks of endlessly flowing river, wakes up the memory and brings forth the thought hitherto lying dormant in the poet's consciousness.

One thing that marks the scene in the above poem is that it serves both as stimulus and analogy to the emotion subsequently expressed. This way of using a natural scene or object often blurs the distinction between this mode and the comparative mode previously discussed. Further obliterating the demarcation between the two modes is the mobility of the position of the scene used for duel purposes. It normally occurs at the beginning of a poem, as in Liu Yuxi's poem cited in the above, but sometimes it may also occur in the middle or at the end of a poem:

> Returning from court day after day, I pawn my spring clothes. 
> Every day I come home drunk from the riverbank. 
> Wine debts are common wherever I go; 
> Seventy-year-olds are rare since time began. 
> Deep among the flowers, butterflies are seen fluttering about; 
> The water-dotting dragonflies are flitting leisurely on the wing. 
> I'll whisper to the wind and light: "Together let's tarry; 

\(^7\)Liu Yuxi 刘禹锡 (722-842), "Zhuzhi ci" 竹枝词, Quan Tang shi, 4110-12.
We shall enjoy the moment and never contrary be."74

The two imagistic lines, Line 5 and Line 6, appear in the middle of the poem, and as such they serve both as an analogy to the poet's thought expressed in lines 1-4 and stimuli to what is to be expressed in the next two lines. We know by instinct that the poet, before composing his poem, is swelled with all sorts of feelings inspired by the butterflies and the dragonflies flying leisurely in the air. However, instead of opening his poem with a depiction of the scene that has provoked him, the poet chooses to vent his inspired feelings first. Thus, being refused mention till after the statement of feelings, the images of butterflies and dragonflies fulfill more effectively its function as an "objective correlative" to the poet's feelings. The happy, wisdom-imbued insects frolicking with each other in the air certainly convince the poet that life is to be enjoyed, hence his another inspired thought stated in the couplet that ends the poem.

For the instance that the scene or object of nature that inspires the poet occurs at the end of the poem, we may cite a ci poem by of He Zhu (1063-1120):

Her footsteps do not tread on the road of Hengtang,
Watching her walking away, fragrant dirts disappear.
With whom to spend the splendid prime of life?
Moonlit steps, flora house,
Carved window, crimson gate,
A place only spring knows.

Blue clouds floating, at the upland, it is late.
With a colored pen and a new topic, only heart-broken sentences form.
Should you ask how much is my leisurely worry?
A plain full of smoke and grass.
The whole city filled with wind and catkin.
The rains at the time the plums turn yellow. 75

74"Qu Jiang" in Du Fu, 125. The English translation is from Cecile Sun, III-26.

This *ci* poem differs from the previous one by Du Fu in that in Du's poem the objects of nature are followed by another statement of feelings that repeats or reinforces the poet's sentiments, whereas here in this poem the natural scene ends the poem abruptly. We find the impact of the scenes used in this manner more dynamic and open-ended, leaving more room for imagination. In the first half of the poem, for example, the author depicts a woman that happens to be walking in his direction. He has never met the woman before, but nonetheless pictures in his mind her private life. The poet's thought turns to himself in the second half of the poem. His thought about the woman still lingers but, tameless and in an embarrassing situation, he can only compose heart-breaking lines even if he is given a pen of talent. But how much is the worry that is pent up in his heart? Instead of directly answering the question, the poet depicts the scene in front of him: the smokes and grasses in the valley, the winds and catkins that fill the city, and the endless rains at the time when the plum turns yellow. All these objective correlatives function effectively to convey the poet's grief and despondence.

3) The pictorial mode

Derived from the technique of *fu*, what characterizes this mode is that the poet, in contriving images for embodiment, engages himself solely in depicting sensory details without touching on his own feelings. Yet, the objects or scenes thus described are not void of emotive import, but rather tinged with the poet's feelings due to the poet's tacit communion with them. They are at once a presentation of the external physical details and an expression of the poet's internal feelings. The mode thus differs from the first in that the poet is not constantly on watch for a proper object, or vehicle, to convey his emotional tenor,
and from the second in that the poet does not first show us a scene or an object that has evoked him and then his emotion aroused by it. In other words, unlike the first two modes where the interplay of emotion and object goes back and forth between the two, in this pictorial mode emotion and object are completely resolved into each other. There is not an overt two-way interaction here because object is emotion and emotion is object, hence the Chinese phrase *ji wu ji xin*.

There are two kinds of poetry that are typically marked by this mode of expression: one is what is called in Chinese *yong wu shi* 詠物詩, or "poetry on object," where a specific object is presented, and the other is called *xie jing shi* 寫景詩, or "poetry of scene," which depicts a scene or a situation. Of the former, Li Shanfu's 李山甫 (fl. 874) poem on the willow is a good example:

> Weak stripes hanging low, it is born with freedom,  
> Yet, bending on his doorway it subjects to his embrace.  
> The golden wind does not understand neither show favors,  
> Due crushes and smoke bullies till the arrival of autumn.76

Tender and without fetters, the willow took its root where it pleased. However, the wind being not understanding nor supportive, the twigs are blown to somebody's doorway and suffer the attacks from dew and smoke. We do not find a word in the poem that denotes the poet's emotion, but the weak image of the willow at the mercy of dew and smoke suggests the complaints of a human being who finds himself in a similar vulnerable situation. The willow in the poem is thus a symbol for someone who lives under the roof of somebody else's house and is susceptible to ill-feelings of slight and mistreatment.

While human emotion in "poetry on object" is usually embodied by the object of depiction, in "poetry of scene" it is often suggested or set off by contrast through the depiction of a scene or situation, as in the following poem by Li Bai:

76 "Liu" 李, *Quan Tang shi*, 7376.
Upon the jade steps white dews grow.  
It is late. Gauze stockings are dabbled.  
She lets down the crystal curtain  
To watch, glass-clear, the autumn moon.77

The poet does not tell us about the gender of the character in the poem, but through the words luowa 罗袜 ("gauze stockings") and shuijing han 水晶帘 ("crystal curtain") we know that it must be a female. The author neither informs us of the thought on her mind, yet through his depiction of the series of the woman's movements, from "standing long on the steps," to "letting down the curtain" and finally to "looking up toward the autumn moon," we seem to understand what she is thinking at the moment. Besides, the use of such words as "jade steps," "white dew," "crystal curtain" and "autumnal moon," all associated with the sense of coldness, suggests the sad and lonesome atmosphere that envelops the woman.

Clearly, in "poetry of scene" the poet becomes more reserved about his feelings, and the distinction between vehicle and tenor is implicit to the point of a total obliteration. However, the absence of human consciousness in explicit terms does not mean that it is absent implicitly. Wang Wei's poems, for example, are generally considered as devoid of human consciousness. Yet, even in his most "empty" and "still" poems, we feel the presence of a human consciousness, however faint it might be:

Empty mountain: no man.  
But voices of men are heard.  
Sun's reflection reaches into the woods  
And shines upon the green moss.78

77"Yujie yuan" 玉阶怨, in Li Bai, 144. The English translation is taken with modification from Yip, 382.

It is a quiet scene from a deep mountain. It is so quiet that the echoes of human voices make it seem even quieter. Perhaps, the absence of the poet's consciousness is reinforced by the sense of emptiness suggested by the poem, but the naturalness in which nature is presented, the fact that the sun shines into the forest and reflects upon the moss, indicates the peaceful mental state of the poet at leisure. Similar to the poem in spirit and style is the poem "River Snow" (Jiang xue 江雪) by Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819):

A thousand mountains--no bird's flight.
A million paths--no man's trace.
Single boat. Bamboo-leaved cape. An old man
Fishing by himself: ice-river. Snow.79

Wang Wei's poem depicts a deep empty mountain, whereas Liu's poem presents a snow scene on a frozen wintry river. Both poems seem to be nothing but two miniatures from the phenomenal world. Yet, while Wang's poem implies in it a peaceful heart in harmony with nature, Liu's poem embodies a state of mind that stands aloof above all worldly cares and considerations.

4. "False impressions" in classical Chinese poetry

Yeh Chia-ying has argued that, despite the sophistication of rhetorical devices in the West, the way emotion is related to object, or vise versa, is rather simple. No matter what "figure of speech" is used--simile, metaphor, metonymy, symbol, personification, synecdoche, or allegory--there exists only one way by which emotion and object are related, namely, first there is emotion and then a rhetorical device is selected for expression of that emotion.80 In other words, of

79Quan Tang shi, 3948. The English translation is from Yip, 317.

80Yeh Chia-ying, "Zhongguo gudian shige zhong xingxiang yu qingyi zhi guanxi lishuo," 42-43. Cecile Sun also stated that of the three modes she discussed, the analogical, the correlative, and the pictorial, the analogical mode is encountered in both Chinese and English nature poetry; the correlative mode occurs normatively in Chinese poetry but is almost totally
the three modes of expression discussed here, only the comparative mode exists in English poetry, where it may be referred to as the use of metaphor. However, even when we compare the comparative mode of Chinese poetry with the metaphorical expressions in English poetry, we find some fundamental differences in the inherent thinking behind the two allegedly analogical modes. This accounts for the fact that metaphor as is understood in the West occurs only sparingly or, in Pauline Yu's argument, never exists in Chinese poetry. To inquire further, we should briefly look at the concept of "metaphor" as espoused by Western critics, obviously the prototype of all other rhetoric devices.

The classical notion of metaphor was provided by Aristotle. In his Poetics, he thus defines the term: "Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy." Of the four instances of transference, the most sophisticated is the absen from English poetry; and the pictorial mode characterizes some Chinese poems but none of, except for a few modern, English poems (Sun, VI-1-87). Sun's findings on the pictorial mode is totally different from mine. This is so because our assumptions about fu are different, especially with regard to its later development. Contrary to her argument that the pictorial mode neither constitutes the best of, nor is most frequently encountered in, Chinese poetry, I would argue the opposite, and hope to have made myself clear through my discussion.

Arthur Waley remarked: "The 'figures of speech,' devices such as metaphor, simile, and play on words, are used by the Chinese with much more restraint than by us. 'Metaphorical epithets' are occasionally to be met with; waves, for example, might perhaps be called 'angry.' But in general the adjective does not bear the heavy burden which our poets have laid upon it. The Chinese would call the sky 'blue,' 'gray,' or 'cloudy,' according to circumstances; but never 'triumphant' or 'terror-scarred' (One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems, 21). Pauline Yu wrote an insightful article on metaphor with regard to Chinese poetry. She observed that in the West metaphor is understood to assert affinities between two previously unrelated things. She traced the philosophical grounds for this conception, i.e., the dualism in Western world views, and argued that the same motive for metaphor does not exist in Chinese poetry ("Metaphor and Chinese Poetry," 209-213). Some scholars took issue with Yu concerning the absence of metaphor in Chinese poetry, but in most cases they did not seem to understand the grounds of her argument.

last one, i.e., analogy, because it involves two relations between four things (if A:B::C:D, then D can be substituted for B, and vice versa. In addition to this, Aristotle points out that metaphor is more than a transference of names. It is, most importantly, a mode of cognition, the ability to relate the apparently unrelated, or, the ability, in his words, "to perceive the similarity in dissimilars." Thus, to Aristotle, "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphors. It is one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius." The poet is a genius, a maker, because, thanks to the poet, familiar relationships are engendered out of the previously unrelated things. It is in this connecting and linking that the poet best shows his virtuosity, and it is also in the collusion of the two referents that poetic truth, whether of necessity or probability, is struck out.

Although Aristotle did not cast the final word on metaphor, subsequent assumptions of the notion deviate little from his archetype. Several points can be concluded from the Aristotelian assumption: 1) Metaphor is a cognitive activity that involves logical reasoning or other conceptual activities; 2) "Affinities" between the two referents of metaphor, tenor and vehicle, are "engendered" by

83Ibid., 187.
84Ibid., 186.
85Ibid., 255.
86We should here mention I. A. Richard, whose notions of "vehicle" and "tenor" have become the key words in talking about metaphor. Richard disagreed with Aristotle as to the relationship between the two referents. He argued that not all metaphors work through comparing similarities, and many of them may depend upon other procedures including contrasting dissimilarities. He proposed the famous "interaction theory," according to which the two referents of metaphor may compare with each other, contrast with each other and fuse with each other (The Philosophy of Rhetoric [New York: Oxford University Press, 1965], 93-108). Despite his new insights, Richard's theory of metaphor, I think, differs from Aristotle's only in the details of how a metaphor works. In terms of the cognitive nature of metaphor, the Aristotelian assumption that metaphor involves connection between two elements is not abandoned. In other words, Richard's "interactive theory" is still based on the connection of the two referents of metaphor.
connection rather than "exist" previously; and 3) The poet is a "maker" and poetic truth is something "made" by the poet. These factors have given rise to several distinctive traits of English poetry including Romantic and even the majority of modern Western subtypes. First, the connection between emotion and object is clearly spelled out. This is linguistically clear, but it in fact represents the working of a cognitive mind. Second, objects of nature function as figures of speech, and the more ingenious the mind is, the more complex the figures of speech. Third, the poet's mind or emotion is the core of lyric expression. Objects are depicted, but this is done by the poet to express his emotive tenor. We have already observed these characteristics in Wordsworth and Hulme's poems quoted at the beginning of this chapter and discussed their discursive propensities. We may now look at two more poems so as to effect a lucid comparison between the two analogical modes of expression in Chinese and English poetry:

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariostest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill . . .

In this well-known poem by Shelley, the west wind is a symbol of the powerful progressive force of the masses and the dead leaves its enemy, the rotten and

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moribund power of the monarch. This is the large allegorical framework of the poem. Within this framework, the dead leaves in the wind are compared to "ghosts feeling from an enchanter" and the winged seeds to "corpses within graves." At both of the levels, textual or sentential, allegorical or rhetorical, the analogies are precise, indicating as they do the fine workings of the poet's intellect. Moreover, the connections between the two referents are explicitly spelled out, by the copular "like" or other grammatical devices such as appositive. Generally speaking, in Romantic poetry where analogy is involved, we often encounter such logical connectives as, in addition to "like," "but," "as," "so," etc. It is also, as Cecile Sun has also noticed, often manifested through the "when-then" and "since-then" or other such familiar formulas. These grammatical connectives are used sparingly in modern Western poetry, but the rhetorical use, or more precisely, the logical nature of metaphorical speech is still clear. Take Robert Frost's poem "A Road Not Taken" for example:

Tow roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

At the end, the poet wrote:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

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The poet identifies human life with a road running through a forest, which gives rise to a series of further comparisons: the branching of the road into several in the forest indicates the complexities of human life; the hesitation of the persona over which road to take suggests the same predicament of the poet in the real-life situation; and finally the fact that the persona's decision on one road over the other has made a big difference on his trip makes us wander whether the individual in reality, be him the poet or somebody else, is happy, regretful or both over the decision he has made early in his life. The comparisons, at levels grand or small, are precisely done, and the reasoning of the intellect maneuvers from simple to complex and from general to particular.

In sharp contrast to this logical reasoning in connecting vehicle and tenor in English poetry is the intuitive grasp of analogy underlying the comparative mode of expression in Chinese poetry, where the two referents are often perceived as originally linked with each other and drawn together without careful consideration. This loose or impressionistic connection of emotion and object accounts for the "false impressions" often encountered in classical Chinese poetry. One striking example is the following lines from Wang Wei's famous poem "Mission to the Frontier" (Shìzhī Sāishāng 使至塞上):

On the great desert, a lone straight column of smoke; 
Above the long river, the setting sun is round.89

The two lines seem to have directly evolved out of the poet's on-site observation of the desert. The picture is rather impressionistic: the vast sands extend infinitely along the horizon with the long column of smoke reaching upward to define its vertical dimension. The sun is setting, and its downward motion is so slow that we see a still round ball hanging halfway in the sky. One might ask how

89 Wang Wei, 1:156. The English translation is from Pauline Yu, Poetry of Wang Wei, 72.
could the smoke from a fire stay straight in the air, however windless the desert might be?90 But preciseness here is apparently not the poet's concern. What occupies the poet is to evoke, with some luminous images, an atmosphere of unusual silence and solitude in which he finds himself. The impressionist picture he captures appeals strongly to our eye, though not to our mind, and we feel an unspeakable sadness that must have griped the poet finding himself alone in the desert.

Sometimes, many Chinese poets, in their oblivious fusion with nature, ignores completely the probability or necessity set by time, space, and perspective. We have already talked about Wang Wei's poem with geographical names unrelated to one another as well as his picture of the banana in snow.91 Now, let us look at another poem of this kind by Li Bai:

Above the Mt. Emei the autumn moon is half round;  
On the Pingqiang River flows and shines its pale light.  
Tonight setting out from Qingxi for the Three Gorges,  
Gliding down from Yuzhou thinking of you whom I cannot see.92

Within a poem of twenty-eight characters, the poet describes his trip from Qingxi through Yuzhou to the Three Gorges. He does so by breaking the sequences of time and locale and weaving them anew with his observations on the trip and his homesick feelings. It is clear that what interests the poet here is not so much a factual description of his trip as an evocation of a profound, ineffable beauty of nature, wrought in the poem by his nostalgia fusing with the moonlit physical world. The poem exemplifies a famous diction by Li Dongyang 李東陽 (1447-
that "poetry values emotion but overlooks facts." It seems that in the opinion of Chinese poets, it is not that the poet should follow the laws of probability and necessity, as Aristotle prescribed, but that the laws should subscribe to the manipulation of the poet. Li Bai's poetry is marked by such "illogical" images: "Monkeys are cawing incessantly on both cliffs; / The light boat already passed ten thousand mountains;" "White hair of three thousand zhang, / Grown so long with the cares of this world;" and "The waters of the Yellow River come flowing from the sky" are some of the best examples.

