

The Antelope that Leaves no Trace: Chinese Models of (Poetic) Meaning

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ABSTRACT

Here I question the view that Chinese lyric is a unique (Non-Western) form of expression by “deconstructing” the models of poetic meaning of three Chinese critics. Thus while Wai Lim Yip holds for a purely “natural” poetic meaning beyond language, I suggest that this is an impossible (self-contradictory) claim. While Pauline Yu sees Chinese lyric as a “contextual response” to the immediate environment, I show that the monistic, “immanent” world-view she presupposes reveals itself on closer examination to be a dualistic view. And while Wong Kin-yuen distinguishes Chinese “metaphor”—by stressing the metonymic, carrying-across force of the *phor*—from Western *meta* (“beyond”)-*phor*, I emphasize the common linguistic ground of metonym and metaphor. My argument in each case is based on a view of language as open-ended, inclusive but indeterminate, a signifying network grounded in its own self-difference. Thus I conclude that all poetic models are finally equivalent because inevitably grounded in a language itself “un-grounded.”

KEY WORDS

lyric
meaning
model
immanence
transcendence

aporia
metaphor
metonym
self-difference
un-grounded

Wai Lim Yip speaks of the special and very natural quality of Chinese poetic language. In his 1981 essay "A New Line a New Mind: Language and the Original World" Yip tells us:

. a poet has to . . . recover the original ground, where we find the given as given, by liberating himself from the accustomed house of thought so as to move into a new house of Being In the Chinese poetic world. . . instead of using language to infuse into objects ego-reflecting meaning. . . it is used to punctuate the natural measure of things as they emerge from the real world. . . To see, therefore, is to see things as things see themselves—to leave objects in their original presences and appear with minimum mediation . . . No further predication is necessary. Thus, *stream, house, silent, no one* 澗戶寂無人 can emerge. . . simply as such. Be nature-thus-natural.¹

This is the sort of Taoist claim for the uniqueness of Chinese lyric that we hear rather often: Chinese poetic language somehow gets beyond ("transcends"?) the language of human thought—at least of rational, discursive, "predicative" thought—in order to come to grips directly with the world of things. But, one might ask, what about Pound's imagism and "modern" poetry in the West? Yip wisely anticipates the question:

But when certain poetic lines that eliminate predication appear in modern Anglo-American poetry . . . following the steps of Mallarmé, people cannot help but call them "deviations." In the words of Roland Barthes,

"Modern poetry destroyed relationships in language and reduced discourse to words as static things. This implies a reversal in our knowledge of Nature. The interrupted flow of the new poetic language initiates a discontinuous Nature, which is revealed only piecemeal. At the very moment when the withdrawal of functions obscures the relations existing in the world, the object in discourse assumes an exalted place: modern poetry is a poetry of the object. In it, Nature becomes a fragmented space . . . The poetic word is here an act without immediate past, without environment. . . ." ²

That Chinese lyric (unlike the discourse of "words as static things" of Western imagism and projectivism) maintains for Yip a solid rootedness

in a "continuous nature," in the time-flow of a natural, relational environment, is clear from his talk of the "real world," of "nature-thus-natural." But the implication for Yip of Barthes' view here would seem to be that Chinese poetic language is "naturally" non-predicative, while the Western lyrical discourse is, alas, naturally predicative and thus (against Aristotle's view of things) cannot catch the (non-predicative) thing-world itself. The rootedness of Chinese poetic language in concrete nature, and perhaps implicitly the non-predicative and un-mediated character of this language (with its relative lack of syntactic interconnections) has also been suggested by, among others, Pauline Yu. In "Alienation Effects" (1988) Yu claims that Chinese lyric stands outside the Western definition of poetry as "fictional" discourse, as the self-dramatizing expression (self-creation perhaps) of a poet's ego (Yip's "using language to infuse into objects ego-reflecting meanings") which also imitates (through a fictionalizing language of metaphor) a transcendent reality that lies beyond the immanent world.³

But isn't this view of a singular (uniquely Chinese) poetic language which reaches beyond "thought" (and thus beyond language itself) to nature and "being" somehow too simplistic? And can we really say, with Yu, that the Chinese metaphysical world-view, embodied by Chinese lyric, is fully immanent and "natural," unencumbered by the supposition of a transcendent reality and of the fictionalizing, transcending self of the poet? Isn't this also making too neat a distinction between East and West? Some Western poets – since Fenellosa and Pound at least – and numerous Western thinkers have been trying to break through, as Yip and Yu are well aware, those very limits within which Western metaphysical/poetic language has been seen to be restricted. But do these limits really exist only for Western poetry/thought? (If they do, why should it be impossible to overcome them?) Are they not built into the universal nature of language?

For no language, on the one hand, can really express meanings that transcend itself, or (express meanings that) fully grasp or catch an extra-linguistic natural world. (If language could do this, why should this capacity be tied to the syntax or other properties of a specific language?) On the other hand, all languages and (poetic and metaphysical) discourses will tend, due to their fundamental inner polarity and difference, to bifurcate meaning into the immediate act of its "expression" in sensuous language (signifiers) and the (transcending) presence or what-ness of what is expressed (signifieds), though meaning in this latter sense is elusive and perhaps illusory, never in fact present to itself because generated by the inner polarity of human

language/thinking.⁴ Thus, my central claim: there is no real or determinate ground for an essential “difference” between Chinese and Western poetic language.

