

*Yuanqing shuo* 緣情說  
(On Lyric Poetry)

Francis K.H. So

SUMMARY

Discussions of whether poetry is engendered primarily due to the poet's urge to express his heartfelt feelings (*yuanqing*) or superstructurally to express his conception of an ethical will (*yanzhi*) are often lumped together to form intertwined issues. While the former notion dwells on poetry as a product of individual necessity first heralded in the fourth century A.D., the latter takes poetry as fulfilment of a social need, representing an earlier recognition. Confucianists often interpret feelings (*qing*) in terms of expressions that fall within the ethical (or didactic) bound of propriety. The authorial will (*zhi*) too, has to reflect the Confucian ethics. Therefore, traditional interpretation of poetry does not differentiate the *yuanqing* from the *yanzhi* notion.

However, Lu Ji, the inventor of the *yuanqing* notion, intends to free poetry from the traditional yoke of ethical interpretation. *Qing*, to him, is the individual expressive desire of poetic sentiments rather than a social mode serving as a handmaid to class ethics. While clearing up the interpretive maze of lyric poetry, Lu Ji has also offered us a view on the nature of poetry not eradicating the social dimension but emphasizing the literary creative significance of it. *Yuanqing*, therefore, contributes to the aesthetic perception of poetry as versus *yanzhi*, the ethical counterpart view of it.

**KEY WORDS**

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lyric poetry  
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*yanzhi*  
Six Dynasties Poetics  
aesthetic appeal



To characterize the nature of poetry, the ancient Chinese often wavered between accepting poetry as manifestation of the poet's "will" to be exuberated by music and dance 言志 (*yanzhi*) and as manifestation of "affection" grown out of the poet's inner urge 緣情 (*yuanqing*). The former admission largely treats poetry socially at the service of propriety or rites while the latter perceives poetry ontologically. Critics and literary criticism of the Pre-Six Dynasties (i.e. pre A.D. 220) generally accepted the first view while subsequent critics favored the latter one. In history, there have been repeated assumptions claiming that the respective views are two sides of the same coin. In terms of chronological development; however, the "affection" theory was a product of the Jin dynasty (A.D. 265-317), a later contention.

Sometime around A.D. 300 Lu Ji 陸機 (A.D. 261-303) wrote the monuments *Wen fu* 文賦 (*Rhyme-prose on Letters, or ars poetica*) in which he discusses various kinds of literary styles, the propensity of the writers, the relationship between style and personality, the making of imaginative literature and the necessity for stylistic variance. Of the ten kinds of genres he discusses, he places particular emphasis on lyric poetry (*shi*) and rhyme-prose (*fu*) which were the dominant forms of literary writings of his day. Two consequential designations of the above mentioned genres (*shi* and *fu*) herald the burgeoning of a redefined Chinese notion of lyricism:

詩緣情而綺靡，  
賦體物而瀏亮。

Lyric poetry on the basis of its expression of sentiments tends to be ornate and delicate; Rhyme-prose elaborative on the object tends to be eloquent and illuminatively translucent.

Much as Lu Ji describes the stylistic and formalistic features of *shi* and *fu*, he also contextually remarks that literary writings should formalistically cope with the objective similitude of the world reflected and that variance and multiplicity in style are closely related to writer's character traits and individual tastes. The relationship between one's character and style, in fact, had earlier been assumed by Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226) in his seminal article "An Essay on Literature" 典論·論文 which defines genres in terms of their artistic effect and aesthetic objective in correlation to the poet's idiosyncrasy. Such a belief that the personality of the writer and his likes, that is, the nature of the artist and the nature of his product affect his style, has been concurred to by many writers and critics throughout history, East and West. Plato (427?-347? B.C.), for example stressed the relationship between moral excellence of the artist and the moral effect of the works. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we have a long list of celebrated writers upholding the belief, including Goethe, Coleridge, Shelley, Carlyle, Arnold and others. Among them, one notable Frenchman is Comte Georges Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707-1788) whose renowned saying at the French Academy, "le style, c'est l'homme lui-même" has earned him a niche in the eighteenth century literary arena. Implicit in Lu Ji's generic description of *shi* and *fu* is that various styles, or for that matter, different genres are to accommodate different contents. *Shi*, for instance, better suits the expression of inner subtle feelings, whereas *fu* the elaboration or embodying the objectification of concrete

images. But *shi* and *fu* should not be taken as contrastive genres. Instead, they should be taken intertextually and complementarily, which means *fu* also needs to express sentiments 緣情 (*yuanqing*) while *shi* elaborates on the image 體物 (*tiwu*). The difference between the two modes in expressing sentiments is a matter of degree, not of kind. That the object, or content of expression, should appropriately be compatible with the form is most happily echoed by the twentieth century New Critics although Lu Ji is not ready to talk about such labels as satire, paradox, tension and irony.