"Interaction of senses" or "synaesthesia" is still another feature that marks the comparative as well as other two modes of expression in Chinese classical poetry. Instances of synaesthesia are all the results of "spiritual encounters." Here the senses of vision, taste, hearing and touching are all interchangeable, and the demarcations between the eye, ear, tongue, nose and other sense faculties become non-existent. A typical example is from Bai Juyi's poem on *pipa*:

Large strings, *shaft-shaft*, like sudden rains.  
Small strings, *chat-chat*, like whispering.  
*Shaft-shaft, chat-chat*, mixing and merging.  
Large pearls, small pearls pureed into a jade tray.  
*Chien-kuan*, the orioles glided beneath the flowers.  
Swallowed sobs, the fountain sped down the boulders.

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93 *Huailutang shihua* 惠麓堂詩話, in Ding Fubao, *Lidai shihua xubian*, 3:1375.  
94 *Zao fa Baidicheng*, Li Bai, 496.  
97 *Pipa xing*, *Quan Tang shi*, 4288. The English translation is taken with modification from Yip, 399.
The lines are an anomaly of sounds, from those of rains, whispers, birds and streams, all used as analogies for the then slack, then pressing music on the *pipa*. Sandwiched between the sound images is an image, the "pears," half visible and half tangible. It is transformed from a sound image and thus acts upon our senses of vision, hearing and touch simultaneously. We perceive in our mind's eye the shapes of the pearls and feel their fullness and sphericity. Bai Juyi's lines: "Winds blow the ancient trees, rains in a fine weather, / Moon shines on the sands, frost at a summer night," are another example where the sense experience of the ear becomes that of the eye, or where, in Ma Rong's words, we "listen to the sound and imagine the shape" (ting sheng lei xing). Other examples of synaesthesia are: "Catkins of the willows flapping the curtains, spring clouds are hot; / Tortoise-shells screening the wind, drunken eyes look askant;" "Swiftly whirling, the light breeze is not light, / Still it blows pieces of flowers and produces red sounds;" "Rain passed, clouds are wet above the trees; / Wind coming, the sounds of the birds are fragrant under the flowers."

"Hot spring clouds," "red sound," and "fragrant bird chips," these things do not even exist in the physical world. Clearly, Chinese poets do not heed so much the realistic aspects of things as the moods or emotions they help to convey.

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98 "Jianglou xiwang zhaoke* 江樓夕望招客* Quan Tang shi, 4961.
100 Li He 李賀 (791-817), "Hudie fei" 蝴蝶飛, *Quan Tang shi*, 4419.
102 Jia Weixiao 賈唯孝 (Ming dyn.), "Deng Luofeng Siguting" 登螺峰四顧亭, in *Ming shi ji shi* 明詩紀事 (Guoxue jiben congshu ed.), 185:1780.
Their depictions of objects are not so much oriented toward their shape as the emotive properties couched or embodied in them. In fact, Chinese poets believe that too much attention to facts would violate the aesthetic principles, because "the artist, while being too cautious with facts, loses the essence." Hence, they prefer "spiritual resemblance" (shen si) over "formal resemblance" (xing si), the former being interpreted by the Qing dynasty scholar Xu Yinfang 許印芳 as "unresemblant resemblance" (bu si zhi si 不似之似). Theirs are the "poets' scenes" (shijia jing 詩家景), such as "At Lantian when the sun is warm, from fine jade arises smoke." They are, in short, "the image beyond images" and "the scene beyond scenes," those that, in Sikong Tu's words, "can only be gazed from afar but cannot be placed in front of one's eyebrows and lashes.

From the discussion in this chapter, it is clear that classical Chinese poetics has developed along the lyric line a series of assumptions that take concealed expression as the highest form. Chinese poets all contrive to produce in their poetry certain poetic exquisiteness, depth and resonance through use of one or more techniques for concealment. It is important to note that such obsession with concealment presupposes a strong belief in the perceptive power of the reader. For, evidently, without the reader's sensitive perceiving, poetry

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103 Liu Xie, 2:651.

104 "Yu Li sheng lun shi shu' ba" 與李生論詩書跋, in Guo Shaoyu and Wang Wensheng, Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan, 2:201.

105 The lines are from Li Shangyin's poem "Jinse" 錦瑟. Quan Tang shi, 6144.

written in concealed style would appear lifeless, if not totally unintelligible. Indeed, it is this confidence in reader's active reenactment, as Mei Yaochen expressed below, that has encouraged the poets to write in a concealed manner:

The author obtains it in his mind, and the reader meets it with his own idea: it is difficult to point at it and describe it in words. However, one can roughly speak of what is more or less like. Take this couplet by Yan Wei [eighth century]: "In the willowy pond, spring water swells; / Over the flowery bank, the evening sun lingers." Does not the appearance of the sky, the manner of the season—harmonious, mild, relaxed, and leisurely—seem as if it were right before one's eyes? Or take Wen Tingyun's [ca. 812-870] "Sound of cockcrow, moon over thatched inn; / Someone's footprints, frost on Plank Bridge." Or Jia Dao's [777-841] "Strange birds cry in the vast wilderness" / Setting sun frightens the traveling man." Do not the hardships of the road and the detained traveler's sad thoughts appear beyond the words?¹⁰⁷

Interestingly, despite the poet's intended concealment, the reader is believed to be able to retrieve the overtones implicit in the poem. And the more concealed the poem is, the more overtones the poem has, the better Chinese readers enjoy the poem. This by no means suggests that Chinese readers can exhaust whatever the poet wishes to say or has actually said. Nor does it mean that the overtones perceived by each reader are identical. However, a single definite reading of a poem does not seem to be the goal of Chinese readers. The answer to this question and the ways in which Chinese readers read their national poetry are the topics of next chapter.

1. Reading, interpretation or aesthetic experience?

What is it to read a poem or a literary text in general? And how should it be read? There is no doubt that many ways exist and theories of reading abound in both Chinese and Western literary traditions. However, given the diverse positions and approaches in the West, it seems that Western critics in general have taken it for granted that to read a literary text is to understand it in terms of its linguistic meaning. They talk profusely about "meaning" or "text," which are catchwords now in the critical profession and the cause for the prodigious controversies among critics and literary scholars. Yet, questions like "Is there an objective meaning in the text?", "Where is the text located, in the author, the reader or the text itself?" and so on, hardly exist in Chinese literary criticism and certainly are not major concerns with Chinese critics. To them reading a literary text is not so much a cognitive as an aesthetic activity. To read a poem is not to merely interpret its linguistic meaning, but to have an emotional and evaluative response to it. Let us consider two poems and see how they are treated in their indigenous literary traditions:

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.  

In this poem by Wordsworth, there seems to be two statements made by the speaker, one in each stanza: (1) I thought she could not die; (2) She is dead. A Western critic would set himself the task of finding out the "relationship" between the statements, and his cognitive interpretation of every phrase will turn on the answer to this problem. These are typical questions that, according to Raman Selden, a Western reader would ask himself when reading the poem: How is he (the reader) to regard the speaker's attitude towards his earlier thoughts about the female? Is it good and sensible to have "no human fears", or is it naive and foolish? Is the "slumber" which sealed his spirit a sleep of illusion or an inspired reverie? Does "she seemed" suggest that she had all the visible marks of an immortal being, or that the speaker was perhaps mistaken? Does the second stanza suggest that she has no spiritual existence in death and is reduced to mere inanimate matter? However, questions like these are unlikely to be raised by a Chinese reader in reading a poem:

Painted bridge and flowing water.  
Damped by rain, the fallen flowers cannot rise.  
Moon breaks through at dusk,  
The lingering fragrance from within the curtain is smelled on the horse.  

Walking to and fro, speechless.  
Tonight, where the spirit of dream fares to?  
Less sympathetic than even the weeping willows,  
Whose catkins fly understandingly into the bridal chamber.  

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3 Wang Anguo 王安国 (Song dyn.), "Tune: Jianzi mulan hua" 凯子木兰花, in Tang Guizhang, Quan Song ci, 1:217.
Compared with Wordsworth's poem, the expression of the poem is more concealed. There is no a clear statement made, but only a vague depiction of a mood or world that hangs over the poem. The gender of the speaker or speakers is not clear, and yet this does not bother a Chinese reader. Without a single word to indicate it, the poem seems to express an insurmountable sadness that haunts a romantic pair after the man took off for the frontier and left the woman behind by herself at home. The images, such as "the fallen flowers," "the moon at the dusk," and so on, all invite the reader's sympathetic enactment of the speakers' emotive states. The line "The lingering fragrance from within the curtain is smelled on the horse" is the most remarkable. To a reader who interprets the line literally, the statement is little more than idiotic nonsense. Yet, no competent Chinese readers would read the line this way. To them, the transcendence of space is inevitable, for only this way can the husband's feelings be rendered more exquisite and profound.

In the West, reading a literary text in order to find a hidden meaning is an age-old practice. In her essay "Against Interpretation," Susan Sontag discusses the phenomenon and ascribes the practice to the perennial concern with content in the Western critical tradition. Sontag traces the root of the Western concern with content to the theory of mimesis in the Greek time. Plato, who proposed the theory, considered poetry as imitation of imitations and therefore unreliable. In an attempt to defend poetry, Aristotle contended that it is not the business of poetry to present what it is, which should be the job of history, but what ought to be according to the laws of necessity and probability. The subsequent apologies of poetry, notably those by Horace and Sidney, all defended the figurative and

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above all "realistic" nature of poetry. And it is this defense of poetry, says Sontag, that "gives birth to the odd vision by which something we have learned to call 'form' is separated off from something we have learned to call 'content,' and to the well-intentioned move which makes content essential and form accessory."^5

Even in modern times when most critics and writers have discarded the theory of art as representation in favor of the theory of art as subjective expression, the main features of mimesis persist. Thus, whether critics "conceive of the work of art on the model of a picture" or "on the model of a statement," content still comes first. The content may be "less figurative, less lucidly realistic," but it is still assumed that a work of art is its content."^6 Sontag proposes that the hegemony of content continues because it has been "perpetuated in the guise of a certain way of encountering works of art." "What the overemphasis on the idea of content entails," she says, "is the perennial, never consummated project of interpretation."^7 This habit of approaching works of art in order to interpret them sustains the idea that there really is such a thing as the content of a work of art.

Wolfgang Iser, in his well-known book *The Act of Reading*, gives a fine depiction of what he refers to as "the traditional form of interpretation." Using the narrator in Henry James' novel *The Figure in the Carpet* as an analogy, Iser depicts the critic's practice of reading as an "archeological approach." The critic starts with the assumption that meaning is a thing that can be excavated through

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5Ibid., 4.

6Ibid.

7Ibid., 6.
interpretation. Claiming that he is searching for "truth" or an esoteric message that corresponds to a social or historical norm, he proceeds to extract it out from a literary text through the tools of referential analysis.\textsuperscript{8} This conforms with Sontag's opinion that interpretation presupposes a discrepancy between the clear meaning of the text and the demand of the reader. It seeks to resolve that discrepancy by "digging" behind the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one. Sontag finds in the theories of Marx and Freud the most celebrated and influential modern theories of interpretation:

All observable phenomena are bracketed, in Freud's phrase, as manifest content. This manifest content must be probed and pushed aside to find the true meaning—the latent content—beneath. For Marx, social events like revolutions and wars; for Freud, the events of individual lives (like neurotic symptoms and slips of the tongue) as well as texts (like a dream or a work of art)—all are treated as occasions for interpretation. According to Marx and Freud, these events only seem to be intelligible. Actually, they have no meaning without interpretation. To understand is to interpret. And to interpret is to restate the phenomenon, in effect to find an equivalent for it.\textsuperscript{9}

Sontag does not mention it in her discussion, but traces of interpretation are clearly discernible even in contemporary reader-oriented theories. Despite its rise as a revolt against the textual objectivity advanced by New Criticism and its alleged interest in reader's experience in the process of reading, the reader-response theory has nevertheless remained hung up on content. A close look at their assumptions reveals that reader-oriented critics have never abandoned the textual premises that characterize the literary theories of other orientations. Not to mention the reading theories of such structuralists as Walker Gibson, Gerald Prince and so on, that are, because of their ideological stands, text-oriented, in


\textsuperscript{9}Sontag, 7.
those radical formulations about the reader's role from phenomenology, psychology and even deconstruction, text remains the basic premise in their assumptions and strategic procedures.\textsuperscript{10} But what marks the reader-response theory most is its organized and highly cognitive interpretative strategies. Stanley Fish's understanding of how we make sense of literary texts is based on a linguistic model. His methods of "slowing down" the reading experience like a slow-motion camera, of concentrating on "the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time," remind us of the close-reading of the text-oriented New Critics.\textsuperscript{11} Iser's "affective theory" notwithstanding, his way of handling the reader's "aesthetic response" betrays a highly cognitive mind at work. As Iser himself has said, he "focused primarily on the response-inviting structures of the literary text," for "tracing these structures and their multiple interrelationships permits to delineate the patternings of a text as a structured prefigurement for the potential impact it is able to exercise."\textsuperscript{12} His phenomenology of text-processing by intended recipients is founded on some "presuppositions" that, he said, "stand in need of being tested as to the insight they are able to open up." He devised the framework so that it "allows to assess

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{10}Even Derrida, without whom the reader-response theory in its present form would hardly exist, does not exclude the text from the premises of his deconstructionist theory. Indeed, in what Abrams calls Derrida's "graphocentric model" of interpretation, text, the physical marks stripped of any reference to a speaking or writing subject, is the only source of meaning. Hence Abram's accusation that Derrida reaches his deconstructionist conclusions by a process "no less dependent on an origin, ground, and end," and "no less remorselessly 'teleological' than the most rigorous of the metaphysical systems that he uses his conclusions to deconstruct." See Abrams' "The Deconstructive Angel," \textit{Critical Inquiry} 3, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 429, 431.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11}For his reading strategies, see his "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," \textit{New Literary History} 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1970): 123-62.}

or diagnose even actual readings, or to make statements about individual text-processing.\textsuperscript{13}

In sharp contrast to this perennial interest in content and highly cognitive interpretative strategies is the excessive concern of Chinese critics with reader's affective experience in the process of reading. This different orientation in reading stems, in fact, from a more basic distinction between the two hermeneutic traditions that in the West meaning is often located in the text, whereas in Chinese literary criticism the meaning of a literary text is invariably identified with the intention of the author. Text in Chinese criticism is considered no more than a medium of understanding, and the meaning of a literary work lies in the author's mind inscribed in the text, hence the phrase "Chinese intentionalism" or "Chinese intentionalist hermeneutics."\textsuperscript{14} Considered problematic and the target of profuse criticism in Western literary criticism, the authorial intention as meaning has dominated the Chinese critical tradition for over two thousand years and its power of influence is strongly felt even today.\textsuperscript{15}

As Zhang Longxi has pointed out, the root of Chinese intentionalist hermeneutics can be traced back to the notion of \textit{shi yan zhi}, the founding assumption in Chinese literary criticism regarding the origin of poetry.\textsuperscript{16} Unlike

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 94

\textsuperscript{14} See James Liu, \textit{Language-Paradox-Poetics}, 95; Zhang Longxi, 134.

\textsuperscript{15} In the West, the authorial intention as meaning has been regarded, ever since Wimsatt and Beardsley's famous denouncement, teleologically fallacious and methodologically subjective and unreliable. Thus, E. D. Hirsch's contention for the "norm" (i.e., the authorial intention) of reading provoked so much resentment from the critical public, and so did the intentionalist argument raised by Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels. The controversies the latter produced were the cause for a special issue of \textit{Critical Inquiry} (June, 1983) and occasioned the publication of the book \textit{Against Theory: Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism} (ed. W. J. T. Mitchell, Chicago, 1985).

\textsuperscript{16} Zhang Longxi, 133-134.
the notion of mimesis in the West which regards poetry as a representation of an outer reality, poetry in Chinese literature is conceived as an expression of the poet's inward feelings. Thus, while in the West the meaning of a poem lies in an esoteric truth presented in the text, for the Chinese the author is where the meaning comes from because his own intention or emotion is the origin of his poetry. Therefore, understanding a poem in Chinese criticism constitutes an understanding of the poet's mind, and to do so the reader must trace back to the poet's original intention.

Mencius, a Confucian thinker second only to Confucius in influence, formulated two methods for reconstructing the original intention of the author: one is by studying the age in which the author lived (zhiren lun shi 知人論世), and the other is through a sympathetic, comprehensive reading of the author's works (yi ni zhi 以意逆志). With regard to the former, Mencius said: "Chanting his poems and reading his books, how can we not know the author as a real person? Therefore, we must study the age in which he lived." This is to say that to read a literary text one must not focus his attention on the work alone, but should expand his scope to cover such ulterior information as the social or historical background of the work, the author's ideology, his life experience and so on. As for the second method, Mencius said: "The interpreter of a poem should not

17Meng Zizhushu, in Ruan Yuan, Shisan jing zhushu, 2:2746.