One way to argue this point would be to look at the interpretive models used by both Chinese and Western literary theorists to define and understand poetry and poetic discourse—models themselves cast in a “metaphysical” discourse often based on poetic images and figures of speech. These models are sufficiently open-ended and indeterminate that they could as well fit Chinese as Western poems (or poetic or metaphysical discourse.) That is, the models themselves could as well be “Western” as “Chinese.” Here then I want to look at some Chinese models of (poetic/metaphysical) meaning—ones assumed by Yip and Yu—to see how, on close inspection, they reveal their own *aporias* or inner contradictions (as I’m assuming Western models also would), their blind spots and indeterminacies. For if all languages and discourses (poetic and theoretical, the discourses of aesthetic models as well as of poems) are finally open-ended and non-determinate, they are also “equivalent”—at least in the sense that there is no clear and determinate ground of difference.

Yip: Poetic Meaning Beyond Language

Yip, after all, is claiming a uniqueness or singularity not just for Chinese lyric but also for the aesthetic theory/model he uses to interpret or ground it, but a close look at his model reveals its blind spot, its *aporia*. In his “*Andersstreben: Conception of Media and Intermedia*” (1980), he speaks of the

traditional Chinese aesthetic ideal, *hsien wai chih yin* 弦外之音—sounds beyond the strings or music beyond the notes on the strings, with strings representing the words or medium. The phrase comes from Ssu-k’ung T’u whose aesthetic horizon can be traced to Taoist-Buddhist origins. . . The key phrases from Chuang-Tzu that gave rise to all later variations of this concept run:

“It is for the fish that the trap exists. When we get the fish, we can forget the trap. . . It is for *i* (meaning, sense of things rather than propositional meaning) that words exist; when we get the *i*, we can forget the words (*yen chih swo i dzai i, de yi erh wang yen* 言諸所以在意,得意而忘言).”⁵

This passage from the *Chuang-Tzu*, which comes at the end of the mixed chapter called *wai wu* 外物, "Externals" or "Contingencies," is often quoted in discussions of Chinese aesthetics.⁶ But let us look more closely at the image here. The word contains its meaning like a fish-trap (actually a *chuan* 筌, fine cloth) contains a fish, and once we've "grasped" the meaning we can "forget" the word. The concrete picture given us by the metaphor is that meaning is inside the husk of words: if it is a meaning that transcends language, a transcendental signified perhaps (and the picture here, despite Chuang-Tzu's frequent "deconstructive" strategies, is surely "logocentric" enough),⁷ it is nonetheless also a meaning which is radically "immanent" to language in the sense of being *hidden within* language; it is a meaning which is first *expressed by* language, or which first expresses language around itself so that it may be seen or found or known therein. "It is for *yi* that words exist. . . ."

Now where I see the apparent contradiction or *aporia* is just here: while the fish-trap model suggests meaning is concealed *within* language, the "sounds beyond the strings" (*hsien-wai-chih-yin*) model — Yip also cites "other familiar phrases, *i tsai yen wai* 意在言外 (*i* exists outside words). . . *yun wai chih chih* 韻外之致 (extreme interest beyond rhythm)" — suggests that meaning, ineffable, lies *beyond* the limits of language. The paradoxical nature of a meaning that sings "beyond the strings" of words and yet is also hidden within words is well-expressed by the character *i* ("meaning") itself: *yi* is *yin* — "sound" over *hsin* — "mind/heart." Pound takes it as "heart-tones" ("the tones given off by the heart"),⁸ a picture that can suggest "meaning" as both (1) the "sound" *outside* of its source (heart or word), "given off" by the center and resonating, expanding outward, and (2) the *central* source, the heart-mind (but not word?) itself.

Of course, one can argue that Chuang-Tzu's "inner" meaning is precisely the "outer" meaning, the meaning that escapes language — that the inner/outer boundary breaks down here, a collapse which either is the *aporia* itself or dissolves it. But I'm taking Chuang-Tzu to mean, again, that meaning is still in some way (at least initially) dependent on language, an important aspect of its being *within* language. Yip however clearly adheres to a picture of *yi*-meaning as fully *beyond* and free of language:

. . . the cuts and turns of the poem . . . *coincide* with the cuts and turns of nature's disclosure of itself or our experiencing of nature . . . we are enabled to leap, as it were, beyond the words themselves

and be spatially liberated from the sense limitations of the words to enter into the rhythm of nature.⁹

Yip's claim that Chinese poetic language allows us to grasp or express the thing-world of nature directly, unmediated by a discursive-predicative language, would seem to depend on the view that meaning comes outside of words precisely so that it can "enter into the rhythm of nature." (We note that this rhythm must be distinguished from that word-rhythm we would transcend: *yun wai chih chih*, "extreme interest beyond rhythm.") But is this what Chuang-Tzu's inner meaning means: that once we "throw away the trap of language" we have the meaning of nature itself? In chapter two of the *Chuang Tzu* we feel that this "released" meaning is more likely to be a "One" or "Tao," a metaphysical Being or Non-being that somehow transcends nature – and/or is radically immanent *in* nature – than (a direct expression of) the thing-world of nature itself. Of course, an "immanent" Tao perhaps *is* just this (expression of) nature. Yet we are still left with the duality of Tao and world, and the key point is this: Chuang-Tzu's Tao, his "One" or "Nothing" or "this" and "that," are terms/meanings which depend intimately on the words which express them (or which they express). The Taoist's deconstructive word-play is just that, a game which plays with, *uses* in the most intimate way, words themselves. If the words are to be finally thrown away it seems we will be left not with a "phenomenal nature" or an "ideal meaning" but with the gaps *between* words, or between words and the meanings hidden within them.¹⁰

Consider Lao-Tzu's opening line: "The tao that can be spoken of (tao-ed) is not the *ch'ang Tao* 常道, constant Tao (Way)." A very common interpretation is this: by trying to speak or know Tao man objectifies it, separates it from himself (with rational, discursive and predicative thinking) and thus conceals it (from himself); the true (constant, permanent, unchanging) Tao cannot be spoken/known just because it is so *close* to us, radically immanent *within* us. (As we hear in the *Secret of the Golden Flower*: "The light of heaven cannot be seen. It is in the two eyes."¹¹) It may be that we are to think of Chuang-Tzu's *yi*-meaning hidden within the husks of words in this light: words, in trying to objectify (Yip's predicating, mediating language?), hide the *miao* 妙 -essence of their meaning within themselves, and/or from the speaker/thinker of those words.