The key expression, *yuanqing*, proposed by Lu Ji has called up more controversy and misunderstanding than good in the history of poetry. *Yuanqing* denotes that the function of *shi* (traditionally glossed as lyric poetry) is to express an overwhelmed impulse of sentiments. Modern scholars often hasten to equate *yuanqing* with the current appellation *shuqing* 抒情, or unbosoming the inner feelings in a mellifluous fashion. Thus *yuanqing* represents the classical concept of engendering lyrical poetry, or rather the Chinese norm of depicting lyricism. But while Lu Ji's observation about Chinese lyrics has its historical application, namely, reference to the convention established by *Shi jing* 詩經 (*The Book of Poetry*, c. 1122-256 B.C.) and *Chu ci* 楚辭 (*The Songs of Chu*, 4th-3rd century B.C.), it also capitalizes on the status quo of the poetic trends of the early Six Dynasties. It is due to *yuanqing*'s referential assessment of the Six Dynasties that has launched scholars into argument as to the authentic explication of the term and has thus created an interpretive maze for many generations.

Some of the dominant lyric subgenres during the Six Dynasties are *youxian shi* 遊仙詩 (immortal visitation poetry), *shanshui shi* 山水詩 (nature poetry), *tianyuan shi* 田園詩 (pastoral poetry), and *gongti shi* 宮體詩 (courtly love poetry). With the exception of *shanshui shi* and *tianyuan shi* that aim to invoke a tranquil mood apart from the often minute attention

to images of fauna, flora and rural life, *youxian shi* and *gongti shi* dwindle to describe lush images of nature harmonized and the intricate portrayal of the human physical appearance respectively. Such descriptions may either be allegorical or literal. The yearning for immortality and the desire to emulate the fairies in *youxian shi* culminate in Guo Pu 郭璞 (276-324), noted for his invocation on self-consolation from worldly frustrations and on heightened projection rather than airy feelings of the immortal realm within the human purview. In this sense, *youxian shi* has offered an avenue for the literati poets and readers alike whose disappointments and political anxiety constantly long for spiritual liberation. But gradually when some frustrated literati turned to the mountains, woods, vales and brooks, they also discovered the aesthetic appeal of mother nature. Nature poetry becomes not so much an escape from anxiety as a source of refreshment, entertainment and enrichment of quotidian living. There is no longer an exclusively pragmatic concern for worldly life as previous types of poetry intended to characterize. As an offshoot of *youxian shi*, nature poetry serves the purpose of the travel experience and moral views of the aristocracy as well as the leisured class of the age, generally construed as a time of political turmoil and upheaval. Unlike the *fu* genre, where hyperbolic imagination and fantasy abound with involved illustrations of the object at issue, nature poetry demands that the poet let flow his sentiments through the tip of his pen while reflecting on close at hand observations of the outside world. Yet, at the same time, images have to be vivid and fresh. Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433), for one, is noted for his crafty, luxuriously elegant diction that is hard to emulate, the very opposite of commonplace phraseology. Binomial alliteration and riming compounds are some of his frequently used rhetorical devices, exhibiting a gamut of colorful and sonorous images in his poetry. Bao Zhao 鮑照 (405-466), following in the wake of Xie Lingyun refines his diction to achieve auditory

and visual effects in his nature poetry. Seemingly, both poets have discovered a world aloof from the mundane cares of their days.