18The contingence of the author's biographical information on the comprehension of his works was stressed by many literary critics of the subsequent periods. Zhang Xuecheng (1738-1801), for example, wrote: "If we do not know the ages in which the ancients lived, we are not in a position to talk about their works. Even if we know the ages in which the ancients lived, we cannot talk about their works unless we have a knowledge of their life experiences." (Wen shi tong yi 文史通義 [Guoxue jiben congshu ed.], 365:81). Fang Dongshu discussed the intentionalist method with more details: "By reading, we seek a thorough understanding of the work and the intention of the author. To understand thoroughly the author's intention, we must study his age in order to know his ideals. Then we study the refinement and the crudeness, the wins and the losses of his language as well as their causes. In this way we can distinguish superiority from inferiority and decide whether to follow him or not." Zhao mei zhan yan 昭妹詹言 (Tongcheng Wu Shi pingben 桐城吳氏評本 ed., 1918), 1.5b.
let the words harm the poem, or the poem harm the intention. To trace back to
the original intention of the author, this is the way to understand the meaning of a
poem." In other words, in reading a poem one should not let himself be led
astray by the meanings of the individual words. He should, instead, pursue a
comprehensive understanding of the poem and thereby retrieve the poet's
original intention. Clearly, if the notion zhi ren lun shi provides a way of knowing
the author's mind through some ulteriorly oriented means, yi yi ni zhi is a method
to reconstruct the author's mind internally through a textual pursuit. The latter
finds an elaborated expression in the chapter of "True Friends" (Zhiyin 知音) of
Liu Xie's monumental work The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons:

Now before we begin to study a piece of literature, we should pay attention
to six points: its genre and style, its rhetoric, its application of the principle
of flexible adaptability, its conformity or nonconformity to orthodox
principle, its factual and intellectual content, and its musical pattern. Once
clear about these points, we shall be able to weigh its merits and its
faults.20

This is the famous "six observations" (liu guan 六観) that prescribe the contents
of study in literary reading. Liu Xie addresses the reader who is able to perceive
the poet's mind zhiyin, or literally, "one who knows the sound." Concerning the
purpose and general procedure of reading, he writes:

The writer's first experience is his inner feeling, which he then seeks to
express in words. But the reader, on the other hand, experiences the
words first, and then works himself into the feeling of the author. If he can
trace the waves back to their source, there will be nothing, however dark
and hidden, that will not be revealed to him. Although the life of an age
may have passed beyond our view, we may often, through reading its
literature, succeed in grasping the heart of it.21

19Meng Zi, 2:2735.
20Liu Xie, 2:715. The English translation is from Vincent Shih, 371.
21Ibid. The translation is from Vincent Shih, 371.
Here, Liu Xie presents reading as a backward movement, following in reverse order the series of steps that has produced the poem. The passage states clearly the purpose of reading, which is to trace the mind of the author at the time the poem was written. The task may not be easy, owing to the passage and the obscurity of time. However, as long as one engages oneself in a retrogressive pursuit, tracing words like waves to their fountain-heads, he will ultimately succeed in obtaining the author’s original intention.

There are several things in Liu Xie’s discussion that should be noted. First, unlike in Mencius’ formulations, the authorial intention is here clearly understood to be the emotive state of the poet when he produced the poem. By the phrase “trace to the sources” (tao yuan 訪源) is not meant a reconstruction of the author’s ideology, as has often been understood, but of the literary mind (i.e., wenxin 文心) that has gone into the making of the poem. It is what Sima Xiangru called “the mind of the fu writers” (fuxin 賦心),\(^{22}\) or what Lu Ji meant by the phrase “exercising mind” in the creative process (wei wen zhi yongxin 為文之用心).\(^{23}\) The use of the word xin in the last line of the quoted passage makes this clear. The literary mind entails the emotion that rose in the poet in response to the stimulus of the physical world. To reconstruct the author’s original intention thus constitutes a reconstruct of the poet’s emotive experience at the time he wrote the poem. Second, to understand the author’s original intention, the reader must “enter” (ru) the poet’s mind and re-live his emotive experience in an existential manner. The word ru is crucial because without a

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\(^{22}\) See Note 28 of Chapter One.

\(^{23}\) Lu Ji, 170.
sympathetic association with the author and a sensitive apprehension of his mind
a correct understanding of the poem would be impossible, as Liu continues:

Our mind reflects reason just as our eyes perceive physical forms; as long
as our eyes are keen, there are no physical forms which cannot be
distinguished, and as long as our mind is alert, there are no feelings or
ideas which cannot be conveyed.24

The true friend of the poet is one who not only knows the "sound" of the poem
(zhi yin) but also the "world" in which the poem was produced (zhi jing 知境).
Or, put differently, to know the sound of the poem is to know the world in which
the poet wrote his poem, and vice versa.

Chinese intentionalism has given rise to what James Liu calls the
"historico-biographico-tropological approach" in the Chinese hermeneutic
tradition.25 Poems are assumed to be factual accounts of historical experience,
as Stephen Owen has observed, and efforts have been made to construct
biographical chronologies from poems or use poems as direct sources for social
or cultural history.26 However, the fact that poetry is considered an authentic
presentation of a historic time does not stand in the way of the reader's
emotional, affective and in short aesthetic response to a poem. In other words,
despite the belief of poetry as factual presentation, Chinese critics and readers
manage to escape the mundane concerns with moralization and authorial

24Xue, 2:715. The translation is from Vincent Shih, 372.

25James Liu, Language-Paradox-Poetics, 96.

26Stephen Owen, Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics, 14-15, 56-57. In fact,
intentional studies in Chinese literature that concern such topics as authorship, author's intention,
the time and locale of the composition of a poem, alluded figures and places in a poem, and so
on, have all to do with the interrelatedness between poetry and history in the Chinese cultural
tradition. The relation between the two can be even seen in the etymology of the word shi 詩.
According to the textual research of Wen Yiduo, the word shi in the formula shi yan zhi was
originally one word with zhi志, whose meanings include "to remember," "to record" and "to
cherish in the heart." See Wen Yiduo quanjí 闕一多全集, eds. Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 et al.
(Shanghai: Kuangming shudian, 1948), 1:118-9.
intention and indulge themselves in the aesthetic pleasures promised by such concealed artistic expressions of a poem as "inspired feelings," "spirit and tone," and "world" that we have talked about in the previous chapter. This is because, first, in the Chinese literary tradition poetry concerns first and foremost with expression of emotion, and thus to understand a poem is to trace and re-live the original emotional experience of the poet as Liu Xie postulated. Moreover, meaning being spotted outside the text in the mind of the author, attainable and accessible through other means, reading is intended and practiced as such as an experiential act aiming at an identification with the author's emotive consciousness. In other words, if the author's intention is known through a study of the age he lived and his biography, the reading process itself becomes a process of aesthetic attainment and enjoyment. Especially in Chinese hermeneutic community where author's intentions (i.e., meanings) are often matters of fact known and shared by every educated reader, the reading process as aesthetic experience is more heeded and emphasized. In this connection, it is important to point out that in Chinese traditional hermeneutics there are "affective fallacy" as well as "intentional fallacy," the latter being often referred to as wo zhu liujing 我注六經 ("I annotate the Six Classics") and the former liujing zhu wo 六經注我 ("The Six Classics annotate me"). The two forms of "fallacy" together form the Chinese hermeneutic tradition like two sides of the same coin. However, in their studies on Chinese traditional hermeneutics, scholars nowadays focus excessively on the intentionalist tendency, which is, as has been shown, basically the Confucian interpretative convention given rise by the exegesis of the ancient classics and marked by a relatively rational analysis and uniform understanding, while neglecting Daoist and, what is more, Chanist affective hermeneutics associated with and constructed on readings of properly
literary writings.\textsuperscript{27} The latter is the most important, for in Chinese criticism almost all articulate notions and assumptions regarding literary understanding are cast from the vanguard point of Chanist tenets, which were, undoubtedly, developed from the indigenous Daoist philosophy, as we shall see in the following.

2. "Reading poetry is like communing in Chan" (du shi ru can Chan 读诗如参禅)

It is a marked phenomenon in the West that almost all the reader-oriented critics are concerned with reading strategies and vie with each other in coming up with what they think the best model of reading practice. Iser's phenomenology of the reading process, with its movement from anticipation to retrospection, its making and unmaking of gestalts, and Fish's slow-processed reading experience that reveals reader's performance as the sequence of decisions, revisions, anticipations, reversals, and recoveries, are some of the best known models. The hypothetical nature of these models notwithstanding, reading is meticulously analyzed and guided through by procedures rationally arrived at. Such detailed accounts of the reading process can hardly be found in Chinese literary criticism. For Chinese critics are less interested in theoretical expositions and explications, let alone providing rationally obtained reading strategies. In fact, they believe that reading is an empirical, existential act, and too much talk will only hinder the

\footnote{\textsuperscript{27} I have here in mind Pauline Yu's \textit{The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition} and Steven Van Zoeren's \textit{Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China}. These studies have performed a fine scholarship in the explication of Confucian hermeneutic tradition, an important but not the only component of Chinese traditional hermeneutics. One exception to my generalization is James Liu's \textit{Language-Paradox-Poetics}, where the author deals with what he calls "the paradox of interpretation" in the Chinese hermeneutic tradition. However, while Liu considers it a different mode of interpretation from Confucian hermeneutics, I think that they are rather two sides of the same hermeneutic convention, as I have discussed in the text.}
aesthetic appreciation of such an experience. Two simple notions sum up all their assumptions about reading or literary understanding, namely, huocan 活参 ("creative communing) and dunwu 頓悟 ("sudden enlightenment"), and to expound them is the attempt of our modern beings for the sake of analysis.

Both huocan and dunwu are terms of Chan Buddhist origin, borrowed over by Chinese critics to stress some quintessentially similar phenomena in reading. The two terms stand for two consecutive phases in the reading process: huocan is the preparatory stage, the instrument, whereas dunwu the ultimate goal. As has been mentioned earlier in this study, since the Song dynasty Chinese critics and poets are fond of explaining poetry in Chan terms. The practice, termed as yi Chan yu shi, can be seen in three respects under different designations: yi Chan lun shi 以禅論詩 ("discussing poetry in terms of Chan"), yi Chan can shi 以禅参詩 ("reading poetry the way to commune in Chan"), and yi Chan heng shì 以禅衡詩 ("judging poetry using Chan standards").28 The second concept, i.e., yi Chan can shi, is concerned with reading of poetry. The word can is the most important. Translated as "to meditate" or "to commune," it refers to the meditative practices in Chan such as "sitting in meditation," "listening for hints," "communing with koans," etc. It is held in Chan that the ultimate truth cannot be conveyed by words or other conceptual means but only be perceived through intuitive apprehension. Reading poetry is seen by literary critics in the same way in which a Chan practitioner participates in Chan meditation because the "miraculous subtleties of poetry cannot be conveyed through verbal

28 Yi Chan heng shi refers to the way in which poetry is judged against the hierarchical standards of the Great or Small Vehicle, of the North or the South Sect in Buddhism, and yi Chan lun shi denotes the practice of explaining the art of writing poetry using Chan notions or concepts as analogies, as have been discussed in the previous chapter.
Yan Yu's statement that "in general, the Way of Chan lies in miraculous apprehension alone, and so does the way of poetry" sums up the commonalities between Chan and poetry. Thus, just as a Chan practitioner apprehends the ultimate truth through intuitive apprehension, so to read poetry one must meditate on the best works of earlier poets before one can come to a sudden revelation of its secret subtleties. This is especially true with Chinese classical poetry marked by concealed expressions. To read classical Chinese poetry, therefore, one should not let himself be trapped by the physical forms of words. Rather, he should strain his inward eye and search for the elusive subtleties lying out of sight. Fan Wen, a Song dynasty critic, wrote:

To read literary works is like communing in Chan. There are a variety of ways for enlightenment, but one must fall into communing at one turning point. Take the literary works by the ancients for example, if one is enlightened at one place, he will apprehend all the other subtleties.

As Fan Wen made it clear, intuitive communing is crucial to the enlightenment in reading. While knowledge and intellect are not unimportant, intuitive communing is one's "proper trade" and "true colors". Modern psychology has revealed Chan meditation as a series of techniques that bring about an abnormal state of consciousness. In this state of mind all rational activities of intellect such as reason, judgment and so on, are stamped out and in place of them is the crude but active function of the unconscious. The thinking subject is closely fused with the phenomenal object, and bizarre visions and sounds arise in

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29Dai Fugu 戴復古 (1167-?), cited in Du Songbo, 381.

30See Note 39 of Chapter One.


32Yan Yu, 12.
profusion. He thus hears voices that his conscious thinking self normally does not hear, and sees activities that he is normally not aware of. These voices he hears and activities he sees, when applied to poetry, are the so-called "the image beyond images" and "the tone beyond the rhythm."

The practice of "communing with poetry" was favored most by Song dynasty critics and poets. Su Shi is said to be among the earliest critics who adopted Chan practice in reading poetry: "To pass the endless night with good poems for the time being, / When encountering good lines I meditate on Chan." Su was reading the poems of Li Zhiyi, a contemporary of Su's, whose poetry is marked by a strong Chan flavor. Su Shi meditated on his poems in order to encounter the profound gusto lying beyond the lines. Xu Rui, another poet of the era, followed the same practice in reading poetry:

The "Great Elegance" has been silent for long,  
By myself, with whom should I converse?  
I wish to befriend the ancients,  
Commune with them till I reach wordlessness.

Clearly, to "commune with" the poems till one reaches "wordlessness" is to find the ineffable but intuitively apprehensible subtleties in the poems. The practice of can was most encouraged by Yan Yu. He wrote:

Try to take the poems of the Han and the Wei and thoroughly meditate on/commune with them; next, take the poems of the Jin and the Song and thoroughly meditate on/commune with them; next, take the poems of the Southern and Northern dynasties and thoroughly meditate on/commune with them; next, take the poems of Shen [Quanqi], Song [Zhiwen], Wang

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33For a detailed account of the consciousness of Buddhist meditation, see David J. Kalupahana's *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 22-43.

34Cited in Du Songbo, 375.

35Cited in *Lidai shihua cihua xuan* 歷代詩話詞話選 (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1984), 82.
[Bo], Yang [Jiong], Lu [Zhaolin], Lo [Binwang], and Admonisher Chen [Z'ang] [all poets of the early Tang era] and thoroughly meditate on/commune with them; next, take the poems of the various masters of the Kaiyuan and Tianbao periods and thoroughly meditate on/commune with them; next, take only the poems of the two masters Li [Bai] and Du [Fu] and thoroughly meditate on/commune with them; ... then take all the poems of the various masters of the Late Tang and thoroughly meditate on/commune with them; then take up the poems of the various schools of the present dynasty from Su [Shi] and Huang [Tingjian] down and thoroughly meditate on/commune with them: as to what is truly right and what is truly wrong, there will be that which naturally cannot be concealed. If you still do not see anything therein, then it is because your true judgment has been obscured by "wild fox heterodoxy": you are past remedy and will never have awakening.36

James Liu has remarked that Yan Yu in this paragraph gave the idea of can shi its most eloquent exposition.37 However, despite the length, Yan Yu explained nowhere what was meant by the phrase shucan 熟參 ("thoroughly commune"). Neither did he take the trouble to relate how to thoroughly commune with a poem except repeating the phrase. From our discussion in the beginning of this study, the experience of can, or wu, is in essence an empirical or existential activity marked by a vague experience, a subjective and holistic understanding of the literary object. Although these traits function together in the intuitive cognition and a distinction between them is practically impossible, in reading the artistic thinking of wu or can is conspicuously marked by a vague experience. We may look at a poem by Wang Wei to see how this is the case:

High on tree-tips, the hibiscus.
In the mountain sets forth red calyxes.
A home by a stream, quiet. No man.
It blooms and falls, blooms and falls.38

36 Yan Yu, 12. The English translation is from James Liu, Language-Paradox-Poetics, 102.

37 James Liu, Language-Paradox-Poetics, 102.

38 Wang Wei, 1:249. The English translation is from Yip, 310.
Upon reading the poem, we are brought into a world wrapped in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility. The flowers blossom and fall according to the cycle of the seasons and we experience the regularity and serenity of the physical environment. However, when we further *commune* with the poem, we observe the vitality of the natural world despite its quietude. Although the valley is empty of people and not without a touch of lonesomeness, the flowers are joyous and alive with robustness and enterprise. If we *commune* with the poem further, we may observe more out of this peaceful valley. We may, for instance, envisage the shape of the valley or the way the hibiscus grow. Or, we may hear the chirps of the mountain birds and feel the chill or damp warmth of the weather. At any rate, the more we commune with the poem, the more we observe at the far end of our consciousness. The same valley and flowers present different pictures in our mind's eye like a kaleidoscope, and accordingly our mind shifts and changes. To account for the fluidity, uncertainty and the multidimensions of our experience, an anatomy of our thought in the reading process is necessary.39

The whole process of our thought may be viewed from two angles: the information provided by the poem and our response to the stimuli of the information. First, concerning the information of the poem, we are provided with three natural images, those of the hibiscus, the internal mountain (*shan zhong* 山中) and the mouth of the valley (*jianhu* 洞户). These three images present no a clearly definable relation among them and seem to be capable of any ordering or structuring depending on the perspectives of the viewer. This is to say that the syntactical structure of the poem is elastic and vague. Moreover, the

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39 The discussion below is indebted to Luo Zongqiang's analysis of the thinking of classical Chinese literary criticism. See Luo Zongqiang 羅宗強, "Cong siwei xingshi kan Zhongguo gudai shilun de yige tedian" 從思維形式看中國古代詩論的一個特點, *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 社會科學戰線 1 (1986): 143-145.
poem aims to express the inner tranquillity and serenity of the speaker. However, the speaker's tranquil mind is neither indicated in the title nor expressed through any expository words in the poem proper, but is rather conveyed by several elastic and vague images. It is not a statement made, but a mood or an atmosphere that permeates the poem, hence the fluidity and elasticity of the thought or emotion of the poet.