Do we then escape or dissolve this "metaphysical" dilemma by ceasing to say/think, thus letting these concealed meanings of our all-too-human

language reveal themselves as just (*those of*) phenomenal nature itself? Or does the moment in which we “stop saying/thinking” also put us beyond nature and (poetic) language as well? This is one way to view the crux of the problem here. My suggestion, again, is that the meanings depend (at least initially) on language; the moment of “knowing” (through mystical insight) the constant Tao (and perhaps the sense of nature beyond language given us by poetry) is necessarily tied to that other dialectical moment in which we “speak the tao that can be spoken of,” and cannot be reached (or spoken of, or imagined) at all without that moment of language. Unspeakable Tao is in a sense *contained* by spoken tao, as fish by trap and meaning by word.

A variation on the same problem lies at the heart, and near the beginning, of Western philosophy: Parmenides’ claim that reality is ultimately One Being, since “thou couldst not know that which is not nor utter it; for the same thing can be thought as can be.”¹² But is Parmenides’ One Being just the sort of formal logical-linguistic (and quintessentially “Western”) concept Yip’s poetic language would go beyond, or is it more like Chuang Tzu’s One which, already “beyond” language (“the One and its name make Two”), nonetheless seems to lurk always already within language, in the play of its gaps, its difference(s)? Duyvendak’s reading of Lao-Tzu’s first line interestingly reverses the normal emphasis: “The tao that can be truly spoken of is other than a permanent Tao.”¹³ Here we might think of Derrida, and of Nietzsche’s truth that is, like a woman, deceptive.

Yip wants a Chinese poetic language, then, which somehow goes beyond human (rational, discursive) language and thinking, leaving no “trace” behind. Is this really possible? Although he bans modern Western poetry, with Barthes’ support, from the temple of purely natural lyrical discourse, Yip likes (as I also do, even if I don’t know what it means) Olson’s feeling that “the poem itself must . . . be a high-energy-construct and . . . an energy discharge. . . . form is never more than an extension of content.”¹⁴ He also likes (as I do) Pound’s vision of the lost “radiant world where one thought cuts through another with clear edge, a world of moving energies,”¹⁵ comparing it with the view of the thirteenth-century Yen Yu:

The highest kind of poetry is that which does not tread on the path of reason, nor fall into the snare of words. . . the antelope that leaves no traces, hanging its horns. . . transparence and luminosity, unblurred and unblocked, like sound in air, color in form, moon in water, image in mirror. Words have limits, but *i* (sense of things) are endless.¹⁶

Here we have again limitless *i*-meaning beyond limited language, *i* which “does not fall into the snare (*chuan*, Chuang-Tzu’s fish-trap, the porous cloth) of words.” But this antelope (of poetic meaning) which “leaves no traces, hanging its horns”: is it “erasing” its own tracks by walking (through the snow of language) and first leaving erasable footprints behind it? What kind of “transparence” is this — the *reflection* of “moon in water, image in mirror”? Is this the transparence of a true “transcendence” (meaning beyond language) or rather that of the immanence and open-endedness of language itself, language which images and reflects a world which finally is contained within it like the image within the mirror, the fish within the trap, the (transcendental) signifieds pointing back to an indefinite regress of signifiers?¹⁷

Yip in “Andersstreben” is comparing poetry to painting and the gestural language of mime; he makes this comment on Li Po’s “a lone sail, a distant shade, lost in the horizon” (孤帆遠影碧空盡)¹⁸: “words, as signs, recreate visual curves and graduations of our perception. To realize a moment’s vital rhythm, language must move exactly the same way the moment originally moves the perceiver.”¹⁹ Next to Olson’s claim that “a poem is energy transferred” and that “form is never more than an extension of content” Yip sets Su Tung-p’o’s statement that “My writing is like water gushing out from an ample, deep spring. It can move. . . without effort and. . . shapes itself according to the objects it encounters.” Here the non-effort sounds of course Taoist and the “ample, deep spring” echoes Lao-Tzu’s chapter 4: “Tao is empty (*chung* 中),/It may be used but its capacity is never exhausted (*pu ying* 不盈)./It is bottomless, perhaps ancestor of all things.”

But if Su Tung-p’o’s poetic writing (language) is “like water gushing out from an ample, deep spring. . . and shapes itself according to the objects it encounters,” doesn’t this figure suggest an open-ended flow of language, an “encompassing” language rather than one beyond whose limit meaning lies? Wilhelm interprets Lao-Tzu’s Tao as “meaning” though he might mean this in a “transcendent” sense; is it not possible to take Tao (more immanently) as “language” itself, and thus take the always over-flowing, inexhaustible well of Tao as that self-grounding (linguistic) ground beneath which (whether as Heidegger’s “language that speaks man” or Derrida’s generalized “writing”) we cannot get? The overflowing well then becomes a metaphor for language’s inexhaustible transparency to itself, its inability to get beneath/beyond itself its open-ended, limitless “recycling” of its own (contingent, finite) signs, its indefinite expressibility.