Contrastive to Xie Lingyun, Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427), the precursor of pastoral poetry, makes use of natural scenes to exhibit his heartfelt urge, thus fusing the scenes with sentiments and objectifying the self with the landscape. His subsequent imitators, too, such as those of the Tang dynasty, dwell on the equanimity of nature and genuine rustic human sentiments. Often however, the later poets illustrate the sweet and beautified rural living, slighting the objective, humble and laborious life of the farmers. On the other extreme of this type of outward exploring and nature-minded poetry is the lyric on courtly parks, floral images and courtesans (*gongti shi*). The delicate and subtle description of the posture of the external object pioneered by nature poetry has been preserved in courtly love lyrics, particularly in generalizing the romantic feelings or rather the intricate love thoughts between man and woman. While often symbolic or allegorical, such sentiments could be sensuous though aesthetically appealing. In fact, literati of the Six Dynasties were sensitive about personal appearance and beauty of countenance. Descriptions of sartorial and physical beauty are overt, explicit and realistic. Since there is a strong sense of light entertainment in the making of this type of poetry, deeper passionate feelings and ideological motives are absent in this poetic mode. There seems to have been more superficial demonstration of images of beauty than inward amplification of the feelings of such images though the illustration remains voluptuous, minute, colorful, visually vivifying and attentive to the looks of the person depicted. While there is no intention to induce the psychological reaction and profound feelings of the reader, such intense and voluptuous sentiments expressed are often deemed frivolous, feminine, decorative and gaudy.

It is this kind of overall impression of poetry of the age

that provoked subsequent critics to assert that Lu Ji did not make judicious and urbane observations about the lyric. To say that lyric in expressing sentiments tends to be ornate and delicate, these critics claimed, befits the description of the dross of poetry of the Wei dynasty (220-239). Besides, "illuminatively translucent" has not been the dominant style of the Han dynasty. As an extreme remark, He Yisun 賀貽孫 (c. 1637) went to the extent to denounce "ornate and delicate" as an indication that Lu Ji did not understand poetry. Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629-1709), for another, disapproved of the conventional treatment of lyric as explained by the *yuangling* notion. To him, the business of being ornate and delicate as the natural exposition of poetic sentiments reflects the boudoir, feminine love thoughts, devoid of reservedness, decorum and propriety. It signifies a far cry from tranquillity and liberality 與高念祖論詩書 ("A Letter on Poetry with Gao Nianzu"). Critics holding views similar to Zhu Yizun's, particularly during the Qing dynasty were, in effect, succumbing to the Confucian code of interpreting poetry as being engendered from spontaneous human feelings but ending in the observation of rites (propriety) and righteousness. Poetry that develops personal sentiments, especially private reflections, indulging an individual's desirous expressions and being irrelevant to an orderly social schema, should be despised. Generally speaking, the traditional moral code of Confucius tends to read poetry from a pragmatic moralistic perspective. All other readings that celebrate individuality estranged from public pragmatic concern will be ill at ease with the Confucian tenet. When a notion of lyric such as *yuangling* places more weight on an individual's responsive feeling than traditionally sanctioned, the Confucianist culture treats it with considerable misgiving.

However, if we refer to the classics, the *yuangling* notion is not that unorthodox. Liu Xie 劉勰 (c. 464-522), a major critic of the Six Dynasties illuminatively epitomized the nature,

function and development of poetry from the earliest time to the Six Dynasties. By tracing poetry to its origin, Liu Xie recaptured the thrust of the "Great Preface to the Book of Poetry" 毛詩大序 (c. A.D. first century) in acknowledging that poetry, music and dance accompany one another in the formative stage.

Great Shun said, "Poetry is the expression of sentiments, and songs are these expressions set to music." Of this explanation, given by the sage, the meaning is clear. That which is the sentiment within the mind becomes poetry when expressed inwards. It is here indeed that literary form unfurls itself to communicate reality. Poetry means discipline, disciplined human emotion. The single idea that runs through the three hundred poems in the *Book of Poetry* is freedom from undisciplined thought. The interpretation of poetry as disciplined human emotions is in thorough agreement with this observation.

("An Exegesis of Poetry," *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*; Shih 43)