Second, let us examine our response. It is in fact composed of two consecutive stages, the awakening of our memory and the creative participation of our thought in the enactment of the poet's emotion. With regard to the first stage, human mind receives information from the external world through a simultaneous function of the sense faculties such as the eye, ear, nose, hands, etc. Of the information thus received, some disappear immediately or after a short stay, and some remain permanently after being processed or programmed, so to speak, by the mind. Two characteristics capture the information thus stored: one is its latency and the other is its associability. After being processed, the information goes dormant in the deep recess of the consciousness. To bring it to life again, a stimulus from the outside world is needed. The stimulus not only wakes up one or several pieces of information, but it can also bring about a chain of responses from various links of information. Applied to the reading of poetry, this is the moment of time when the reverberation of the heart or soul is effected. As Gaston Bachlard has stated, who studies "the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of man,"\textsuperscript{40} that the great function of poetry "is to give us back the situation of our

dreams" that lie dormant in the depths of the unconscious.\textsuperscript{41} Certain image evokes a certain kind of thing or event, and certain others certain other kinds of things or events, but each image is intended to "resound" in the mind of its reader, and ultimately to" reverberate" in the soul of the reader.\textsuperscript{42} Take the image of the mountain in Wang Wei's poem for example. It is often associated with peace and profundity. The mountain or mountains we have seen may not resemble the one in the poem, but they share some basic qualities of peacefulness and profundity. Once the mountain in Wang Wei's poem comes close to those in our consciousness, our response starts its train of operation. The latent information breaks forth, and resemblant pictures and sentiments loom large.

The awakening of the memory is not the end of our response to Wang Wei's poem. For the mountain or mountains in our consciousness and the experience associated with it are only resemblant and not identical to those in Wang Wei's poem. What ensues after the awakening of our memory is comparison and selection by the mind to yield the closest picture possible to Wang Wei's poem. Further, the picture after the selection is still a vague resemblance, and so the mind quickly fills the gap by forming anew the picture based on the information offered by the poem. Herein lies the re-creation of the reader in the process of reading.

From the discussion in the above, the images and the mood in Wang Wei's poem are elastic, and so is our response to the poem in the whole process of reading from comparison to selection and from conjecture to re-creation. It is a

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 15.

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., xvi.
holistic grasp of the poem, the focus being on the entire mood or atmosphere rather than on specific details. It is also an analogous thinking and hence the experience is vague and imprecise.

3. Modes of "communing with poetry" (*can shi* 参诗)

Since human mind receives and responds to the physical world through the simultaneous function of the sense faculties, a poem as an object to which a reader is to respond has several dimensions: phonetic, syntactical, semantic, and typographical. For a poem to produce the greatest possible reverberation and resonance, a reader must respond to the poem at once phonetically, syntactically, semantically, and typographically. Undoubtedly, a complete account of reading that takes all these aspects into consideration is beyond this study. Here I shall only focus on the semantic aspect of a poem in the experience of reading. I choose to do so because, according to Bachelard, the most essential and decisive factor of the power of a poem rests on its semantical, i.e., representational property, which Bachelard calls "poetic image." This is especially true with classical Chinese poetry characterized by its density of concrete images resulted either from the syntactical requirements of Chinese or the purposeful juxtaposition of them by Chinese poets for evocation. I shall discuss eight modes in which a Chinese reader responds to a poem semantically based on my own experience as well as those of other native Chinese scholars.43 These modes by no means exhaust the ways that a Chinese reader would approach a poem.

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43 The discussion here is partially derived from Zhao Jingbo 趙景波, "Lun Zhongguo gudian shige de qianzai xinxi xitong" 論中國古典詩歌的潛在信息系統 (*Qiqhaer shifanxueyuan xuebao* 齊齊哈爾師範學院學報 2 [February 1985]: 20-9). The study has rendered me insight to present here a more complete picture of how a poem would appeal to a native Chinese reader.
classical poem is read, though they capture some typical ways that Chinese readers approach their national poetry.

1) Extension from part to whole

It is now clear that Chinese classical poetry in general tends toward indirectness or opacity. One way to achieve this effect is to use the name of one thing for another that is associated with it. For example, the phrase fengqiang 風樯 ("wind mast") is typically used to refer to a boat, gange 干戈 ("weapon") to war, emei 城眉 ("delicate eyebrows") to a beautiful woman, sangma 桑麻 ("mulberry and flax") to farming, etc. These objects are often part of the things or the concepts they represent and therefore incomplete in their reference. However, once these objects enter the aesthetic consciousness, they are caused to expand, so to speak, till the entire pictures behind them are formed.

The line, "Human face and peach blossom reflect each other red," depicts only a human head and an individual flower. However, in our imagination we observe more than what these fragmentary objects literally stand for. The "human face" is inseparable from a human body, and the "peach blossom" must grow on a peach tree. Thus, from the "human face" we retrieve the image of a young female in elegant figure. We are not sure what a girl in the Tang dynasty would actually wear, but on the whole the costume must be in the ancient style with loose sleeves and large girth. As for the "peach blossom," it should not be the only one but must be among many others that are in full blossom amidst green twigs and leaves. The girl's face is reflected by the red blossoms and appears more beautiful than ever. This may complete the picture in our mind,

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44Cui Hu 崔護 (fl. 796.), "Ti ducheng Nanzhuang" 題都城南莊, Quan Tang shi, 4148.
and the information we have filled is based on what is originally present in the poem.

2) Filling in missing links

Both time and space are characterized by a continuity that cannot be put to stop in actual life. Moreover, man's activity is always bound with certain context, temporal, spatial or otherwise. Poetry reflects life in the most concise form, and therefore it cannot but prune, so to speak, what it is to present. It is typical in Chinese poetry and, indeed, any other poetry, that the author often cuts a portion from time and space or selects a profile of life experience to express himself, thus rendering many blanks into his writings. On the other hand, when reflected in consciousness, the physical reality retains its continuity and wholeness. As readers, we are able to fill in the blanks of a literary work based on our life experience. We can, in other words, generate a complete picture where only partial information is provided. Consider the following poem by Jia Dao 賈島 (779-843):

Ask the shepherd boy under the pine tree.
Answer that the master has gone gathering herbs.
He must be in this mountain.
Clouds being thick, not knowing his whereabouts.\(^{45}\)

In real life situations, conversation between two parities is always present with questions and answers. This poem is remarkable in that it omits all the interrogatives in the three rounds of questions, resulting in the blanks in three places of the poem. We are thus prompted to fill in the questions based on the answers presented to us. Restored to its original form, the poem should be:

Question: "Is your master here now?"
Answer: "My master has gone plucking herbs."

\(^{45}\)Fang yinzhe bu yu" 賈隱者不遇, Quan Tang shi, 6693.
Question: "Where has he gone for herbs?"
Answer: "In this mountain for sure."

Question: "Where is it in this mountain?"
Answer: "Cannot tell, the clouds being thick."

Because of the reader's active retrieving of the missing links, continuity is restored to the truncated scene of life presented in the poem.

3) Textual association

Each literary work, historical story, myth or legend is composed of multifarious information. In a varying and complex manner, this information is related to each other and thus form their frames of reference. Chinese poets are fond of incorporating into their writings words and phrases from a certain network, the practice of using so-called *diangu* 典故 ("allusions"). To readers who are familiar with the original context, this incorporated item will act as trigger to the latent information or nuances. Upon reading the poem, the reader will bring back in his mind all the referents that are associated with it. He processes the retrieved information and establishes thereby a new frame of reference.

"Song of the Governor of Yanmen" (*Yanman taishou xing* 雁門太守行) is a famous poem by Li He. In the poem are the lines: "Half folded, the red banners overlook the Yi River, / Frost being heavy and drums cold, sound is unable to rise."46 The lines depict a scene of battle on the frontier where the soldiers have broken through a tight encirclement and are chasing the invaders with vigorous strides. The term *Yishui* 易水 originally stands for a geographical place. However, it cannot be replaced here by any other term simply because it has appeared in an earlier context. According to a record in the *Intrigues of the Warring States* (*Zhanguo ce* 戰國策), Jing Ke 荊柯 (?-227 B.C.) was about to

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46Ibid., 4395.
leave for the state of Qin with the mission of assassinating the Qin king. The
prince of Yan, who ordered the task, gave him a farewell dinner on the bank of
the Yi River. Gao Jianli 高渐离 (fl. 3rd cent. B.C.) beat on a music instrument,
to which Jing Ke chanted: "Wind is blowing and the water in the Yi River is cold, /
Once he is gone, the warrior will never return!" When the reader familiar with
the story encounters Li He's poem, the term *Yishui* will naturally evoke his
memory of the historic event and bring back to him all the emotional nuances
associated with Jing Ke's heroic undertaking. This refreshed memory and
emotion are interwoven with the poetic world of Li He's poem, thus enriching its
contents and artistic effect.

There are in Chinese a great number of words, phrases, and sentences
that were, in the course of time, endowed with emotive tenors by the various
semantic contexts of numerous historical or literary works. For example,
*changcheng* 长城 ("long wall"), *damo* 大漠 ("great desert"), and *Tianshan* 天山
(literally, "heavenly mountain") carry with them the bleak and desolate
atmosphere of the frontier; *Nanpu* 南浦 (literally, "southern riverside"),
*changting* 长亭 ("long pavilion"), and *lanzhou* 蘭舟 ("magrobia boat") are often
associated with feelings at separation; *xiyang* 夕陽 ("setting sun"), *canyue* 残月
("remnant moon"), and *qiushuang* 秋霜 ("autumnal frost") often convey to us the
lonely and dreary sentiments of a traveler.

4) Comparison

To express emotion by means of concrete objects is typical of Chinese
classical poetry. We look at an object not as the object per se, but our attention
is on the broader and more generalized meaning it suggests. Things that are not

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47Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 77 B.C.-6 B.C.), *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 3:1137.
the same by nature may appear occasionally similar. Such similarities are internalized and form correspondence of one type or the other in our consciousness. The sight of one object may recall in our mind another object that is different by nature but shares certain similarity with it.

In the type of poems where this mode of enactment is typical, object and significance, or, vehicle and tenor, are often incongruous. The relation between them is not what the two entities originally possess, but subject to human conception and exists as such in man's consciousness. Metaphor and symbolism are operated precisely by the free association of man's consciousness. The former is distinguished from the latter in that the relation between the vehicle and the tenor is temporary and dissolves when the context is changed. Symbolism, on the other hand, is more stable, where the tenor suggested by a vehicle is established through usage and becomes a collective emblem in a cultural tradition. Consider the following poem:

The rat of the official granary is as big as a *dou*,^48^ Refused to leave even the granary is opened. The soldiers are without food and hundreds of families starved, Who dispatch it but the grain finds its way into the mouths of the officials every day.^49^

In reading this poem, our enactment of the poem's significance will not stop at the big rat, but will go beyond the rat in search of some implied meaning it signifies. Obviously, this poem satirizes the corrupted officials through the analogy of the big rat in the granary. Owing to their similar attributes, e. g., avariciousness and greed, the depiction of the rat activates our memory of corrupted officials in our

^48^ *Dou* 斗 is a unit of dry measure for grain. One *dou* is a decalitre. Here *dou* means a container that can hold as much as one decalitre of grain.

^49^ Cao Ye 曹頎 (fl. 847), "Guancang shu" 官倉鼠, *Quan Tang shi*, 6866.
There are in Chinese classical poetry many objects that are rich in symbolic meanings, such as qingsong ("green pine"), luzhu （"green bamboo"), juhua （"chrysanthemum"), mudan （"peony"), etc. In some poems they are depicted independently, in designation of some abstract meanings, while in other poems they appear as a foil to some other objects and together suggest some abstract meanings.

5) Contrast

Things in the world all exist in comparison to each other, though comparisons are all subjective in nature. In oppositions such as high and low, big and small, long and short, far and near, good and evil, beautiful and ugly, fast and slow, powerful and weak, and so on, the two sides are correlative: each cannot exist without the presence of the other. For instance, there is not the concept of "small" without at the least the possibility of the concept of "big," and vice versa. Moreover, ordinarily speaking, affirmation implies negation and negation contains affirmation. If, for example, we endorse "big," we necessarily repudiate "small," and the same is true the other way round. The contrast between objects and things are thus internalized by human consciousness. Lying inoperative in human mind ordinarily, once one side of the binary information is referred to, the other side is accordingly restored. In Chinese poetry, the poet often shuns a direct eulogy or criticism of one side, but achieves the purpose indirectly by an eulogy or criticism of the opposite side. For example:

50 The object "rat" is used in the poem as a metaphor, whose analogy to corrupted officials dissolves once away from the context of the poem. However, to readers who are versed in Chinese classical poetry, "rat" presents also as a symbol due to its earlier use, also in reference to corrupted officials, in the poem "Shuoshu" from The Book of Poetry. Kong Yingda, Maoshi zhengyi, 5. 7b.
The bright moon of the Qin and the Pass of the Han,
From the expedition of thousands of the soldiers have not returned.
If only the fleet-footed general of Longcheng were still alive,
Preventing the horses of the Hu from passing the Yinshan.51

The last two lines of the poem sing the praise of the hero General Li Guang 李廣 in the Han period.52 At the time when "soldiers have not yet returned from their expedition," the poet's mention of the name of this historic figure alerts the reader to the situation in the Tang dynasty when the generals guarding the borders were impotent and the invaders from the Hu country rode roughshod, tyrannizing people wherever they went.

6) Extension from exterior to interior

Under normal circumstances, one's facial expression, gesture and posture reflect one's inner mental activities. Our physical eyes cannot observe one's mental activities, but we can conjecture what is on one's mind based on one's kinetic movements. This congruity between inner mentality and outer physical designations is well recognized by classical Chinese poets, hence their attention to depiction in their writings of the facial expressions or movements of the characters. As readers, we can always have access to the inner thoughts of the characters based on the information the poet provides regarding their exterior physical designations.

Wang Changling's poems about the complaints of imperial concubines are marked by a skillful characterization of the inner activities of the antagonists.

51 Wang Changling, "Chu sai" 出塞, Quan Tang shi, 1444.

52 The allusion is to a historic event recorded in The Records of the Grand Historian (Shi ji 史記). The story goes that General Li Guang was staying with his troops in a place named Youbeiping. The invaders of the Xiongnu learned about it and nick-named him the "Fleet-footed General of the Han." Avoiding any conflicts with him, they dared not enter the place for years. Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145 B.C.-90 B.C.), Shi ji, in Baina ben ershisi shi 百衲本二十四史 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1967), 2:1058.
Neither prolonged monologues by the characters nor the author’s own explanations are to be found. The poem simply presents the character's facial expression or movement with an economy of words, and yet we gain an glimpse into the deep recess of his or her mentality:

Opening the golden palace at dawn with the broom,  
Walking to and fro with a round fan in her hand.53

This poem is based on a true story of Ban Jieyu (ca. 206 B.C.-25 A.D.), a disfavored imperial concubine of Cheng Emperor of the Han dynasty. After cleaning the Golden Palace, the female character of the poem, having nothing else to do, walks back and forth with a round fan in her hand. The object “round fan” alludes to an earlier poem, attributed to Ban Jieyu herself, and has become a symbol for the desertion by the emperor.54 Also, the phrase “walking to and fro” reveals vividly the emotive state of the woman who was once overwhelmingly favored by the emperor but now disgraced by living in limbo. As the woman walks to and fro in the yard, thoughts swell in her heart. She recalls the sweet words of the emperor when they were together and his harsh treatment once she fell out of his favor. She also pictures to herself the ungirded pleasures of the emperor’s new woman, reflecting on her own helpless situation with indignation and resentment.

7) Lexical association

In Chinese there are many words and phrases whose meanings are multiple. These multiple meanings are related to each other in such a way that when we encounter a word, one meaning will arouse in our mind the echo of the

53 Wang Changling, “Changxin qiu ci” 長信秋詞, Quan Tang shi, 1445.

54 Ban’s poem, entitled “Song of Complaints” (“Yuange xing” 忍歎行), uses the round fan as a symbol to depict the uncertainty of her life as an imperial concubine, hence another name for the poem “Song of the Round Fan” (“Tuanshan ge” 圖扇歌).
other. Chinese poets make frequent use of these semantically rich words in order to enhance the vibration of the poem in the reader's mind and soul.

The Yellow River extends afar onto the white clouds.
A stretch of a lonely city amidst the mountains of thousands of ren.
Why should the Qiang flute complain about the willow,
Spring wind does not travel through the Yumen Pass.55

The first two lines of the poem could be envisaged as such: a troop from the interior maneuvering toward the Yumen Pass has crossed the Yellow River and arrived at the place named Liangzhou. The soldiers, looking backward, find mountains higher and cities smaller, all enveloped in a bleak atmosphere. Looking eastward, they identify the Yellow River as far as the horizon, hometown being left further behind. A strong nostalgia grips their heart, and, as if from nowhere, the plaintive music from the song "Yangliu zhi" (Willow Twigs*) sounds on the instrument of the Qiang flute. The last two lines of the poem are most appealing, for they contain words that are semantically rich and provocative. *Yangliu in poetry often refers to the abridged title of the music so named, but it meanwhile denotes the natural object of the willow. *Chunfeng 春風 ("spring wind") literally refers to the natural wind, and yet it implicitly conveys the meaning of imperial favor. Because of the double meanings of these two phrases, we envision a picture richer than what the two lines suggest on surface: there are no willow trees beyond the Yumen Pass, neither is there any favor from the emperor. Once the meaning of "royal favor" is added, the significance of the poem is rendered more profound. Beyond the Yumen Pass there is no spring air nor the warmth of the human world. The emperor indulges himself in the monarchical luxuries, his concern being too occupied with

55Wang Zhihuan 王之涣 (688-742), "Liangzhou ci" 涼州詞, Quan Tang shi, 2849.
immediate pleasures to reach the frontier where the soldiers are fighting to death
to safeguard their country.