I suggest that Yip here, with his allusion to Su Tung-p'o's "poetic writing like gushing water," is bringing into play another and — though he may not realize it — somewhat different model of poetic meaning, that of the "well" or "cup." And this figure of the cup/well reveals or discloses another *aporia*: if *i*-meaning is ambiguously *within-and-without* the fish-trap, the cup is at once *filling-and-emptying* itself/its meaning. The "antelope leaves no trace" passage ends with this sentence: "*yen yu chin erh i wu ch'üung* 言有盡而意無窮, words have a limit but meaning is limitless." Here the word rendered "limit" is *chin*, which has the *min*-cup (dish, plate, saucer) radical on the bottom and the hand-radical on top: a hand holding a cup, drinking. This *chin* can mean "to exhaust, to use up, to complete, to finish, to accomplish, all, entirely, totally, wholly." The fundamentally ambiguous, perhaps paradoxical or aporistic nature of this "sign" (exhaust/complete, finish/total) is used to good poetic effect at the end of that beautiful line of Li Po's (whose words/signs, for Yip, "recreate the visual curves and gradations of our perception"): "A lone sail, a distant shade, lost in the horizon;" the last three characters here are *pi kung chin*, "blue sky *chin*."

However, *chin* often seems to mean "exhaust(ed)" or "limit(ed)," as in the antelope passage where *yu chin* ("having limit") is contrasted with *wu ch'üung* ("no limit," "not having limit"). We get another kind of *chin/ch'üung* juxtaposition in the *Shuo Kua* commentary on the *I Ching*: *ch'üung li chin hsing i chih yu ming* 窮理盡性以至於命, which in the Baynes/Wilhelm translation becomes, "By thinking through the order of the outer world to the end, and by exploring the law of their nature to the deepest core, they arrived at an understanding of fate." This *chin* here is taken as "exploring. . . to the deepest core," balancing the "thinking through. . . to the end" of the *ch'üung*: thus *chin* plays a more active and positive role here, that of "exhaustion" as "completion" and "filling to the limit" rather than as being (passively and negatively) "bounded by the limit" — as does *ch'üung* which, with its *hsueh*-"empty" radical on top and its *shen*-"body" below on the left, generally means "poor, impoverished, lacking" as well as "to exhaust, to trace to the source, the extreme, the farthest." Upon closer view, both *chin* and *ch'üung* reveal themselves as paradoxes, *aporias* meaning "filling"-and-"emptying," perhaps "totalizing"-and-"negating." Why then in the last line of the antelope passage must we take the *yen yu chin erh i wu ch'üung* as "words have a limit but meaning is limitless," and not rather as "language fills to its own limit (totalizes itself) but meaning does not fill to its limit (does not totalize itself)"? If we took it this way, might it not

mean that meaning is contained *within* encompassing language like the fish within the trap?

The *ying* 盈 in Lao-Tzu's chapter 4—where the well of Tao is *pu ying*, “never exhausted”—suggests another such aporia: this *ying* has the cup-radical on the bottom and means “to fill, to become full” as in *ying kuei* (waxing/waning) and *ying yueh* (full moon). The Tao then, in its *chung*-emptiness—but here *chung* 中 means “center” as well as “empty”—never fills itself “completely” to its limit, or, at the moment it does so fill itself, it begins immediately like the moon to wane. Thinking of Tao as language, perhaps Lao-Tzu could also mean: “Tao is central (all-encompassing); in use it never fills itself to its limit; Tao is groundless. . . .” But does it not fill to its limit because it has no limit or because that limit (“meaning,” transcendental signified) is indeterminate, unreachable by the open-ended chain of signifiers? And is it groundless because it is itself the ground (of whatever there is) or because there is no ground?

In the (Confucian?) *Chung Yung*, “Doctrine of the Mean” chapter 22 we also get the model of the *chin*-cup, though here it may be the cup of the “self” rather than of language and/or meaning which fills-and-empties itself: “Only those who are absolutely sincere (*chih ch'eng* 至誠) can fully develop their nature (*chin ch'i hsing* 盡其性).”²⁰ Pound, rightly I feel, translates the *chin* as filling-and-emptying, though to do so he also (needlessly?) bifurcates *hsing*-nature into “inborn talent” and “nature”: “Only the most absolute sincerity under heaven can bring the inborn talent to the full and empty the chalice of the nature.”²¹

That this *chin*-development (waxing/waning) is also a *chin*-completion is clear in *Chung Yung* 25: “Sincerity means the completion of the self and the Way is self-directing,” where the Chinese reads *ch'eng chih, tzu ch'eng ye, erh tao, tzu tao yeh*, 誠者，自成也，而道，自道也，“sincerity is self-completion, Tao is self-Tao.” “Self” here seems to mean something like “self-reflexivity” or “self-referentiality.” “The only completion (filling-to-the-limit, filling-and-emptying?) is self-completion, the only Tao a Tao which (like language?) refers to itself, grounds itself.

Indeed, if we look closer at *ch'eng*-sincerity, we note that it has the *yen*-language radical on the left and *ch'eng*-completion (for sound only or also for meaning?) on the right, suggesting “complete expression,” “self-expression.” Thinking of “sincerity,” *complete* self-expression is also (complete) self-transparency, so that nothing is hidden—from others or from oneself. In a sense the “self” disappears here and there is only transparency.

Could we then also take this sort of self-transparency as the self-disclosure of language, whose only “completion” (“meaning”) is the self-referentiality of an open-ended and indefinite series of signs?