Being the *locus classicus* for many subsequent discussions, this passage is particularly noteworthy for its first two sentences. A more literal translation is: poetry verbalizes the inner feelings and songs are to sing out these feelings. By laying out these two points, the early commentator of the *Book of Poetry* virtually links up, if not combines *shi* with *ge* 歌 (song). The magic about *shi* is that it generates the verbalized and schematized inner feelings which are responsive to the external objects and hence spontaneous reaction to the outside world. Such feelings are innate and have been recognized as an endowed feature. When an outflow of such feelings does not suffice to express the objectified self, the poet takes to song (*ge*). As the musical form of *shi*, song is not the

former's reworking or recasting. It acts as the melodious intensification of *shi*. Three issues merit discussion at this juncture. First, song as an extension of *shi*, like the latter, also gives vent to the urge of the inner feeling. It is not that *shi* does not have the urge, but that *shi* and *ge* differ in degrees and sustentation in their urge. Both poetry and song are forms of various magnitude in providing freedom to the "undisciplined thought" in order to communicate ideas. Second, the fact that poetry may readily be set to the tune of music indicates that the language of poetry is inherently melodious, metrical, or at least rhythmic. No uneven or cacophonous turns of phrases may be set to music without disrupting the flow of melody. Nor can prosaic and wordy expressions be appropriate to prosodic tune, realizing the fact that classical poetry down to the Six Dynasties has been four-word or five-word lines. Implicit in this linguistic practice of writing poetry is the belief that poetry, and in this particular case *shi*, by nature is melodious. In form, *shi* is metrical, rhythmic and cantillating which are various levels of music. Closely related to this observation is the third point that *shi* and *ge* are cognates. Lyric poetry and song indeed have the same origin and share many fundamental elements in the making. At least in the primordial periods, lyrics were set to music to further express sentiments which became songs. The contents of songs were unmistakably lyrics and that is a historical fact. To put the matter simply, singing and reciting of the lyrics are affiliated modes of expressing sentiments. With reference to the development of lyric in the West, we find the Eastern and Western traditions concur fundamentally. It has been urbanely observed that Western lyric "is a poem written for music" and lyrical poetry owes its origin to music and "has not lost the singing line" to develop into an "absolute spontaneity" or "a pure *cri de coeur*" (Lewis 3-4). The "singing line" then seems to be the universal nature of lyric, at least in the primordial stage of its making.

When scholars equate the *yuanqing* notion with the *yanzhi* 言志 (verbalization of inner feelings, or the expression of sentiments) theory, they are in fact elevating the former to the latter status in hope of granting *yuanqing* a guaranteed historical position or more intricately formulating an indigenous theory of lyric proper to the climate of the Six Dynasties. This mentality is understandably acceptable and is much warranted in scholarly analysis. The renowned commentators of *Wen Xuan* 文選 (*An Anthology of Selections of Literary Writings*), Li Shan 李善 (?-689) and The Five Ministers, or, Five Commentators 五臣 (fl. 713-755), were of the opinion that because poetry verbalizes inner feelings, it is *yuanqing*. With such respectable authorities as these, subsequent critics followed suit though some still had qualms about the actual operative mode of the *qing* that Lu Ji had in mind. On the other hand, by equating *yanzhi* to *yuanqing*, scholars not only aim at the assumptions that the two concur at the deep level and in the actual *modus operandi*, but they also find the latter term an appropriate appellation of the time.

Another way of saying this is that each age needs its own terminology and language to describe even the uncontested universal issue. But still, there is a subtle difference between *yanzhi* and *yuanqing*. While the former notion dwells on the word *zhi* which could well be interpreted as the poet's will or political will in addition to his sentiments, traditional scholars tend to see the function *zhi* as serving the ordinary expression of decorous emotions. *Zhi* in this heuristic sense may not necessarily be the original expression of the poet but what scholars want it to mean to the world. To modern readers, the *zhi* of poetry then has two levels of meaning: one, the purportedly genuine feelings of the poet and two, the masquerade sentiments of the poet through scholars' traditional interpretation. As a matter of fact, the second level of reading dominates throughout the centuries.

During the Six Dynasties when Lu Ji, despite his

predecessors, singles out the word *qing* instead of *zhi*, individual sentiments, not edifying emotions, dominate Lu Ji's discourse and begin to gain the attention of the contemporary literary arena. Indeed, Lu Ji intends to break new ground in hermeneutics to avoid the traditional allegorizing of poetry. Wang Kaiyun 吳闓運 (1832-1916), while implicitly concurring that art and poetry move the reader undetected, asserts that poetry has to hide its intention behind rhetoric. The poet's desire has to be entrusted to the object that he portrays.