In passing, it should be said that communing with poetry in order to
retrieve implicit information is a complex psychological and cognitive process. In
the actual reading process, these modes may alternate and intervene with each
other so that it is possible that several modes are operative together in reading
one single poem. The distinctions in the above are made for the sake of a
convenient discussion and are not without arbitrariness and dogmatism.

4. Interpretative pluralism or "communing with live sentences" (can huojų
首活句)

As has been already demonstrated, the practice of can in reading is a
vague existential experience, and as such it gives rise to the subjectivity of
understanding in literary appreciation. However, not only the vague experience
of can implies that there is no a single definitive understanding of a poem, but
Chinese critics and poets deliberately encourage reader's creative participation,
thus making literary understanding even more open-ended. Here we come to the
idea of huo 活 ("creative" or "flexible") in the notion of huocan 活参, or the idea
of can huojų ("commune with live sentences"), a very important concept in
Chinese affective hermeneutics.

The idea of "commune with live sentences instead of dead sentences" (can huojų wu can siju 參活句勿參死句) is again from Chan Buddhism. There
are many interpretations of the notion in Chan, but in essence it suggests that in
communing with a koan56 one must not fall to a rigid understanding of the words.

56Japanese transliteration of the Chinese phrase gongan公案. Translated into English
as "public documents," gongan are in general collections of the sayings and anecdotes of Chan
masters.
Instead, he should allow his mind maximum freedom and approach the *koan* from his own subjective understanding. Communing with a *koan* can be compared to cracking a riddle. However, the riddle of a *koan* is one, but the answers to the riddle could be a thousand varying from individual to individual. Further, while the answers are a thousand, the only one that is not an answer is the rigid, direct decoding of the riddle. Chan believes that everything in the world is void. They are nothing but the illusions of human mind. To become Buddha, one must achieve an enlightenment of mind. And once he is enlightened, he apprehends the emptiness of the world and nothing will stand in his way. Since human mind is of paramount importance, "those who search among words are fools, and those who trust their own mind are enlightened."  

The subjectivity of understanding was recognized early in the Chinese literary tradition. In the "Commentary on the Appended Phrases" to the *Book of Changes* we find the remark "When the benevolent sees it, he calls it benevolence; when the wise sees it, he calls it wisdom" (renzhe jian ren, zhizhe jian zhi 仁者見之謂之仁, 智者見之謂之智). Dong Zhongshu declared that "there is no direct interpretation of the poems" (*shi wu dagu* 詩無達詁). After the practice of Chan was adopted in literary understanding, the reader's creative role was magnified and more heeded. Reading in all aspects is compared to communing in Chan. As a Chan practitioner creatively meditates on

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57 By Dazhu Chanshi 大珠禪師, cited in Ge Zhaoguang, 175.

58 Gao Heng, *Zhou yi dazhuan xinzhu*, 514. The formulation was not concerned with the interpretation of poetry, but it was frequently cited by scholars of later times to justify different interpretations of the same poem.

59 Dong Zhongshu, *Chunqiu fanlu*, 3. 9b. Dong was speaking about the *Book of Poetry*, but his dictum was applied to poetry in general by critics of later times to justify a new interpretation of a poem.
a koan, so the greatest taboo in reading a poem is to confine oneself by the surface, linguistic meaning of the words. As the Song dynasty poet-critic Gong Shengren 冯圣任 wrote:

Learning poetry is like learning to meditate in Chan,
Words can be arranged and yet meaning is not to be conveyed thereby.
As meeting of minds is outside the range of sound and regulations,
Stones need not be smelted to amend the blue sky.60

Zeng Ji (1084-1166) made it more clear by directly applying the Chanist notion:

Learning poetry is like communing in Chan:
Be careful not to commune with dead lines.61

By "communing with dead lines" Zeng refers to the way of reading a poem by rigidly decoding the linguistic meaning of the words. In Chinese poetry talks there are many remarks that criticize and ridicule the practice of communing with dead sentences. Take the poem "Spring South of the Yangzi River" (Jiangnan chun 江南春) by Du Mu for example:

A thousand miles, orioles chirps and the green contrasts with the red.
The wind of the flags of wine shops among villages on rivers and mountains.
The four hundred eighty temples from the Southern Dynasties,
How many buildings and towers are clothed within mists and rains.62

The poem captures a spring scene south of the Yellow River through an impressionistic depiction of a series of objects commonly encountered in the area. Yang Shen 杨慎 (1488-1559) found fault with the poet's sweeping description and remarked: "The chirps of the orioles for a thousand miles, who would hear? The green leaves contrast with the red blossoms for a thousand miles, who would see? If it is ten miles, it is plausible that the chirps of the

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60 Cited by Wei Qingzhi in Shiren yuxie, 1:9.
61 Cited in Du Songbook, 380.
62 Quan Tang shi, 5964.
orioles, the scene of the green and the red and the objects of villages, towers, 
temples, and the flags of wine shops would be included within. He Wenhuan 
criticized Yang's petty-mindedness, saying:

In my opinion, even if it is ten miles, the scene is not necessarily audible or 
visible. The poem is entitled "Spring South of the Yellow River." The area 
south of the Yellow River is as vast as thousands of miles. In such a huge 
area orioles chirp and green leaves contrast with red flowers. There are 
flags of wine shops where villages are, either on the banks of the rivers or 
in the mountains. The four hundred eighty temples and towers are mostly 
enveloped within mists and rains. The poem refers extensively and is not 
confined to one particular place, hence the general reference of the title 
"Spring South of the Yellow River." The poet is indeed good at selecting a 
title.

We may cite another poem for illustration:

Moondown: crows caw. Frost, a skyful. 
River maples, fishing lamps, sad drowsiness. 
Beyond Su-chou City, the Cold Mountain Temple 
Rings its midnight bell, reaching this visitor's boat.

Ouyang Xiu commented on the poem that, good as it is, the poem does not abide 
by common sense because the third geng is not the time for ringing bells. In 
an effort to defend the merit of the poem, Fan Wen cited lines by other poets to 
confirm that people in the Tang dynasty did beat the watches at midnight. Hu 
Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602), however, deemed the argument unnecessary, 
saying: "People debated about the line by Zhang Ji: The midnight bell reaches

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63 Yang Shen, Shengan shihua 升庵詞話, in Ding Fubao, Lidai shihua xubian, 2:800.
64 He Wenhuan, "Lidai shihua kaosuo" 歷代詩話考索, included in Lidai shihua, 530.
65 Zhang Ji 張繼 (fl. 742), "Fengqiao yebo" 楓橋夜泊, Quan Tang shi, 2721. The 
English translation is from Yip, 329.
66 Ouyang Xiu, Liuyi shihua, in He Wenhuan, Lidai shihua, 160. Geng refers to one of 
the five two-hour periods into which the night was divided in traditional China, and sanggeng is 
the third two-hour period that falls approximately at midnight.
67 See Hu Zi, Tiaoxi yuyin conghua qianji, 23. 5a.
the visitor’s boat. * To me, however, they all made fool of themselves. Poetry makes statements by means of scenes, and its success lies in the harmony of tones and in the matching of meaning and object. Such trivial things as factual details are not worthy of concern. Whether people beat the watches at midnight or whether the bell was heard at all is not to be worried about.  

The illustrations cited in the above show that decoding the linguistic meaning of a poem to the neglect of its artistic expression of spirit or mood is considered as communing with dead sentences and should be avoided in the reading practice. It is also referred to as "the rustic scholar reading history" (cun xuejiu du shi 村學究讀史) and is much despised in Chinese hermeneutic community. In Chinese affective hermeneutics a fine distinction is made between "understanding poetry" (du shi 認詩) and "interpreting poetry" (jie shi 解詩). The latter refers to rational comprehension attained after analytical interpretation; the former refers to intuitive apprehension without analysis. While interpretation of poetry cannot be carried out without language, understanding of a poem needs not, and perhaps cannot, be described in words. In general, Chinese critics and poets favor "understanding poetry" to "interpreting poetry." In other words, they deplore "communing with dead sentences" and advocate its opposite, "communing with live sentences." By the word huo is meant the use of creative imagination in the practice of reading. Far from constraining himself by the physical words of a poem, one should follow his own inclination to wherever

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68 Hu Yinglin, *Shi sou 詩薮* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979), 195. 

69 The phrase is by Feng Jiwu 馮集梧 (fl. 1796), used by him in his criticism of Xu Yanzhou’s 許彦周 (fl. early 12th cent.) rigid reading of Du Mu’s poem “Chi bi” 赤壁, another instance of "communing with dead sentences" in Chinese hermeneutic history much ridiculed by critics, poets and scholars. See *Fanchuan shi jizhu 樊川詩集注* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 271.
his imagination leads him. He should understand the poem as his subjective
mind receives it, and perceive the poetic world as his intuition revives it. Hence,
Zeng Ji continued:

To think as one pleases is not prohibited,
For to read is to follow one's own heart.

This way of reading poetry, popular as it is with Chinese critics and readers, may
appear too light-hearted, if not too irresponsible to Western readers. For there is
no doubt that the poetical world perceived by each reader cannot be assumed to
be identical and pluralism in interpretation would be the necessary consequence.
Chinese critics are not unaware of the pluralism caused by creative communing.
Wang Fuzhi, for example, realized this phenomenon and said:

The author uses consistent thought, and each reader obtains what he can
according to his own feeling/nature... The wandering of human
feeling/nature is limitless, and each one encounters what he does
according to his own feeling/nature.70

However, the denial of a single definite interpretation of a poem does not seem to
concern Chinese critics and readers, as Xie Zhen 謝榛 (1495-1575) told us:

In poetry, there is that which can be interpreted or understood [jie], that
which cannot be interpreted or understood, and that which need not be
interpreted or understood. Its is like the moon in water or a flower in the
mirror. Don't be bogged down by its traces, and it will be all right.71

Obviously, Chinese readers and critics are not bothered by the pluralism resulted
from readers' active reenactment. In fact, the more pluralism wrought in a poem,
the better the poem is considered to be, for the simple reason that the poem
contains more overtones and reverberations. "Xu Gan drew a walking horse.

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70 Jiangzhai shihua, in Ding Fubao, Qing shihua, 3. The English translation is from
James Liu, Language-Paradox-Poetics, 103-104.

71 Siming shihua 西漢詩話, in Ding Fubao, Xu lidai shihua xubian, 3:1137. The English
translation is from James Liu, Language-Paradox-Poetics, 100.
The silk was torn and damaged one leg of the horse. However, from the remnant painting the spectators perceived a complete horse "walking at ease." A Tang poet once wrote: "A red spot on the green twig, / Moving color of spring needs not be heavy," yet this spurred the imagination of a Song dynasty poet, who therefore "drew a beautiful lady leaning on the banister of an invisible pavilion in the distance." All these anecdotes show that concealed expression evokes boundless imagination, whereas intuitive communing enriches drastically the poetical world. And the richer the world of a poem is, the better Chinese readers enjoy it, indulging as they do in their imaginary kingdom.

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72 Chen Shidao 陈師道 (1053-1102). Houshan ji 吳山集 (Si bu beiyao ed.), 19. 2a.
73 From Chen Shan's 陳善 (fl. 1131-1162) Menshi xinhua 揚益新話. Cited in Ge Zhaoguang, 180.
CHAPTER V

MIAOWU IN LITERARY CRITICISM

1. Literary criticism, science or art?

One of the most controversial issues in Western meta-criticism is whether literary criticism is a science or an art. However, despite the debate, a look at the history of Western criticism shows that the position that views literary criticism as a systematic, organized body of literature remains the reigning position. We find in Aristotle father of this objective trend. His *Poetics* has left us with a body of knowledge that aims at a rational theory of literature and permanent standards of judgment. Aristotelian assumptions of a total scheme of literature, as embodied in his notions of the unities in tragedy and the proper machinery in the epic, were established by Horace's *De arte poetica* as the fundamental concerns of the neoclassical enterprise. With the advent of the empiricist science in the seventeenth century, inaugurated by such philosophers of science as Hobbes and Locke, the objective standard of Western criticism changed, following Western science, from the Aristotelian rationalist speculation of the universal to pursuing truth through empirical experience. Thus, literature, particularly fiction, became an experimental art

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1 "Criticism" in the West is an essentially contested concept. All possible positions regarding the term have been formulated and reformulated in the past in different contexts and for different purposes. According to Wellek, judicial criticism dominated Western criticism till the later part of the eighteenth century. Since then, the history of Western criticism was nothing but a tug of wars between the main trends, the basic conflict being "between objective and subjective standards," which "overlaps somewhat the debate between absolutism and relativism." Wellek, "Literary Criticism: A Historical Perspective," in Paul Hernadi, ed., *What is Criticism?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 297-321.
and the methods of natural science were introduced into literary study. Spinoza is said to be the first who adopted empiricist methods in literary study. His pioneering book on the scientific approach to biblical interpretation forged a new way for literary scholarship and influenced particularly such critics as Lessing, Coleridge, John Stuart Mill, Hippolyte Taine and I. A. Richards. By Hume's time, the scientific empiricism had evolved into a scientific positivism, and literary criticism again followed suit. The most characteristic proposal of "literary positivism" is that literature should be explained by the methods of natural science, by causality, by such external determining forces as are formulated in Taine's famous slogan of *la race, le milieu, le moment* (*"race, environment, moment"*). The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the collapse of the notion of a definitive truth in science due to Einstein's revolution in physical theory and literature itself reacted against realism and naturalism in the direction of symbolism and other modernisms. Yet, the "Devils of Positivism," as Edward Davenport calls it, did not loosen its grip on literary critics, to whom the search for a systematic and unified principle of literature has always remained the aim of literary scholarship.

Despite its origin as a revolt against the positivism of the nineteenth century, modern Western literary criticism is haunted by the same scientific spirit

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3 Mill argued, in his famous volume on logic and scientific method, that "the backward state of the moral sciences can only be remedied by applying to them the methods of physical science, duly extended and generalized" (*"A System of Logic,"* in *J. S. Mill's Philosophy of Scientific Method*, ed. Ernest Nagel [New York: Hafner, 1950], 307). Taine regarded criticism as "analogous to botany, which studies the orange, the laurel, the pine, and the birch, with equal interest" (*Philosophie de l'art*, cited by Wellek in "Literary Criticism: A Historical Perspective," 305) and tried to model criticism on the pattern of deterministic science.

that has guided the literary study before. With few exceptions, the hybrid of the critical schools in the twentieth century have collaborated in the pursuit for a scientific theory of criticism. By finding their rationale in the discoveries of linguistics, which is held to be a science and therefore more scientific, these diverse schools are able to proceed on the analogy between science and literary study. The first group of critics are the Russian formalists, who focus sharply on formal devices, using linguistic tools to analyze the language of poetry as a special language. They are also the first to attempt a strictly formal study of the types and procedures of fiction. Then there are the American New Critics. Given the diverse practices of the school, the proposition of a scientific methodology grounded on natural science is the common creed of the critics. According to Art Berman, the author of the book *From the New Criticism to Deconstruction*, New Criticism is founded precisely on the empiricist principles and purports criticism to be a scientific-like knowledge of a content that is not itself such a knowledge.  

Cleanth Brooks, for example, argues strongly against critical relativism and for standards, and William K. Wimsatt defines "the domain of literary criticism" as "the verbal object and its analysis." The next typical group is the French structuralists. Based on the structural linguistics of Saussure and Russian formalism, the structuralists attempt to establish an exhaustive, complete system or science of literature on the analogy of a linguistic system. Roland Barthes, the leading spokesman of the group, asserts that writing is subversive of the scientific discourse with its claim for reference to

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Todorov announces that the aim of criticism "is not so much a better knowledge of the object but the perfecting of scientific discourse." Interestingly, the scientific spirit is even discernible in deconstructionist "anti-scientific" criticism. Also based on the linguistic discoveries, Derrida begins his work with a critique of some positivist elements of structuralism and, indeed, those of the whole Western metaphysics. Yet, as Davenport has pointed out, the anti-scientific attitude in both Derrida and the late Barthes must not so much be seen as directed against all forms of the scientific spirit in criticism as specifically against the failures of the inadequately conceived scientific ventures of structuralism and semiotics. The scientific urge in Derrida is best seen in his occasional obsession with tracking binary oppositions. Miller in his own way reveals the urge of scientism when he justifies his deconstructionist position by an analogy with modern astrophysics.

Scientific or anti-scientific, the appearance of deconstruction in the

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9 Semioticians are another group of critics who subsume literary criticism under the general science of linguistics or under the still more general science of semiotics. Roman Jakobson's classic paper "Linguistics and Poetics" argues that "since linguistics is the global science of verbal structure, poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics" (In T. A. Sebeok, ed., Style in Language [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966], 16-19). Jakobson and others make a point of using the term "poetics" or "literary study", since they regard the term "criticism" as a misnomer, falsely suggesting that the study of literature is essentially a subjective, normative exercise of "tastes and opinions" rather than "an objective scholarly analysis of verbal art." Ibid., 351-352.


The 1970s' brought Western criticism into a questionable field. Yet, a look at the recent development of literary study shows that after deconstruction's attack on positivism, a return to the age-old concept of criticism seems under way. This is indicated by an explosion of reassumed interest in the 1980s' in the study of the ideological, social, and cultural relations of science in general and in the study of literature and science in particular. According to Stuart Peterfreund, the author of a recent anthology dedicated to the study of literature and science, the booming interest in literature and science is, on the one hand, a reaffirmation of a field of inquiry that had a questionable future in the late 1970s' and, on the other hand, a calling into question the previous methods of the literary study via science prior to the 1980s'.