In *Chung Yung* 26 *chin*-exhaustion appears in a more specifically linguistic context: “The Way of Heaven and Earth may be completely described (*chin*) in one sentence: They are (or it is?) without any doubleness (*pu erh* 不貳) and so they produce things in an unfathomable way.”²² The *chin*-exhaustion or *chin*-completion of the Tao of Heaven/Earth (or just Heaven/Earth) is here in a sense its true or full description, its definition: one *yen* 言 (word or sentence) can exhaust/complete it/its meaning; a thing or term is filled/emptied out into its definition/meaning, just as the sincere self fills/empties itself into full transparency. But this single sign, this term or entity of “Heaven-Earth” hides (like language itself) within its very “non-doubleness,” its own inner split, the polarity and (heaven-earth, signified-signifier) “betweenness” of itself.

As Lao-Tzu says in chapter 5, “*T'ien ti chih chien, chi yu tuo yueh hu* 天地之間，其猶橐籥乎，the heaven-earth *chien*-between is like a bellows,” where the *tuo of tuo yueh*, “bellows” means actually “bottomless sack.” And in chapter 7: “Heaven and earth. . . *pu tzu sheng* 不自生，do not exist for themselves, and for this reason can *ch'ang sheng* 長生，exist forever.” Heaven-earth is, in the deepest ontological sense – like the self or world or human language that grounds both – always bifurcated, outside of itself, (internally) different from itself, self-different.

Yu: Poem as Contextual Response

However, it is just this deceptive (Taoist and/or Confucian) view of the non-duality of the Tao of Heaven-Earth, by which it (they) bring(s) the whole world about with seemingly no effort, “in an unfathomable way,” that Pauline Yu upholds as the classical Chinese world-view. For according to this (metaphysical) model the Tao is not different from the world that it brings about or mutually implicates – “no doubleness” – and this immanent here-and-now is the *only* reality. Yu, we recall, claims that Western poetry and poetics is essentially mimetic, based on a dualistic world-model which separates immanent from transcendent reality and sees the “author” of a literary work as a kind of transcendental subject, a creator whose “imitation” of nature is a dramatization, a created world of fictional (or “poetic”) discourse, a fictive world which transcends immanent reality (nature) through

the use of symbol and metaphor.

Yu quotes Earl Miner on the Greeks—“Taking imitation as the norm, they were unable to distinguish lyric from narrative”—and agrees with Miner that the “focus of ancient Greek poetics on the drama, and of Japanese and Chinese on poetry” is a crucially important consideration for comparative critical theory.²³ The Chinese lyrical “speaker,” then, is not to be a fictionalizing or dramatizing “maker,” not a “lyrical self” as distinct from “empirical self,” but rather (as empirical and lyrical self or spontaneous “singer” of the poetic emotion) the localization or embodiment of a natural *response* to a stimulus coming from the environment, a “*literal reaction* of the poet” (rather than “imitation of an action”) to the “external world of which he or she is an integral part.” For this is the Confucian

“secular” poetic tradition, which would continue to regard a poem not as a work of fiction but as what Barbara Smith has called a “natural utterance.” Such an utterance “not only occurs *in* a particular set of circumstances—what is often referred to as its *context*—but is also understood as being a response *to* those circumstances. In other words, the historical ‘context’ of an utterance does not merely surround it but *occasions* it, brings it into existence. This occasion *is* the meaning of the poem, ascertained from asking “*why it occurred*: the situations and motives that produced it, the set of conditions . . . that caused the speaker to utter that statement at that time in that form—in other words, what we are calling here its *context*.”²⁴

But as the liberal quotation here from Barbara Smith’s *On the Margins of Discourse* suggests, Yu’s view of Chinese lyric might fit rather well the current “discourse”-based critical theories in the West, pre-eminently “new historicism.” Although Yu is claiming that Chinese lyrical discourse, grounded in the immanent world-view, is unique, might not western “contextual” and “ideological” theory more easily apply itself to Chinese lyric than to a recalcitrant (self-dramatizing, fictionalized) Western poetry? Here, however, I want to continue the strategy I used with Yip, and look at this immanentist Chinese world-picture Yu assumes in order to see if it does not on closer inspection begin to break down, revealing its inner *aporia* and the illusion at least of a transcendent world of ideal meaning(s), grounded in the rhetorical figure-making power of language.

We notice that Yu's view is both like and unlike Yip's. On the one hand, both uphold a "natural" poetic language, beyond predication and mediation, which can somehow grasp or catch nature directly—a language uncontaminated by rationalizing, fictionalizing, self-dramatizing (or even separately existing?) subjects. On the other hand, Yip holds for a meaning that, residing in nature itself, transcends language, using a presumably Taoist (or "transcendentalist"?) model—a position I have attempted to deconstruct—while Yu holds that the poem's meaning is (because residing in nature itself?) the "context" which "occasioned" it, the set of conditions—physical, psychological, social, political, historical—which surround it and summon it forth in the (organic, contextual) way that a stimulus brings about a response.

But if a poem is in fact a structure of language, words which (presumably) have meaning, then what does it mean to say its *meaning* is in its surrounding environment or *context*? Does this mean the meaning is no longer in the "language" of the poem itself but somehow transcends it? If so, the same sort of argument, the same "immanentist" (or deconstructive) view of language I used against Yip's position can be used again here—as it no doubt could be and is used against new historicist, ideological and "contextualist" theories in the West.²⁵ Or does Yu's contextualism mean, as seems more likely, that there is no real distinction between the world within the poem and the world without, the language within and the language without? (But isn't this in some sense a point on which all the western poststructuralist theories agree?) This would after all seem to fit the view of an immanentist Chinese metaphysics. And Yu is quite clear:

There are no disjunctures between true reality and concrete reality or between concrete reality and literary work, gaps that may have provoked censure in some Western quarters but that also establish the possibility of poiesis, fictionality, and the poet's duplication of the "heavenly maker's" creative act. For the reader of Chinese poetry, not only is there no heavenly maker but. . . . the lyrical and empirical selves are one and the same.²⁶