Thus in history, since the Zhou dynasty, or the *Book of Poetry* period, *shi* has been the product of disillusioned and thwarted sages whose only vindication lies in allegorized poetry. During the Six Dynasties, however, the Jin dynasty (266-316), known for its vogue of frivolity and attention to petty objects turned poetry into something more metaphysical. The Song (420-479) and Qi (479-501) celebrating outings and carousals, dabbled in nature poetry. The Liang (502-55) and Chen (557-588) dynasties characterized by their intricate and tender thinking, in turn, developed love lyrics. Poets of these eras realized that human sentiments should not be undisciplined and verbal expressions must not be overreaching; instead, sentiments should be euphemistically subtle to shelter the feelings behind the diction. However, later literati considered exquisiteness and ornateness as linguistic taboo and belittled the poetic creativity of the Six Dynasties. Their misgivings about the expressions of individual sentiments (*yuanying*) led them to think that the mode indulged in extravagant phraseology, synonymous with the excessively decadent and erotic expressions of the Zheng songs in the *Book of Poetry* and, hence, astray from the elegant and decorous odes of the *Book of Poetry* (*Wen fu jishi* 78-79). While aiming to defend *yuanying* among many who disdained the notion, Wang Kaiyun assumes that *qing* still justifiably falls within the orthodoxy of hermeneutics. Yet, despite his defense he missed Lu Ji's subtle intention.

As argued by a modern scholar, Zhou Ruchang (otherwise Chou Ju-ch'ang) 周汝昌, *yuanqing* has nothing to do with *yanzhi*, *xianqing* 閒情 (leisured induction of sentiments), *yanqing* 艷情 (voluptuous provocation of emotions) and *seqing* 色情 (sensuous expression of emotions). The *qing* of Lu Ji's *yuanqing* really refers to refined emotions or what traditionalists claimed were the seven emotions not restricted to pessimistic and rueful emotions. The Ming and Qing scholars picked on Lu Ji because they glossed the expression *qimi* 綺靡 incorrectly, taking it to mean "trivially extravagant," and "exuberantly beautiful." The term should really be glossed as "elegantly delicate," based on a metaphor derived from exquisite silk fabrics. Such usage is confirmed by Liu Xie's essay, "An Analysis of *sao*," in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (the *Chiu-ko* and *Chiu-pien*, delicate and lyrical, express grief) and this gloss matches the annotation of Li Shan (*Wen fu jishi* 79-80).

By all accounts, Liu Xie as well as subsequent scholars made reference to *Chu ci*, a corpus of poetry of lament, which on several occasions designates the necessity of *qing* in poetry. *Qing* in *Chu ci*, besides being a refined outflow of subjective feelings, to be sure, fabricates an internalized "I," a suppressed ego, that yearns to harmonize with the outside world. Thus, there is the alter ego expressing a moral view, political concern as well as a mythologized ideal of the world. Needless to say, the poetic vision builds up lyrical intensity in the feeling that persistently looks for an outlet. Morality in the *Chu ci* corpus does not mean didactic teaching, rather it signifies the realization of a person's worth in life and obligation to the ethical hierarchy. Political concern has been the universal ethos of literati throughout history. Failure to lodge such concerns in realistic life causes a sense of loss and isolation from public affairs, hence such an individual becomes an abject haughty self.

The exasperated voice subdued in an entwining metrical

flow of floral and mythopoeic images constitutes the engaging *Chu ci* style. It is at once individualistic, melancholic and allegorical, sounding out the mission in life of a social class. For this reason, despite the outlandish mythology, exuberant and florid imagery, the bereaved impulse of the frustrated poetic "I" can readily appeal to the disconcerted scholars and seemingly detached literati alike. The expression of the sorrowful mood, the explicating of the agonized or conflicting ego and the releasing of a heightened plaintive voice makes up the *Chu ci* lyric which in due course has been lauded together with the Book of Poetry as the canons of Chinese lyrics.

There are then two different modes of the same type to express sentiments; the equanimitous edifying poetry as witnessed by the *Shi jing* love lyrics and the heightened masquerade ego shown in *Chu ci's* allegorized mythopoeic lament. Both cherish delicate and subtle sentiments as well as satirical pathos and have thus stood for the canonical lyric impulse. While *Chu ci* is sometimes considered a variant of *fu*, it is all the more closely related with *shi*. Therefore, the *Book of Poetry* and *Chu ci* correlatively represent the common fountainhead of the Chinese lyric.