What marks the new trend of interest in literature and science from the old one is that it is now informed by a new outlook and a better methodology, thanks to the latest advancement in the philosophy of science. As is pointed out by Davenport, the limit of the traditional positivism lies in its hostility to and refusal to deal with metaphysics, hence its efforts to escape it by focusing on the sterile formalistic aspects of literature at the expense of its properly literary content. Derrida has committed the same positivist mistake in that, rather than face metaphysics and tackle with it, he and his colleagues flee it by negating altogether the legitimacy of its existence. To Davenport, as to many other contemporary critics, literature cannot escape metaphysics, to the same extent that science cannot escape it. Citing Karl Popper, whose "conjectural" philosophy of science marks the modern advance in the scientific history, Davenport writes:

All scientific laws, all attempts to generalize from singular observations,

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involve us in conjecture, in guesswork, so that Popper calls scientific
laws themselves conjectures or guesses, which in turn depend upon
metaphysical assumption about order, causality, and so on.\(^{14}\)

Popper's program does not stop with recognizing the place of metaphysics in a
scientific discourse. It claims further to study metaphysics scientifically, looking
to find ways to test it. It is this belief of the "testability" or the "falsifiability" of
metaphysics that Davenport finds Popper's theory so richly relevant and
significant to literary criticism. He and many other contemporary scholars call
for a reassessment of the positivist methodology previously employed in literary
study. Thus, under the inspiration of Popper's conjectural philosophy of
science, a new scientific discourse of literature--one that does not sacrifice the
metaphysical content of literature and does not abandon the pursuit of testability
either--is emerging.

While literary criticism is a much debated concept in the West, in the
Chinese literary tradition the status of criticism is less problematic and has
engendered little, if any, meta-critical discussion. Generally speaking, Chinese
critics, especially in traditional China, are less concerned with a systematic
theory of literature, let alone an inquiry of the literary object in a scientific spirit.
In fact, the philosophical discussions of literature, basically poetry, produced in
traditional China cannot be accurately described as "literary theory" and "literary
criticism," in the sense the phrases are used in the West. For, as C. H. Wang
puts it, "a scholar or writer set forth his ideas about the nature of literature in
general, the value and function of imaginative writing in different genres, or the
merits and flaws of poetic works, but did not really criticize literature in the sense
we do today, to evaluate it for those not trained to judge it."\(^{15}\) Such terms as

\(^{14}\)Ibid., 9.

wenxue lilun 文學理論 ("literary theory") and wenxue piping 文學批評 ("literary criticism") were introduced into China at the beginning of the twentieth century when China was exposed to Western influence. Before that time, discussions of literature were grouped under the categories of "collective anthology" (zongji 稿集), "literature and history" (wen shi 文史) and "small talks" (xiaoshuo 小說), and gathered helter-skelter from lengthy monographs, prefaces and postscripts, poetry talks, poems on poetry, letters to literary friends and colleagues, notes and commentaries written on the classics or other favorite masterpieces. Thus, if we approach Chinese criticism with Western perspectives, i.e., to look at it as an organized body of knowledge about literature, we find nothing but disappointment and failures. It disappoints us, first of all, in that it lacks a rational procedure and, for that matter, an objective standard for literary scholarship, so taken for granted by scholars of Western criticism. Wang, in the following passage, characterizes vividly the nature of Chinese criticism:

Generally speaking, it (Chinese criticism) is not systematic, sometimes not even orderly, in its arguments. It does not offer strong contentions, and in most cases it fails to define the terminology involved. Often it is like a mosaic of subtle artistic and intellectual patterns, but arranged in a certain surrealistic way. Some of the pieces, individually and in combination, are illuminating and inspiring, yet they often appear to lack a coherent framework. Some of the pieces, or groups of pieces, are simply inharmonious, conflicting with one another in theme and style— one of the creatures in herd of sheep simply looks like a wolf. And some pieces are missing. We do not know whether they have been lost with the passage of time, omitted unintentionally, or left out deliberately.

3 (May 1979): 529.

16 Siku quanshu zongmu 四庫全書總目, compiled in the Qing dynasty, started for the first time to group discussions of poetry under the category of shi wen ping 詩文評, or "evaluation of poetry and prose," but again the term wenxue lilun and wenxue piping were not used till after the twentieth century.

17 C. H. Wang, 531.
Such an episodic, disorderly body of critical heritage presents problems to some scholars of Chinese criticism at present times. Indeed, if the status of criticism was not problematic in traditional China, it is now in the eyes of some contemporary critics. Complaints about the "impressionistic" judgment, "vaguely" or "intuitively" defined concepts and lack of sustained standards of Chinese criticism frequently occur in their studies. Thus, Yang Hung-lieh has this to say at his shocking and annoying discoveries:

Poetics has existed in China for more than a thousand years. However, there are few works which are systematic and valuable. We have only some disorganized writings to use as sources in our study of Chinese poetics.  Further comments are made by Yeh Chia-ying and Jan W. Walls, Adele Rickett, and David R. Knechtges. These complaints are lodged by using, consciously or unwittingly, Western scholarly frameworks.

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Western standards to judge the Chinese counterpart. However, the question is that the scientific method that calls for analysis and exposition in the process of critical study, a must to critical professionals in the West, was either unknown or ignored by traditional Chinese critics. The fact that natural science in traditional China was a less developed discipline than that of humanities might have contributed to the absence of the objective spirit from Chinese criticism, but Chinese critics did not conceive literary criticism as a scientific discourse and for that matter deem the objective analysis a necessary procedure. In other words, instead of a scientific view of literary study, we find an entirely different notion underlying and operating Chinese criticism. Or, more precisely by talking in the dichotomy of art and science, the core of the meta-critical quarrels in the West, Chinese critics, rather, regard literary criticism as essentially an art, requiring much the same subjectivity and creativity as the object of their study. Although this notion of literary criticism has never been clearly articulated, let alone challenged by other possible opposing positions, the way Chinese critics perform their literary scholarship clearly points to the fact that for literary criticism Chinese critics prefer art to science.

2. The lyric tendency of Chinese literary criticism

A glance over Chinese literary criticism reveals that it is marked by a strong lyrical tendency. Or, "lyric criticism," to use the term by Kang-i Sun Chang, constitutes the major mode of traditional Chinese literary scholarship. As has been mentioned before, the object of traditional Chinese criticism is predominantly poetry. Unlike Western critics who are anxious to redeem the

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parasitic nature of criticism by divorcing it from literature with some fast and clear distinctions, Chinese critics do not conceive criticism as an a-literary practice different in nature from the object being studied. In fact, criticism is closely tied with poetry by Chinese critics, so much so that the language of criticism is often indistinguishable from the language of poetry. The reason for the obliteration is, obviously, that in traditional China a critic was in the meantime a poet. Thus in his critical writings, the poet-critic tended to cut across genres and rendered to his critical language a strong poetic quality. Yet, the obliteration is founded, more importantly, on a conscious ideology of the critic, i.e., on the ideology of criticism as aesthetic experience. In her study on the "lyric criticism" in the Six Dynasties (220-589), Sun has noticed the phenomenon and attributed it, justifiably, to "an overwhelming concern with lyricism in China in genres other than lyric poetry." Thus, criticism, together with other non-poetic genres such as prose and fiction, is practiced essentially as lyric expression or aesthetic experience and judged according to its lyrical and aesthetic attainment. I have already dwelled on the obstinate orientation toward aestheticism in Chinese poetry in the previous chapters that accounts for the lack of discursive elements in writing and an objective search for meaning in reading. In criticizing, the critic aims not at an exposition of his philosophical ideas about literature but at a poetic embodiment of them. Nor does he attempt to present the actual features of the artwork, for his effort is focused on revealing

23 For the efforts in the West to divorce criticism from literature, one good example is Cary Nelson's essay "On Whether Criticism Is Literature," included in Paul Hemadi, ed., What is Criticism, 253-267.

24 Kang-i Sun Chang, 215. Perhaps, it is necessary to cite as its footnote what Jaroslav Prusek has said regarding the lyrical tendency in tradition Chinese fiction: "Lyrical poetry has such a dominating position in Chinese literature that it is only natural that all domains of literature and, indeed, all domains of art are subservient to it." "The Realistic and Lyric Elements in the Chinese Medieval Story," in Prusek, Chinese History and Literature (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1970), 18.
the aesthetic impact he has felt. The critic, in other words, aims to evoke an emotive response from the reader to the artwork through an revelation of his own aesthetic experience, and the revelation of his own experience will contribute in turn to that of the aesthetic ideals of the artwork. Therefore, in the process, the poet's artwork forms constantly the object of the critic's aesthetic contemplation. Responding to it as an organic world and communing with it by merging himself empathically into the world, the critic immerses himself in the aesthetic satisfaction the poem incurs on him. He then proceeds to reveal his satisfaction to readers in terms as truthful to the poem as possible.

Apparently, ordinary language is insufficient to describe the inner-directed aesthetic experience, however real it is to the critic, as Liu Xie expressed in the following:

But the subtle meanings beyond our thought and the profound inner workings of the heart inexpressible in words are not to be reached by language; here one should know enough to halt his brush. Only the most subtle soul understands their secret, and only the most spiritual mind comprehends their number. The [master chef] I Chih was unable to tell people how he cooked, and wheelwright Pien could not inform people how he wielded his ax. [Great art] is infinitely subtle.25

To transcend the barrier between him and the reader, the critic, as with the poet in creative writing, "halts his brush" by adopting a highly metaphorical language in his criticism, be it evaluative, interpretative or appreciative. Instead of a straightforward depiction, concrete images from nature are used to evoke or suggest the moods or ideas in his mind, hence another term "imagistic criticism" by modern scholars to refer to Chinese criticism.26 Maureen A. Robertson illustrates this very well when she discusses Zhong Hong's imagistic method:

25Liu Xie, 2:495. The translation is from Vincent Shih, 220.

26See Chia-ying Yeh and Jan W. Walls, 70.
Responding to the work, he then provides others with a record of that response. He offers others an alternative or substitute for the actual experience of the work itself, by creating a visual image which embodies aesthetic appeals close in kind to those he has discovered in the work.27

For years, scholars of Chinese criticism have heaped their criticism over its ambiguity caused, among other factors, by this imagistic method, as Yeh and Walls have done:

The shortcoming is that it can have neither a rational theoretical basis nor objectively defined standards. The images used to criticize poets are based entirely on the immediate subjective response of the critic to the work. Thus imagistic comparisons may sometimes be used inaccurately, and, as a result, the reader may be misled by an inappropriate stylistic illustration. It becomes particularly difficult, at the same time, for the critic to pursue any argument at length, for over-reliance on imagistic illustration inhibits the development of an objective theory to be used as the basis of logical argument. The results of this "vagueness" constitute the greatest defect in the Chinese tradition of literary criticism.28

Undoubtedly, what Yeh and Wall have said is true when the "theoretical basis" or "object theory" is sought in some positivist sense as in Western criticism, but when other notions of criticism is involved, such as the one that views criticism as art or artistic experience, the ambiguity charged on Chinese criticism starts to diminish. For, while analytical language is best used to proceed with an objective discourse, imagistic language is the most proper medium for depiction of aesthetic experience. Or, more precisely, if imagistic language is ambiguous and illusive when used for exposition of ideas, it is clear and unequivocal in expression of emotive and aesthetic experience because it provokes the reader's response to the experience. In this connection, the more imagistic language is, the more satisfying the experience is because it leaves more room


28 Chia-ying Yeh and Jan W. Walls, 70.
for imagination. This is not to say that the imagination is boundless and strays far from the object of contemplation. For, indeed, as Robertson has pointed out, the imagistic procedure in Chinese criticism supposes that there are "categories" of appeal, that there is, for instance, a certain type of aesthetic appeal which leaping monkeys and vigorous angular brushstrokes share, an aesthetic message they both convey.29

Not only the visual images and the aesthetic qualities they stand for carry the same "categorical appeal," but because of this the reader shares with the critic the same aesthetic impact that a work of art effects on them. The so-called dian wu piping 點悟批評 ("criticism of provocation and awakening") is such that the critic only delineates the contour of the aesthetic appeal (dian 點) and the reader uses his own imagination or intuitive cognition to arrive at it (wu 悟).

Pauline Yu captures vividly the nature of Chinese "provocative" criticism in the following passage, though her concern is with some other topic:

By employing suggestion rather than assertion, he (Sikong Tu) leaves us no choice but to attempt to discover his meaning by drawing analogies between his vision of man in the universe and the writer in the universe. He provides no specifics for the relationship, however, but only relativities . . . he constantly speaks of going beyond or not reaching a state without identifying the state. So our cognitive understanding must be filled in by our aesthetic apprehension of the work as its own example. Thus the world of the Shih-p'ìn must receive its confirmation from the reader actualizing that world.30

In what follows, I shall examine the imagistic procedure in Chinese criticism and by doing so reveal the intuitive and aesthetic mind of the Chinese critic.

3. The imagistic procedures of Chinese literary criticism

29 Maureen Robertson, 333.

The critic's use of poetic imagery presents itself in two categories: one is the use of images coined by the critic himself, the other adopted from the poem or poems of a particular poet. I shall illustrate the two imagistic methods under two separate sections. Generally speaking, Chinese criticism up to the Tang dynasty is predominantly marked by images in the first category, whereas critical writings, basically poetry talks, from the Song period onward are filled with images from both despite the fact that both of the imagistic methods became established in the Six Dynasties. Therefore, our attention in the first section will be focused on the earlier stage of Chinese criticism, including also Sikong Tu and Yan Yu, whereas in the second section critical writings in the tradition of poetry talks will be the central topic of our discussion.

1) Images coined by the critic

Imagery in this category is sometimes used as metaphor, but mostly as simile, for more often than not it is preceded by the character ru 如, or "like." Lu Ji was the first critic to use imagery of this type consistently in literary criticism. Despite that "On Literature" is the first exclusive work on literature in Chinese criticism, its imagistic language has rendered it to be one of the greatest pieces of literary writings in Chinese literature:31

Now one feels blithe as a swimmer calmly borne by celestial waters, And then, as a diver into a secret world, lost in subterranean currents. Hence,

Arduously sought expressions, hitherto evasive, hidden, Will be like stray fishes out of the ocean bottom to emerge on the angler's hook; And quick-winged metaphors, fleeting, far-fetched Feathered tribes, while sky-faring are brought down from the curl-clouds by the fowler's bow.

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31 The fact that Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531) included Wen fu in his Zhaoming wenxuan 聞名文選, an anthology of pure literature, well indicates that Wen fu was regarded as a literary work.
Shapes of tame animals by the sudden shining forth of a tiger are
illuminated,
Or amid the surf-tossed gulls the vision of a dragon emerges.

The words, as they expand, become all-evocative,
The thought, still further pursued, will run the deeper,
Till flowers in full blossom exhale all-pervading fragrance,
And tender boughs, their saps running, grow to a whole jungle of
splendor.32

This rhymeprose is devoted to the discussion of the creative experience in the
process of writing. It is interesting to note that at the beginning of the poem, the
poet-critic Lu Ji complains about the difficulty of putting in words the mysteries of
writing.33 However, as he proceeds, he finds a solution in the use of imagistic
expressions that render his thoughts into vivid pictures. Although the title of the
poem has been translated as "Exposition on Literature," Lu Ji does not express
his thoughts in expository terms whatsoever, but couches them instead in the
evocative and suggestive concrete images.34 He believes that through an
intuitive contemplation of these images the reader will arrive at the efficacies
and nuances of the creative experience that he is otherwise unable to convey.

Liu Xie, who based his theories on Lu Ji's assumptions and advocated
the "literary mind," was directly influenced by the latter's imagistic method. A
look at his monumental work The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons
shows that despite the fact that Liu Xie is claimed to be the most analytical critic

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32 Lu Ji, 170-71. The English translations are from Ch'en Shih-hsiang 陳世稡, "On
Literature," in Cyril Birch, ed., Anthology of Chinese Literature from Early Times to the Fourteenth

33 Thus, Lu Ji says: "Constantly present is the feeling of regret that the meaning
apprehended does not represent the objects observed; and, furthermore, words fail to convey
the meaning." Lu Ji, 170; Ch'en Shih-hsiang, 204.

and his book the most comprehensive and systematic work ever produced in Chinese critical history, the critic nevertheless employs a substantial amount of metaphorical expressions to illustrate his ideas. If in Lu Ji images are evoked to help with the discussion of general principles of literature, in Lu Xie they are often used as an aid in characterization of some specific critical notions or concepts:

One who is engaged in literary thought travels far in spirit. Quietly absorbed in contemplation, his thinking reaches back one thousand years; and with only the slightest movement of his countenance, his vision penetrates ten thousand li; he creates the music of pearls and jade between his poetic lines, and he witnesses the rolling of wind and clouds right before his brows and lashes. These things are possible because of the work of the imagination.35

In the above passage, Liu discusses the notion of shensi in creative writing. However, as with Lu Ji, Liu does not generalize in abstract terms what "spiritual thinking" is nor does he prescribe propositionally what it should be, but rather presents its characteristics in some concrete images that suggest the contour, the momentum of the notion. Liu remarks, at the end of the chapter on the topic, that the efficacies of literary experience cannot be described or accounted for in plain language. Yet through depiction of two images, one being an image of sound and the other vision, that Liu believes that the poet perceives in the process of writing, Liu believes that he has succeeded in conveying the essence of the notion shensi. We find another good example in his definition of feng gu 風骨, or "wind and bone."

Literary expressions are conditioned by the bone in much the same way as the standing posture of a body is conditioned by its skeleton; feeling gives form to the wind very much as a physical form envelops the vitality which animates it.36

35Liu Xie, 2:493. The translation is from Vincent Shih, 216.