This is the monistic-immanentist metaphysical model (again seemingly not at all unknown to twentieth century theory in the West). Within this ("intertextual"?) world, then, perhaps a world of pure language, where there is no (real) distinction between poem and world that surrounds it, the poet spontaneously responds (Tao follows *tzu-ran* 道法自然, "self-so" or

“nature” or “spontaneity”) to the world and his poem’s/song’s meaning is within-and-without, co-extensive with the pulsating wave of reality that is both stimulus-and-response. Is this a possible picture of things? Perhaps so. But are we talking about a (purely natural) *emotional* response, a response of feeling (to an emotional stimulus), or a response in/as language (to an emotional or linguistic stimulus)? Can these be the same thing? This is again the problem of the inner difference of language/meaning: meaning is only expressed in words, but may not be experienced in words. That is, the poet experiences his “meaning” as something other than his language itself.

Indeed, Yu realizes that the stimulus-response model is grounded in an “expressive-affective” model, whose classic statement is found in the Great Preface to the first anthology of Chinese poetry, the *Shir jing* 詩經 or Classic of Poetry. She quotes from that text:

Poetry is where the intent (*chih* 志) of the heart/mind (*hsin* 心) goes. What in the heart is intent is poetry when emitted in words. An emotion moves within and takes form in words. If words do not suffice, then one sighs. . . . Emotions are emitted in sounds, and when sounds form a pattern, they are called tones
²⁷

But now we are brought back to Yip’s image of “sounds beyond the strings,” suggesting a meaning that transcends language itself. For here we are given another model of poetic meaning which reveals its own *aporia*: “What in the heart is intent is poetry when emitted in words.” That is, within (the heart, or heart of *i*-meaning?) is *chih*-intent, where *chih* (will, desire) is soldier-over-heart; when this is “emitted in words” or expressed outwardly (the “heart-tones” of *i*-meaning emanating forth in Pound’s figure) it is *shih*-poetry. Language is in a sense already on the *outside*, with meaning (or at least feeling and intent) on the inside. Have we arrived then at another discontinuous model which places meaning both inside (in the heart’s feeling) and outside (in words)? Unlike Chuang-Tzu’s “fish (meaning) within trap (word)” model, which is concerned with arriving at and holding onto the meaning itself, this “feeling expressed in words” model is concerned with poetry as the place “where the intent of the heart/mind goes,” as the outward direction of an already-being-expressed, the act of *expression* of meaning rather than the act of grasping or knowing it.

Or perhaps here we must see meaning as the not-yet-expressed and

perhaps never-to-be-expressed, since the problem is how to express feeling that sometimes goes beyond the power of words to express—"if words do not suffice. . . ." Isn't this picture of an all-but-inexpressible inner feeling an inner-transcendence model of meaning—inexpressible meaning inwardly transcends language—and so finally the same as the "music beyond strings" (outer transcendence) model? This picture, like that one, is grounded in an *aporia*, an inner contradiction and indeterminacy: meaning is here-and-there, within-and-without. Thus such a model of meaning as *expression* does not fit the monistic-immanent (single-world) model of meaning as a continuous pattern of occasion-and-*response*.

Yu also quotes Liu Xie's *The Literary Mind: Dragon Carvings*:

. man is endowed with seven emotions, which are moved in response to objects. When moved by objects one sings of one's intent totally spontaneously. . . . Emotions are moved and take form in words; reason emerges and literature appears; for in following the hidden to reach the manifest, one matches the external to the internal. . . . when things move, the heart/mind is also stirred. . . ."²⁸

"Emotions are moved and take form in words": again (echoing the Preface of the *Classic of Poetry*) we have words on the outside, and emotions—moving in response to objects—within. But if the response is emotional and also linguistic, is the contextual stimulus-response model of poetry to be grounded finally in language or feeling? The indeterminacy of ground suggests this is not a monistic-immanent model in which world and poem are purely "equivalent": meaning in this world/poem may be found in the inner emotion (how does this model allow for subjective inwardness?), *or* in the words themselves, *or* in some transcendental zone ("music beyond strings")—or perhaps all three at once.

And here Liu Xie takes us back to a Taoist model of metaphysical immanence—the one Yu presumably wants—by echoing Lao-Tzu: "in following the hidden to reach the manifest, one matches the external to the internal." But this is a paradox. Indeed, Taoism's "immanent" world view is fully paradoxical: through the hidden and internal (pursuing it far enough, emptying/filling the *chin*-cup of self/Tao to the limit) we reach the manifest and external, since these two (inside and outside) are finally the same; the fully "self-expressed" self, completely filled-and-emptied (of itself)

and thus completely transparent to itself, is also a no-self; the well of Tao is empty-yet-inexhaustible. This picture is finally not one of complete immanence after all, nor of complete transcendence, but of a paradoxical immanent transcendence (or transcendent immanence), and if we take it seriously it will tend to cut away the very ground from, or deconstruct, a purely immanent-contextualist model of poetic meaning.

For though Chuang-Tzu, with his fish-meaning within language-trap, may be concerned with meaning's (inner/outer) transcendence of language—its location either inside or outside language (or the self) and thus its “inexpressibility” (“the tao that can be spoken of is not the constant Tao”)—he is I feel more fundamentally concerned with the (ideal yet impossible) action of *throwing away* the words once we have their meaning, that is, with the “merely expressible” nature of meaning, its (“human, all-too-human”) entrapment within language. The figure of the fish trap expresses the finite or indefinite or indeterminate nature of language and of the relation of meaning to language: meaning is on the one hand trapped within language because there are no ideal meanings (transcendental signifieds) beyond language, and yet we have always the language-generated illusion of these (logocentric) meanings. Language's own inner difference pushes us to go on trying to throw it away and grasp its fish-meaning . . . and perhaps only in this way, with this realization, *can* we grasp it.