In this broad view of historical development, when Lu Ji remarks on the generative nature of *shi*, he surely has the full span of literary history behind him. However, he also consciously desires to break up the Confucian yoke of interpreting poetry. While conventionally the *yanzhi* notion includes the element of *qing*, the latter, nevertheless, only plays a subservient role under the shadow of the political and ethical code of the Confucian culture. Everything has to be constrained by propriety to suppress or defuse inordinate desires. Thus the expressing of sentiments too has to fall within the bound of propriety and righteousness, or rather to be purified by Confucian ethics.

In hermeneutics, besides tracing the original lexical meaning and authorial intention in the making, one needs to

analyze and make use of the historical meaning, that is, interpretations accumulated over generations. Apparently, it is the historical meaning of *qing* that Lu Ji wants to be liberated from. In fact, shortly before him, toward the close of the Eastern Han dynasty, Confucian teachings had begun to decline in influence. Literary writings of the Jian'an era (A.D. 196-220) already signified freedom from previous ethical demand. During this period

Emperor Yen and Ch'en Ssu galloped ahead with a free rein, while Wang, Hsu, fling, and Liu, with eyes fixed on the road, raced along in competition. Their common themes are love for the wind and the moon, excursions to gardens and parks, royal grace and favors, drunken revelry and feasts. Heroic in giving free play to their vitality, open and artless in the application of their talents, never resorting to petty cleverness in the expression of their feelings or in their descriptions of what they saw, and in harnessing language for their descriptions, aiming simply at lucidity -- in all these ways they manifest the same spirit.

("An Exegesis of Poetry," *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*; Shih 46)

It is against this literary backdrop that Lu Ji promotes his *yuanqing* notion, favoring the eliciting of sentiments freed from ideological concern. While inculpating Lu Ji's *yuanqing* as reneging on propriety and righteousness, his fault-finders ironically affirm the significance of *yuanqing* as the proper political, economical, religious and other anxieties. Comparatively, *yuanqing* is more suitable than *yanzhi* in demonstrating the Chinese mode of lyric as a term appropriate for use in the West.

However, even while *yuanqing* suits the emotion-oriented rather than intellect-based poetry of the Six Dynasties, there

are shadings of significance in the overall interpretation of *qing* during the same period when the notion was propounded. The first discourse on the lexical nuance may be illustrated by Liu Xie who attempts to reconcile the theoretical link between *yanzhi* and *yuanqing*. To him, sentiment (*qing*) is inseparable from will (*zhi*). The coined phrase *qingzhi* represents a version of *qingli* 情理 (emotion and intellect) which when separately treated may be considered as disparate elements. But as has been realized in the West, music often embodies motifs which are dissonant opposites while striving for harmony. Similarly, *qing* and *li* as antipodes coalesce to resolve the conflicts between expressing private feelings as opposed to conventional ideas. In reaching the juxtaposition of *qing* and *li* and forming a union between the two, Liu Xie aims to show the affinity between *yuanqing* and *yanzhi*. This may be seen as Liu Xie's dialectics of reconciling the apparently opposites in order to reach a concept of harmony within dissonance or what Westerners would term as *concordia discors*. The interplay of *qing* and *li* and similarly *yuanqing* and *yanzhi*, regardless of whether they truly originate from the same source, sets the inner dissolution within a larger harmonious context of the Chinese lyrical tradition. In this sense, Liu Xie as someone who understands the formation, nature, function and development of poetry, perceives poetic sentiments to be a mental state absorbed in the lyrico-musical imagination of propriety, rites and righteousness. *Qing* in this context then is quite similar to the Japanese notion of *kokoro* which may variously be equated to the heart, desire, will and sentiments; all of which contribute to Japanese lyrical aesthetics. While both the Chinese and Japanese lyrical traditions carry a pathetic undertone, their foremost common feature is the intricacy and delicacy of feeling. In this sense, Lu Ji's *yuanqing* may be regarded as subversive to the Confucian notion of decorous and masked feeling.