36Liu Xie, 2:513; Vincent Shih, 227.
Liu Xie's use of imagery to illustrate critical notions and concepts forged a new critical method for critics to come. Sikong Tu, to whom we shall return shortly, derived the method from Liu Xie and used it in his famous illustration of the twenty-four styles that he postulated in poetry.

It should be noted that in both Lu Ji and Liu Xie images from nature are used predominantly as metaphors. In other words, they seldom, if any, use the pattern "X ru Y" ("X is like Y") encountered frequently in other Chinese critical writings. They speak metaphorically and the relation between the signifier and the signified is implied rather than overtly expressed. After Liu Xie, Zhong Hong adopted the same imagistic method in his "Gradings of Poetry." Moreover, following closely the characterological vocabulary of his time, Zhong Hong also used imagery as simile, i.e., in the "X ru Y" formula. Still another difference between Zhong Hong and his predecessors is that unlike Lu Ji and Liu Xie who used concrete images to illustrate their theoretic assumptions of literature, Zhong Hong used them in his practical criticism that aimed at a grading of the previous poets. We find, in "Gradings of Poetry," that images are used by Zhong Hong mostly to characterize the styles of the various poets. For example, when he evaluates Liu Zhen's poetry, Zhong uses two images that are couched in a metaphor: "the true bone arising from the mist and the high wind leaping over the vulgar." Commenting on Xie Lingyun's poetry, Zhong uses several other images that take the form of simile: "It is like the green pine standing out from the shrubs and the white jade shining in the midst of dust and sand." Compared with images used as metaphors, images used as simile

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37 Zhong Hong, 7.
38 Ibid., 9.
occur predominantly. Quoting the words by Tang Huixiu 汪惠休, a contemporary poet-critic, Zhong contrasts the poetry of Yan Yanzhi 颜延之 (384-456) with that of Xie Lingyun: "The poetry of Xie is like the lotus emerging from the water, while that of Yen is like intermixed colors and carved gold." When commenting on the poetry of Fan Yun 范雲 (451-503) and Qiu Chi 邱遲 (464-508), Zhong compares the former's art to the "blowing wind which whirls the snow" whereas Qiu's the "fallen flowers that cling to the grass." Whatever forms the images are used, we find that they occur mostly by themselves with little, if any, comment from the critic. If we recall that in Chinese criticism the critic aims not so much at an exposition of his ideas about the artwork as at a revealing of the aesthetic impact he feels, we realize that by presenting the images without comment, Zhong lets the images work directly on the reader's mind and thereby conveys the aesthetic appeal he himself has felt.

Just as the literary notions and assumptions espoused in the Six Dynasties became the fundamental critical concerns of Chinese criticism as a whole, so the imagistic methods practiced by the critics in the same period established themselves as the basic forms in which Chinese literary criticism was to appear. Whether they were engaged in theoretical discussions or practical criticism, critics of later centuries all tended to use imagistic expressions of one way or the other to express their ideas. As a matter of fact, the imagistic methods were even adopted by critics of genres other than poetry, beginning with the critics of prose in the Tang dynasty. It is recorded in the "Biography of Yang Jiong" (Yang Jiong zhuan 楊炯傳) from The History of Former Tang (Jiu Tang shu 舊唐書) that Zhang Yue 張說 (667-730)

39 Ibid., 13-14.
40 Ibid., 15.
discusses the prose of some Tang writers with his friend Xu Jian, saying:

The literary imagination of Yang Yingchuan is like water falling from a steep river, which we can take without any limit . . .

The writings of Li Qiao, Cui Rong, Xue Ji and Song Zhiwen are like fine gold and beautiful jade, good for all purposes.

The writing of Fu Jiamu is like a lone summit or a precipice, standing upright at a height of a hundred thousand feet. Heavy clouds surround it and threatening thunders explode from it—indeed a scene of awe! If his writing is brought to the court, it will startle people.

The prose of Zhang Jiuling is like weightless and plain silk, practical but slightly lacking in trim.

The prose of Wang Han is like jade cups and jars, precious but full of flaws.41

Huangfu Shi's 皇甫湜 (9th cent.) essay "Persuasion of Study" (Yu ye 喻業) is another good example of the imagistic method used by critics of prose writings.

In it the critic describes eleven writers with imagistic passages even longer than Zhang's. This is how the critic's descriptions begin:

The writing of Duke of [the State of] Yan (Zhang Yue) is like a magnificent mansion made of the best lumber. Multi-storied, it creates a grand atmosphere, harmonizing the yin and the yang, supervising winter and summer. It seats the emperor and assembles the empress and the concubines.

The writing of Duke of [the State of] Xu (Su Ting) is like the bell, the drum, the reed and stone instruments, with elaborate decorations. Properly posited at the imperial palace, it can be used to worship the deities and the ancestors.

The writing of Li Beihai (Li Yong) is like [an army dressed in red plumes and black armor], spreading widely on the plain. It is like the clouds and the wind. There are wolves and tigers among them. When they march magnificently, ordered [to battle]—oh, they really frighten you!

The prose of Han Libu is like torrents of a river, which gushes a thousand li at one stride and flows endlessly lashing the winds and stimulating the waves. However, when used for agricultural purposes, it is not appropriate for use.42

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41In Baina ben ershi shi, 28:15676. The first half of the English translation is based on the one by Wong Wai-leung. See Wong Wai-leung, "Chinese Impressionistic Criticism: A Study of the Poetry-Talk (Shih-hua Tzu-hua) Tradition (Ph. D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1976), 88.

42Huangfu Chizheng wenji 皇甫持正文集 (Si bu congkan chubian ed.), 40:4. The English translation is based on Wong Wai-leung, 88-89.
However, in the Tang dynasty, the critic who best deserves our elaboration is Sikong Tu, whose "Twenty-Four Styles of Poetry" has become one of the masterpieces of Chinese imagistic criticism. This critical work is a set of twenty-four poems in the archaic four-syllable form. These twenty-four poems are not only statements about the nature of poetic styles, but are also imaginatively successful poems in their own right. In each poem, the poet-critic concerns with one poetic style, and the whole group consists of descriptions of twenty-four styles that the critic synthesizes from the previous poetry. What marks the critic's debt to the earlier critical tradition is his sustained use of imagery, both as metaphor and simile. Thus, instead of describing various styles in expository language, he casts them within concrete, sensuous images from nature that vividly embody their characteristics. The following two poems are taken in their entirety from "The Twenty-four Styles of Poetry:"

Gathering the water-plants
From the wild luxuriance of spring,
Away in the depth of a wild valley
Anon I see a lovely girl.
With green leaves the peach-trees are loaded,
The breeze blows gently along the stream,
Willows shade the winding path,
Darting orioles collect in groups.43

A Mist-cloud hanging on the river bank,
Pink almond-flowers along the bough,
A flower-girt cottage beneath the moon,
A painted bridge half seen in shadow,
A golden goblet brimming with wine,
A friend with his hand on the lute....
Take these and be content;
They will swell thy heart beneath thy robe.44


44Sikong Tu, 18; Giles, 182.
The first poem is intended to convey the poetic style entitled *xiannong* 稲穗, or "slim and stout." The images are carefully chosen so as to best reveal the moods or characteristics pertaining to the style. Thus, the mood of "slim" is suggested by the trickling water and the elegant lass, and that of "stout" is conveyed by the rich, dynamic color of the whole picture. In the second poem the critic embodies the style of *qili* 崖麗, or "embroideries." The images, such as the "flower-girt cottage," the "painted bridge," and the "golden goblet brimming with wine," all convey to us a gorgeous and splendid style as is suggested by its title. What is worth noting is that nowhere in the poems, except in the titles, does the critic indicate his reference to poetry. This is not to mean that the critic does not make explanatory remarks at all in the entire set of the poems. In fact, a considerable amount of abstract statements accompany the imagistic expressions either previously or after them. However, a pattern is discernible in this mixed use of abstract and concrete expressions, for we find that the critic tends to use the former when explaining the properties of a certain style, whereas the latter to convey the mood or world of that style. This shows the critic's conviction that to arrive at those ineffable efficacies of poetic qualities imagistic expression by way of suggestion and evocation is undoubtedly the best avenue.

Not only does Sikong Tu use concrete images in the critical discussions couched in poetic form, but in his prose writings he also uses the method in a sustained manner. For example, his letter to his friend Mr. Li is couched in its entirety in a metaphor, in which understanding of poetry is compared to differentiation of flavors. In Sikong's opinion, the best poetry is those that contain something resembling the taste "beyond the briny and sour" (*xian sun*...)

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45See Note 33 of Chapter 3.
zhi wai 齡酸之外), meaning that there is a higher order of beauty. His metaphorical formulations, such as "the image beyond images," "the scene beyond scenes" and "the flavor beyond the taste," have all become classic vocabularies in the language of Chinese literary criticism.

The same assumption is also espoused by Yan Yu in his Canglang’s Discussions of Poetry. Interestingly, Yan Yu uses another image, which he borrowed from Zen Buddhism, to express the idea termed by him as xingqu:

The poets of the High T'ang [8th century] relied only on inspired feelings [hsing-ch’u], like the antelope that hangs by its horns, leaving no traces to be found.46

The image, "the antelope that hangs by its horns," used here as metaphor is followed immediately by four more images, all couched in simile:

Therefore, the miraculousness of their poetry lies in its transparent luminosity, which cannot be pieced together; it is like sound in the air, color in appearances, the moon in water, or an image in the mirror; it has limited words but unlimited meaning.47

What Sikong Tu formulates as "the taste beyond flavor" has evolved in Yan Yu into "the sound in the air," "the color in appearances," "the moon in water," and "an image in the mirror." By these images from Buddhism, Yan Yu expresses the idea that the beauty of poetry should be located between what can be understood and what cannot be understood. It should neither be pinned down by concept nor expressed through the word of mouth. Elsewhere in the same critical piece, Yan Yu also employs imagistic expressions in his evaluation of individual poets. For example, he compares the poetry of Li Bai and Du Fu to "the bird-king flapping its golden wings to divide the sea, the fragrant elephant

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46 Yan Yu, 26. The translation is from James Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature, 39.
47 Ibid.
crossing the river," whereas the verse of Meng Jiao (751-814) and Jia Dao (779-843) to "insects chirping among the grasses."48

As is indicated by Canglang's Discussions of Poetry, the use of concrete images by way of metaphor and simile is a frequent method with the critics of poetry talks that came to flourish in the Song dynasty. In his dissertation devoted to the study of poetry talks, Wong Wai-leung has remarked that the imagistic expression "is familiar in every one of the twenty-one" poetry talks chosen for his study.49 However, since poetry talks are the focus of the next section where another category of imagery in Chinese criticism will be dealt with, I shall not elaborate on them here but simply register the statement that critics of poetry talks are in general fond of coining imagistic expressions in their critical discussions. In some critics, such as Xie Zhen and Yuan Mei, the imagistic expressions are massive and sustained, forming one of the most striking features of their critical methods.

2) Images coined by the poet

Imagistic method in the second form is to demonstrate critical ideas and assumptions by means of images adopted from the poet. Such a method invariably involves the critic's quoting a line or lines, laden with sensuous images, from a given poet. In Chinese literary criticism thus a practice is called zhai ju, or "selection of lines." Zhai ju was most favored by the critics of poetry talks, so much so that it became the basic format of the critical writings in this tradition. Thus, in this section our discussion shall be centered on poetry talks, though we shall begin with Zhong Hong, from whom the method was said.

48Van Yu, 177.
49Wong Wai-lung, 95.
to have been derived.

In general, Chinese critics maintain that an extraordinary line or lines in a crucial place can brighten an otherwise mediocre literary composition. A poem may contain some commonplace elements, but a well-written line in the crucial place, the so-called *jingce* 警策 (*rallying whips*), will rally forces and turn the poem into a work of high quality.\(^{50}\) Such a belief has given rise to the assumption that the characteristics of a poet's style can be discerned from the *jingce* out of the total corpus of his works. Thus, by selecting the famous lines and presenting them to the reader, the critic provides an insight into the overall features of the poet's literary style. We find this is the assumption that motivates Zhong Hong's selection of lines from the poets he evaluates. According to Wong Wai-leung, Zhong Hong was the first critic in Chinese critical history who adopted the method of *zhai ju* in literary criticism.\(^{51}\) In his "Gradings of Poetry" we encounter many places where Zhong uses this method to assess the achievements of individual poets. If we include the lines Zhong quotes from other poet-critics, the number of the occasions is doubled. We have already cited the lines Zhong quotes from Tang Huixiu to evaluate the poetry of Yan Yanzhi and Xie Lingyun. In another place when comparing Pan Yue's (247-300) poetry with Lu Ji's, he quotes from Xie Hun 謝混 (?-412), saying, "Pan Yue's poetry is dazzling like the unrolling of brocade: there is beauty everywhere; Lu's writings are sands to be gleaned in search of gold: there are

\(^{50}\)The assumption originated in Lu Ji's "On Literature," in which Lu says: "A pithy saying at a crucial point may whip all parts into a whole. / Though all the words are in nice order arrayed, such a 'rallying whip' is needed to make them serve." Lu Ji, 172. Translation is from Ch'en Shih-hsiang, 211-212.

\(^{51}\)Wong Wai-leung, 108. However, since the imagistic method as a whole was embedded in the characterological vocabulary of the time, we may well speculate that *zhai ju* had been used before Zhong Hong by other men of letters.
gems all around. As for the lines quoted directly from the poets, the typical lines from the "Nineteen Ancient Poems" (gushi shijiushou 古詩十九首) are "A guest arrives from a remote place" and "The trees of tangerine and teak are glittering with fruits." The famous line of Bao Zhao 鮑照 (ca. 414-466) selected by Zhong is "Sun in the sky, the market is buzzing [with people]," and that of Xie Tiao is "A yellow bird paces to and fro on green twigs." The lines which Zhong believes are the best in Guo Pu's 郭璞 (276-324) poetry are "What can be done to the tiger and the leopard" and "The wings of the halberd are resting in the hazel stem;" and those in Tao Yuanming's 陶淵明 (365-427) are "With joyous words get drunk over the spring wine" and "At sunset, the sky is cloudless." Significantly, on all these occasions, Zhong Hong does not bother to comment on the lines he has selected, assuming that the reader shares the same opinion with him, or at least can see for himself the rationale for the selection. Thus, the jingce of individual poets function, as it were, as allusions in Chinese literary criticism. Upon reading them, the reader immediately recalls the general styles of the poets with whom he is supposed to be well acquainted.

Zhong Hong also uses the method of zhai ju to demonstrate his literary assumptions and notions, for he believes that the selected lines from the poet present the best possible illustrations to the literary ideas he finds difficult to explain. What with the belief that the notion he postulates is in accordance with the one that has guided the composition of a given poem, and what with the fact

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52 Zhong Hong, 8.
53 Ibid., 6.
54 Ibid., 3.
that a good poem has prompted the critic's advocating of it, Zhong Hong takes advantage of the convenience and effectiveness that the method *zhai ju* lends itself. For example, when he argues against the excessive use of allusion in poetry, he quotes from Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232), "Around the tall towers, sad winds in profusion," and from Xie Lingyun, "Bright moon shines upon piles of snow," suggesting that a good poem does not necessarily involve use of abstruse, pedantic allusions.\(^{56}\) Commenting on the rhythmical properties of Chinese poetry, Zhong argues that Chinese poetry was attuned to music without the awareness of such concepts as gong 宫 and shang 商\(^{57}\) by quoting from Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220) and Liu Zhen, "Place the wine in the great hall" and "The moon shines over the high tower" respectively.\(^{58}\) Interestingly, in these cases Zhong Hong does not even mention the names of these poets, taking the reader's familiarity with the lines for granted. Herein is seen the power of the allusions, which is to say, the selected lines, and their appeals to both the critic and the reader.

The nature of the quoted lines in "Gradings of Poetry" is self-evident: first, they are all scenery-oriented, laden with concrete images from the phenomenal world; second, they are used by the critic to demonstrate literary ideas as well as in assessment of the poets' individual styles; lastly, they occur, more often than not, by themselves with little illustration from the critic. Given the fact that the lines are selected from various poets, they function in the same way as the vocabulary of the critic himself. The same is also true with the selection of lines

\(^{56}\)Ibid., 4.

\(^{57}\)Music terms in traditional China. Together with jue 角, zhi 徵, and yu 羽, they were referred to as "five sounds" (wu yin 五音) in traditional China, which equal to modern music scores of 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 respectively.

\(^{58}\)Ibid., 5.
in the critical writings of poetry talks. As we shall see, critics writing in this tradition not only derived the method from Zhong Hong, but the way they used it never went beyond what their pioneer had attempted.