Thus if we really want to “deconstruct” Yu's contextual response model of poetic meaning, the best way would be to look at the Chinese metaphysical world-view she explicitly assumes. On the face of things, the current consensus view of the Chinese world-model indeed sees it as an “immanent” and “contextual” one. Hall and Ames distinguish the Confucian “immanent language” and aesthetic order (“within which the principles. . . are themselves dependent upon and emerge out of the contexts to which they have intrinsic relevance”) from a Western logical order that “involves the act of closure” and a Western “language of transcendence” that construes the world in terms of substances and closed oppositions (versus the Chinese contextual “disclosure”). However, when we look more closely at this picture of an immanent, self-generating world-context, it begins to reveal its inner gap and discontinuity, its ambiguous immanence-and-transcendence. We have already had a glimpse of this gap in the Taoist texts of Lao-zu and Chuang-Tzu and in the “Confucian” *Chung Yung*; let us now have a brief look at the model of “correlative thinking” which Yu most explicitly appropriates, the model emerging from that founding text

for both Taoism and Confucianism, the *I Ching*.

Yu tells us that in the *I*'s system of correlative thinking "links between things are always already there, grounded by a shared membership in an unarticulated yet *a priori* category (*lei*) antecedent to any individual artifice."²⁹ This is again the monistic-immanent world-model, the contextual pattern of balanced heaven-earth (*yang-yin*, creative-receptive) polarity in which "change" (*p'ien* 變) or "Tao" is not something that transcends the context (the polarity, the pattern of change) but is rather just the "alternation" of *yin* and *yang* (*Ta Chuan* A 11.4). But if we look more closely at this surface pattern of equivalence and "betweenness" of heaven which "opens the gate" and earth which "closes" it, we notice that earth is also "closed at rest and open in motion" (*Ta Chuan* A 6.2). That is, earth itself can be seen as opening into a wider and deeper ground, a "vastness." This "geocentric" weight or priority, unbalancing the balance, would be one interpretation—a Taoist one perhaps—of the gap which opens, on closer view, between the heaven-earth polarity and the Tao or change which underlies and grounds it.

Yu emphasizes "shared membership in an unarticulated. . . category antecedent to any individual artifice," prior to "the ingenious creation of the poet as maker;" while clearly there is no creative artifice in this sense, there is in the *I*'s metaphysical model a hierarchy and a kind of "creation" in the sense of "modeling" or "imaging," a discontinuous pattern (horizontal or vertical) of change.

Heaven creates divine things; the holy sage takes them as models (*tse* 則). Heaven and earth change and transform; the holy sage imitates them. In the heavens hang images (*hsiang* 象) that reveal good fortune and misfortune; the holy sage reproduces (*hsiang*) these.³⁰

We have this same *hsiang* earlier in the *Ta Chuan*: "In the heavens *hsiang*-images are completed, on earth *hsing* 形 -shapes are completed."³¹ Indeed, throughout the *I* runs a pattern of modeling or imaging: heaven (and its *shen wu* 神物, "divine things") is the model for sages and for earthly (natural) shapes, sages are a model for common men (users of the *I* as divinatory text), heaven's images (trigrams or what they image, natural and/or supra-natural phenomena) are "imaged" (reproduced) by the sages, and so forth. One might, if he did not want to posit a transcendent absolute here

(Heaven or Spirit), see an open-endedness, reversibility and thus finally indeterminacy in this “imaging” (just as in Yip’s “moon in water, image in mirror” which for him figures a transcendent meaning). Do trigrams image or model human/natural states/phenomena and the other way around (phenomena image trigrams) as well? Can we not see here a pattern of open-ended self-referentiality, an indefinite play of mirrors as in an encompassing language, a grammatology or generalized “writing.”³²

Such would be perhaps a “horizontal” view of this discontinuous model. There is also a way of giving it a “vertical” dimension, though this above all would be precluded by the immanent-monistic world-view. The same *tse* that is translated “model” in the above passage becomes, as *tse* 測 with the water radical on the left, “measure” or “commensurable.” One of its many occurrences in the *Ta Chuan* is in this passage (A 5.9): “That aspect (of Tao) which cannot be fathomed (*pu tse* 不測) in terms of the light and the dark is called spirit (*shen* (神) divine).” (Peterson: “Being incommensurate (*pu tse*) with *yin* and *yang* is what is meant by numinous.”)³³ Thus a kind of gap and difference, perhaps an *abgrund* or abyss, may underlie the *I*’s continuous and symmetrical context. This encompassing and incommensurate (*pu tse*, unfathomable, unable to be “sounded” like the sea’s or earth’s depths) Tao, like language itself, un-grounds any monistic and strictly “immanent” world-model. The “difference” which permeates finally Eastern and Western (poetic-metaphysical) models—grounded as they are in the un-ground of language—is perhaps not generated by a transcending-above but rather by a falling away of the ground underneath. . . like a bottomless well.

Conclusion: Metaphoricity and Indeterminacy

Thus both Yip and Yu seem to be assuming poetic/metaphysical frameworks or models of interpretation which themselves reveal an inner break, a discontinuity, difference-within-unity; I take this to be the same universal and indeterminate ground which underlies all such models—language itself. Yip wants the language of the poem to grasp nature directly (beyond human thinking) and yet he also wants it to express human meaning: such a language must be both immanent-and-transcendent. Yu sees the lyric as (natural, spontaneous) emotional response (again beneath or beyond the level of rationality) to the environmental situation that occasioned it, and yet she is using as her models the traditional picture of the poet’s inner feeling taking

outward form in words—a picture in which meaning is generated not just by response but by *expression*—and the traditional metaphysical picture of an immanent context of balanced polarity which in fact is grounded in a deeper gap and discontinuity.