Xiao Gang 蕭綱 (503-551) and Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508-554), bro-

thers of Xi Tong who sponsored the compilation of *Wen Xuan*, represent the second type of discourse. They maintain that poetry and all creative writing should express sentiments par excellence and should be freed from the Confucian restraints of propriety and righteousness. For their assumption of *qing*, they appreciate the flourishing of *gongti shi* and *seqing shi* that are deemed the poetry of exotica and erotica. Clearly this aesthetic-essentialist view of literature shattered the Confucian ideological shackle which confined the literati for generations. Even in this era one witnesses the art for art's sake assumption and, to use Archibald MacLeish's oft-quoted dictum to describe the situation, "Poetry should not mean/but be." To be sure, without this unconditional recognition of *qing*, several subgenres of *shi* such as those discussed earlier will be disqualified from the respectable list and the inner self in poetry will hardly ever be realized. Besides, failure to come up with this dimension of *qing* meant that there would only be the outer world but not the inner self. Without the opportunity to reconcile the self with the world, poetic vision will be incomplete because it is one dimensional, representing only the lower stratum of imagination and the expected lyric will turn into the narrative or the dramatic.

Somewhat comparable to Liu Xie is the third discourse spearheaded by Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (469-518) whose *Shipin* 詩品 (*Evaluation of Poetry*) asserts that the source of poetic creation comes from the interplay of nature and social living which evokes a poet's ecstasy expressed duly in poetic language. Zhong Rong's concept of *qing* is twofold; firstly it must not be bound by the Confucian code of propriety and righteousness and, secondly, it has to include a social dimension. *Qing* needs to be stimulated and engendered by outside objects (inclusive of nature and social reality). He also emphasizes the significance of personal frustration and grudge. Distinguished poets in classical times, observed Zhong Rong, had based their works on personal grudge or remonstrance.

This type of harbored resentment may either be directed toward social ills or personal disappointment. In the latter case, the tone of the language may be depressive or pathetic. To a certain extent, both the frustration of a groveling life and self-revelation of melancholic reluctance in retreat constitute the social contents of worldly concerns. Therefore, this type of poetry in expressing the self identifies the world as an internal image and acquires a social dimension different from that of the Confucian.

These three types of sentiment-based discourses render the Six Dynasties a specially significant era of renovative thinking about lyric poetry. *Yuanqing* thereby acquires various nuances, including supportive and conflicting points of view down to the Tang dynasty. In the Early Tang, as the conservative scholars dominated the literary circle, they proposed that the function of poetry should be *yanzhi* rather than *yuanqing* in their bid to override the sentiment provocation of the Six Dynasties. But in the High Tang period, as exemplified by Li Bo, Du Fu, Wang Changling, etc., the *yuanqing* notion apparently won the favor of most sophisticated poets whose understanding of *qing* is close to that of Zhong Rong. Only after the Mid-Tang did the *yanzhi* school again prevail. But the *yuanqing* mode still surfaced in such celebrated poets as Li He, Li Shangyin and Du Mu. The Song dynasty (960-1279) saw another ebb of the *yuanqing* notion and ever since there was incessant strife between *yanzhi* that stands for the Confucian view of literature and *yuanqing* that has become synonymous with the Taoist notion of poetic creation.

Like lyrics in the West, the *yuanqing* notion proposes *shi* as an instantaneous expression of sentiments. It further finds concurrence with the Western expressive theorists who assume that good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of feeling and that the lyric serves as the essential poetic form. Thus, critics of William Wordsworth's generation particularly delighted in

the long lyrical poems and looking inwardly they found in them interests of emotion, thought and will rather than outwardly scenes, events, and actions. But somewhat dissimilar to the expressive theory of lyric, the *yuanqing* notion of expression concretizes a poem by means of the images and in a few lines (the structural feature of *shi*). In fact, the expression represents the compressed experiences juxtaposed in a short metrical poem. The poem, often an enlarged and extended image, is the consolidation of an emotional complex structure, at once melodious, mellifluous, ornate, intricate and sometimes intense. As conventionally illustrated by *Shi jing* and *Chu ci*, sentiments in poetry reveal the reconciliation between the self and the world, the subjective inner domain and the objective outer space. Lu Ji, in arguing that *shi* portrays its object in an ornate and delicate manner, reminds us that the lyric combines the self and the world not in a tenuous and vigorous way, but in an inward and aesthetic way, accommodating the Keatsian "negative capability," i.e., "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." In this sense, Lu Ji suggests that we not approach lyric poetry from a didactic or broadly socio-political way but envision sentiments psychologically and refrain from a preconceived frame of social reality. Sentiments are anthropocentric rather than ideological. *Yuanqing* thus not only asserts itself as a theory of lyricism but also opens up a dialogue with the Confucian and other ideological proponents of the nature and function of poetry.

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