Poetry talks are a major component of traditional Chinese literary criticism. They came to flourish several hundred years after Zhong Hong in the Song dynasty, with such pioneer work as Ouyang Xiu's *Liuyi shihua*. Invariably, poetry talks take the form of small paragraphs, written at various times to be collected eventually into a series of chapters to make a book. Discussions of poetry talks range from philosophical reflections on nature, human relations and government to personal assumptions about the creative arts in general. Despite the diversity of the contents, poetry talks are marked by a single impressionistic or intuitionalist method. As a rule, critics of poetry talks, from Ouyang Xiu to Wang Guowei, tend to make broad generalization, for they evaluate or describe or both but do not analyze. Further, their comments are often couched in concrete images, either coined by themselves or adopted from elsewhere. While images contracted by critics are a frequent phenomenon, images adopted from poets, i.e., selection of lines, appears to be virtually the basic procedure of poetry talks. There are several reasons that account for the obsession with the method in poetry talks. First, poetry talks, like Zhong Hong's "Gradings of Poetry," are oriented primarily toward a pragmatical and evaluative purpose. Invariably, we find the critic engaged in discussion of stylistic characteristics of a poet, poem and collection of poems, account of some anecdotes about a poet, and textual criticism of a poem including the words

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59 According to Guo Shaoyu, poetry talks should be traced back to Zhong Hong's *Shi pin* or even further (*Ouzhaoshi gudian wenxue lunji* [Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983], 2: 218). He Wenhuan included *Shi pin* as the first poetry talk in his *Lidai shihua*. Despite all this, Ouyang Xiu's *Liuyi shihua* is the first piece of critical writing that bears the term *shihua* in the title.
from the poem. As Xu Yanzhou defined the meaning of the term *shihua* in the preface to his "Poetry Talks of Yanzhou" (*Yanzhou shihua* 彭周詩話):

*Shihua* is to distinguish lines, to present the past and the present, to register massive virtues, to record marvelous events and to correct mistakes.60

Since narration of anecdotes, critical commentary and textual criticism are the major concerns of poetry talks, selection of lines from poets as illustration is an inevitable procedure. Second, while the enormous creative writings in the Tang dynasty gave rise to poetry talks as a major critical enterprise, they, on the other hand, provided the critics of poetry talks with convenient and exemplary illustrations. A random look at the poetry talks shows that the majority of the selected lines are from Tang poetry. This is because the syntaxes in the poetry of the Han and Six Dynasties are simple and natural, integrated as they are as an organic body, thus making selection of lines difficult for the critic. Tang poetry, on the contrary, especially the regulated poetry composed since the High Tang when Chinese versification became the most sophisticated, can be tackled with through different rhythmical aspects and from individual lines and words, as Hu Yinglin said in the following:

The syntaxes of the High Tang poetry are natural and integrated, and, like poetry in the two Han periods, can not be dealt with from one word. Ever since the elder Du (Du Fu), the lines [of poetry] started to have marvelous words as crux (yan), and thenceforth are not natural and integrated.61

The statement that the selected lines in poetry talks are mostly "antithetical couplets"62 is based on the fact that the versification, founded on Shen Yue's

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60 In He Wenhuan, *Lidai shihua*, 378.
61 Shi sou, 91.
62 Wong Wai-leung, 116.
沈约 (441-513) rhythmical theory and brought to perfection through the repeated practice of Tang poets, divides a poem into groups of lines, the antithetical couplet(s) being in the middle. Each line, and, indeed, each word in the line, observes its own regulations for rhyme and rhythm, and for those middle lines, the requirement of parallelism, e.g., the rule of contrast in terms of rhythm and diction, has to be met, too (hence the word "antithetical"). Such a division of a poem into small units not only provides topics for critical discussions but makes possible and convenient the selection of lines for the critic. Since the antithetical couplets of a poem are the most complicated in terms of versification and therefore represent the best of the poem, they are often the target of the selection on the part of the critic.

Besides rhythmical and parallel regulations, all individual lines are required by Chinese versification to coordinate thematically with one another based on the structural principle of "beginning, development, transition and conclusion" (qi, cheng, zhuan, he 起,承,轉,合). Wong Wai-leung has observed that despite the emphasis on the coordination among the lines in a poem, critics of poetry talks often select lines from a poem and make comments based on them regardless of their relation to the rest of the poem. Such a practice seems to pay no respect to the principle in Chinese versification that a good poem should possess remarkable lines on the one hand and be structurally sound on the other and is criticized as a misleading procedure by many contemporary critics. Thus, Lu Xun wrote:

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63 Ibid., 108.

64 Such a deprecatory phrase as youju wupian 有句無篇 is addressed to the poets who possess good selectable lines but do not write good poems on the whole. Xie Lingyun, his status in the first grading in Zhong Hong's Shi pin notwithstanding, is often criticized by critics of later times as one of these poets.
There is another [practice] that most easily leads the reader astray, namely, selection of lines. A selected line is a piece of embroidery torn away from the clothes and, through the selector's boasting and arbitrary explanation, is held aloof from the world and dust. The reader, having not seen the staff as a whole, is dazzled into a state of bewilderedness. The most obvious example is the foregoing line "Leisurely and carefree, he sees the South Mountain." [The critics] forget about the poems "On Drinking Wine" and "Reading The Mountain and Sea Classics" by the same poet Tao Qian, describing him as a man of complacence. Herein is seen the problem with selection of lines.65

What Lu Xun said is correct when selected lines from a certain poet are used to present the overall style of the poet. However, Lu Xun failed to take into account that in poetry talks lines are selected not only to present the style of a given poet but, more importantly, they are singled out for their intrinsic beauties or the aesthetic impact of the beauties felt by the critic. Given the fact that the latter is a more immediate concern of poetry talks in particular and of Chinese literary criticism in general, selection of lines in poetry talks cannot be otherwise.

If selection of lines has its limit when used to present the specific style of a poet, it proves to be an effective method with which to reveal the aesthetic appeal of a poetic style. It is also an effective method to demonstrate the literary notions and assumptions of the critic on the strength of its power of suggestion and evocation. Wong Wai-leung has remarked that in poetry talks "lines are often selected not for supporting a critical opinion, but for their intrinsic attractiveness."66 Such a statement is ambiguous and needs qualification. For, while the intrinsic attractiveness of lines promotes the selection of them by a critic of poetry talks, by revealing the intrinsic attractiveness and its aesthetic

65 Quoted by Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫 in Shici lihua 詩詞例話 (Taipei: Nanqi chubanshe, 1985), 5-6.
66 Wong Wai-leung, 108.
impact on the critic, the critic contributes to the revelation of the literary ideas and critical opinions he espouses—at least this is what the critic believes himself. The statement that the critic in Chinese criticism aims not at an exposition of his ideas should not be taken to mean that the critic does not raise or advance any ideas. What differentiates him from a Western critic is the method that he employs. While the latter adopts an analytical and expository procedure, the Chinese critic elucidates his ideas by an imagistic casting of them and through the revelation of the aesthetic appeal of the imagistic casting.

In the following, I shall list some commonly expounded notions by critics of poetry talks using the method of selection of lines.

"Emotion and scene" (qing jing 情景)

The country master, a descendant from Historian Chen, once said, in writing poetry one must combine scene with emotion and emotion with scene. Only in this way can one talk about poetry. For instance, "Fragrant grasses accompanying man also easily get old, / Fallen flowers drifting on the water likewise flow to the east"—this is the case where emotion is combined with scene; "The yellow leaves in the rain, / The gray-haired man under the lamp"—this is the case where scene is combined with emotion.67

There are grand-scale scenes, small-scale scenes and small-scale scenes within grand-scale scenes. "When willow leaves open there should be a gentle breeze," "Flowers fall on the gathered ministers and the good scene changes," "The wind comes direct on one pendent mast," and "The green haze gazed at vanishes." All these are small-scale scenes that convey the spirit of grand-scale scenes. As for "The rivers flow as if outside heaven and earth, / And the mountain seem there and not there," and "The mountains and the rivers seem expectant, / The flowers and willows appear impartial," they are too much of an ambitious attempt at being grand, and the note of discordance about them leaves us cold.68

67 Du Mu 都穆 (1459-1525), Nanhao shihua 南濠詩話, in Ding Fubao, Lidai shihua xubian, 3:1359.

68 Wang Fuzhi, Jiangzhai shihua, in Ding Fubao, Qing shihua, 1:14. The translation with modification is from Siu-kit Wong, 109.
"The years of a lifetime do not reach one hundred, / Yet they contain a thousand years' sorrow. / When days are short and the dull nights long, / Why not take a lamp and wander forth?" "Seeking by food to obtain Immortality / Many have been the dupe of strange drugs. / Better far to drink good wine / And clothe our bodies in robes of satin and silk." Such descriptions of emotions lack any obstructing veil. "I pluck chrysanthemums by the eastern fence, / Far distant appear the southern mountains. / The mountain air at end of day feels fresh / As birds wing their way homeward in flocks." "The sky seems like a lofty tent / Spreading over the steppes in all directions. / Sky azure clear / Steppes vast unending / Wind blows, grass bends, cows and sheep appear." Such descriptions of scenery lack any obstruction veil.

"Natural workmanship" (ziran 自然)

[Poets] in the periods of Liang, Chen, and Sui adored deliberated sentences. Thus, Yu Jianwu writes, "Wild geese with clouds spread battle arrays, / Sands with fleabanes are startled at the same moment;" "The remnant rainbows receive the evening rain, / Over the broken bank a fresh water flows;" "In the light of the river is suspended the pendulous cliffs, / Down the greens of the mountains gush the increasing waters." Yin Keng writes, "Orioles lodge on the domestic trees, / Flowers trace the winds downward the mountains." Jiang Zong writes, "Dews wash the moon on the mountains, / Clouds lead the smoke on the stoned-road." Emperor Yang of the Sui writes, "The bird, alerted, tends to move the trees, / The fish, cold, feels like hiding behind the mosses." These are all famous lines, but the traces of craft are clear compared with Xiao Xie's (Xie Tiao) "On the horizon the returning boat is recognized, / In the clouds, the trees in the river are distinguished." The lines by Tao Yuanming such as "I pluck the chrysanthemums under the eastern hedge, / Easily the southern mountains come in sight" and "The smooth field meets the distant wind, / The young seedlings are pregnant with new sprouts" are filled with natural liveliness which can not be obtained through deliberate thoughts.

In some five-character regulated poems some words in the antithetical lines are not parallel to each other, such as "Leaning on the stick outside Chaimen, / Facing the wind [I] listen to the evening cicada chirping." In some others all the words in the lines are not parallel to each other. A good example is the poem with the lines "A mat hanging several
thousand 《》 and "A night at the western river in Niuzhu." [Poems like these] are composed at one breath and thus obtain the marvelousness of natural workmanship. Beginners occupy themselves with the rules of parallelism and therefore cannot reach this perfect state.71

"Indirect expression" (hanxu 宿蓄)

A poem in the "Guo feng" goes like this: "In love but [he] cannot see [the lover], / Scratching the head [the man] hesitates;" "Looking but [she] cannot see [him], / Standing [she] breaks in tears." The expressions are reserved and the meanings are exquisite. Neither rush nor obvious, here lies the value of the poem. An ancient poem says: "Sleeves are filled with fragrance / Long distance will not consume it;" Li Taibai says: "The white teeth never speak up, / The loving heart holds itself in vain." These poems are comparable to the poems in the "Guo feng." As for Du Mu's lines: "Passions always manifest as cold feelings, / [I] can never smile in front of you [the loved one]," the massage is not bad but the intent is shallow and lacks in lingering meanings.72

Du Fu excels in expressing emotions marked by indirectness. "The limpid Wei does have no feelings, / In said times it solitary flows east;" "Like the light gull just beyond the gentle oar, / In my misery you seem so worthy." These examples are better than the lines "Suddenly comes a song in the old style, / At home thoughts so hard check the tears" and thus enhance the power of admonition (feng 《}).73

"The jade complexion is not comparable to the color of the cold crow, / That carries with it the shadow of the shining sun." The cold crow is admired to an remarkable degree. "The Yuan and Xiang day and night flow to the east, / Without stopping a while for the worried person." The rivers of the Yuan and Xiang are blamed in a subtle manner. Herein the technique of concealed expression can be apprehended.74

"Versification" (shifa 詩法)

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71 Shi Buhua 沈驥華 (Qing dyn.), Xianyong shuo shi 現億說詩, in Ding Fubao, Qing shihua, 2:974.

72 Zhang Jie, Suihantang shihua, in Ding Fubao, Lidai shihua xubian, 1:454.

73 Wang Fuzhi, Jiangzhai shihua, in Ding Fubao, Qing shihua, 1:14. Translation with modification is from Siu-kit Wong, 109.

74 Shi Buhua, Xianyong shuo shi, in Ding Fubao, Qing shihua, 2:997.
Writing poetry, one must start with dexterity and finish with clumsiness. Therefore, in diction, the hardest thing is the clumsiness, and in a poem it is the clumsy sentence that is the most difficult. By the term "clumsy" is meant that a poem is composed without conscious workmanship, and the efficacy is beyond the craft of techniques and dexterity. There are many clumsy sentences by the ancient poets, such as "The pond produces spring grasses," "Maple leaves fall on the cold Wu River," "The azure river is as quiet as silk," "The mud from the bird nest falls from the empty roof," "The pure light amuses human beings, / The traveler gradually forgets to return," "The grand river flows day and night, / The traveler's heart is still encroached with sadness," "The bright moon enters the high tower, / The flowing light is drifting to and fro," "I pluck chrysanthemums by the east fence, / Far distance appears the southern mountains," etc.75

The notion of "forcefulness" should be a guiding principle when we first begin to think about the writing of a quatrain in five-character lines. What "forcefulness" means when applied to the quatrain was best understood by the poets of the Golden Tang, as we can see from this example: "Where, my lord, is your dwelling-place? / For your maid lives at Hengtang." / I stopped the boat and tentatively enquired, / Thinking we might just have come from the same town." The suggestiveness [forcefulness] seems almost inexhaustible; and even the space left unoccupied by words teems with communication. The next poem is by Li Mengyang and is not without the same quality: "Torrential are the waters of the Yangzi River, / Where, oh, where is Huangzhou? / The mountains twirl, the banks return, / And the boat is before the turreted tower."76

The list of the notions espoused by critics of poetry talks can be further extended, and so are the samples of selected lines grouped under each rubric. However, suffice it to say that selection of lines is used by critics of poetry talks not only in practical criticism but also in discussion of literary ideas and assumptions. From the selected lines listed in the above, we observe two prominent features concerning the use of the method: first, when presenting a line or lines, the critic seldom, if at all, mentions the name of the poet from whom the lines are selected, assuming that the reader is well acquainted with the fact.

75 Luo Dajing 羅大綬 (fl. 1220-1240), Helinyulu 鳴林玉露 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 288.

76 Wang Fuzhi, Jiangzhai shihua, in Ding Fubao, Qing shihua, 1:19. Translation with modification is from Siu-kit Wong, 154.
Second, using selected lines to illustrate his point, the critic makes no comment on the merits of the lines, leaving the reader judging for himself their aesthetic ideals. In some cases, the critic attaches one or two remarks to the selected lines, but these remarks are little more than impressionistic exclamations and amount to nothing toward an expository explanation. This leads to our reflection on the readership in Chinese literary criticism. I have previously mentioned that in Chinese criticism a critic, almost without any exceptions, is at the same time a poet. In addition to the dual status of the critic, he and his colleagues form the only group of competent readers of Chinese critical writings. Thus, as T. A. Hsia has remarked, Chinese criticism is written for the sharp-witted professionals to read rather than for those who are not trained to judge. But a more cogent message to the topic of this study is that since the critic is also the reader, his critical writings are intended not to instruct but to delight. He delights himself as well as others. He does so by writing as a critic the way he writes as a poet and reading critical writings the way he reads poetic works. Herein lies the ground for the remark, stated earlier, that for literary criticism Chinese critics prefer art to science, and herein is also seen the workings of the intuitive, aesthetic mind of traditional Chinese literary critics.

77 Most likely, the reader shares with the critic the same opinion regarding the lines selected, for they are often those whose merits are acknowledged by the general public.

78 Hsia Tsi-an, "Liangshou huaishi" 兩首壊詩, Wenxue zazhi 文學雜誌 3, no. 3 (1957): 18.
CONCLUSION

This study argues for the importance of cultural relevance and against evaluative universalism in Chinese literary studies. Such an argument necessarily implies a rejection of the idea of a universal theory of literature. The rejection is based on several accounts, having to do as much with the premise as with the methodology of the theory. First, universal poetics encourages surface comparison of two or more national literatures. It focuses on some sporadic common denominators while excluding from consideration the basic dissimilarities for being "marginal" and "parochial." However, as this study has endeavored to show, it is often those "localities" and "marginalities" that are the core of the literary tradition under discussion. Second, universalistic approach is the legacy of New Criticism and other modern formalistic criticism. It is incapable of discourse analysis informed by poststructuralist thinking. Comparative literary studies should be first of all comparative cultural studies. Meaningful literary comparisons are performed in cross-cultural-anthropological investigations rather than in close readings of textual products. Lastly, universal poetics nourishes ethnocentric practices. Far from transcending nationalism, it is in fact a means for a few "great" literatures to assert hegemony on a supranational scale. Orientalists will continue orientalizing as long as the idea of a universal poetics remains operative. Thus, to dismantle the Orientalist discourse we must first of all engage ourselves in a destruction of the maneuvers of the concept of a grand universal literature.
However, the rejection of a universal theory of literature does not challenge the validity of cross-cultural knowledge. Andrew Nathan's concern that cultural relativism may deny the reality of transcultural dialogues is not necessary.\(^1\) It is the contention of this study, as would be that of any other studies of similar approach, that only when the "localities" of the two literary traditions are brought into focus can comparative literature become truly comparative and dialogues intended for cross-cultural understanding more meaningful. The peculiarities of other cultures will, furthermore, lead us to reassess some of the views we hold about our own literature and culture. For example, the concealed evocative expression of Chinese poetry and the contemplative aesthetic experience of Chinese readers in the reading process may suggest different approaches for poets and critics in the West. On the other hand, Western literary criticism that aims at a scientific body of knowledge will open the vistas of native Chinese critics toward other methodological possibilities. Northrop has insightfully pointed out that the West has contributed to the theoretical component of human knowledge about the world, whereas the East the aesthetic component in that knowledge.\(^2\) Although a synthesis between the two components of human knowledge as aspired by Northrop remains an ideal, a glimpse into the concepts and procedures confined to other cultures will certainly enhance and refine our overall knowledge about the world.


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