Wong Kin-yuen begins his recent article on “Metaphoricity in Classical Chinese Criticism” with the admission that “classical Chinese criticism and poetics are characterized by a kind of discourse which is generally metaphorical;”³⁴ I would add that the same holds true of Western or any possible (critical) discourse. But Yu, as we know, sees Chinese lyric standing outside the Western concept of poetry’s fictionalizing discourse that “makes” a transcending world (of meaning) through metaphor; in 1981 she adduced “Western theories of metaphor. . . . to demonstrate its absence in Chinese poetry if cultural and philosophical implications behind metaphor are taken seriously.”³⁵ Again the problem arises: how can the poetic language itself be free of metaphor if the poetic/metaphysical models used to interpret or define it cannot escape language’s figure-making power?

But Wong’s claim here is that Chinese *hsing* 興 -metaphor overcomes Jakobson’s polarization of metaphor (the “axis of selection and similarity”) and metonymy (the “axis of combination and contiguity”) by embodying “the ‘phora’ part in ‘epiphora,’ the very moment of shifting”—*hsing* means rising, “uplifting of mood and feeling”—rather than “the epistemological status of ‘meta,’ . . . the metaphysics of presence itself” which dominates the Western sense of “metaphor.” That is, *hsing*-metaphor is to be finally a deeper and more encompassing metonymy that grounds metaphor. But is this not in fact a kind of deconstructive maneuver, analogous to Derrida’s grounding of (logically necessary, logocentric) self-present “speech” in a (contingent, indefinite) generalized “writing”? Wong indeed cites de Man’s laying bare of the philosophers’ preference for the (transcending) “meta” of metaphorical meaning over metonymy, his discovery that most of Proust’s metaphors are in fact metonymy in disguise: “. . . persuasion is achieved by a figural play in which contingent figures of chance masquerade deceptively as figures of necessity.”³⁶ He also cites Eco’s grounding of metaphor in the arbitrary metonymic contiguities of culture:

A metaphor can be invented because language, in its process of unlimited semiosis, constitutes a multidimensional network of metonymies, each of which is explained by a cultural convention rather than by an original resemblance.³⁷

It strikes me that the attempt to ground poetic/metaphysical discourse in metonymy, or metaphor-as-metonymy, can be viewed as part of the ongoing post-structuralist project of laying bare the contingency of meaning, the underlying discourses of power and so forth. And surely the limitation one is trying to overcome, or the “text” one is trying to elucidate, is a universal and not just Chinese one. On the other hand, if we see this attempt to emphasize the *phor*-“carrying force” of metaphor (rather than the paradigmatic meaning-selection of its *meta*-“beyond”) as an attempt to escape or overcome the split (immanent/transcendent, signifier/signified) in human language and thinking, then I doubt that it can succeed.

Wong also turns to Ricoeur, for whom

metaphor is an act of predication instead of denomination; the bearer of metaphoric meaning does not lie in the juxtaposition of nouns but in the relation between subject and predicate. The creation of a new semantic world under the working of metaphor does not rely on a logical clash among images but is the result of a dynamics between images and the copula “is.” Instead of metaphor, therefore, Ricoeur talks about metaphorical statement in which there is an easing off of the “paradigmatic tension” by the moving force of “syntagmatic innovation” resulting in a new world of meaning.³⁸

But doesn't this bring us back full circle to that very trap of (Western rational) “predication” and “mediation” which Yip's uniquely Chinese poetic language avoids by directly grasping/expressing nature? This focus on the carrying force of the *phor* and on the active verbal force of the copula—thus the syntactical contiguity and combinatory power (“innovation”) of language—is perhaps an attempt to escape the pitfall of bifurcation of language-meaning into immanent and transcendent levels by looking at its purely “horizontal” combinatory operation. But can such a view really escape this pitfall? Is not predication—“the dynamics between images and the copula ‘is’”—itself inevitably the attempt to form (transcending) unities of meaning, “symbols” and “metaphors”? Perhaps metaphor and metonym are finally “equivalent”—their difference indeterminate—against the background of the self-difference and abyss of language.

When Wong asserts that “the Chinese *hsing* originates from the Taoist ideal of preserving a metaphorical space in which a semantic world comes into being,” its “feeling . . . truthful to its fundamental negativity of the unex-

pressed in the said," he falls into the same sort of trap Yip and Yu fall into: wanting a kind of purely "immanent" (metonymic not metaphorical, horizontal not vertical) poetic language he nonetheless resorts to the rhetoric of "metaphorical spaces," to the (inner-)transcending "negativity of the unexpressed in the said" . . . that is, to Taoist paradox, to rhetoric and metaphor. *Hsing* is itself a kind of cup-figure (the radical *chiu* 臼 is "a mortar for unhusking rice, a socket at a bone joint") and means "to *open*" as well as "to rise, to happen, to begin." Perhaps then this *hsing* is finally another aporistic model of meaning, fundamentally "open," ambiguous and indeterminate like the *chin-cup* which fills-and-empties itself. This cup appears again in "Ch'ung Hung's famous dictum 'when words (*wen* 文, "pattern," "writing") exhaust (*chin*) themselves while their meaning (*i*) goes beyond them, there is *hsing*.'"³⁹

But finally all poetry and (metaphor-based) poetic models, Western as well as Eastern, inevitably resort to rhetorical tropes and (vertical) metaphoricality, for they are fundamentally the same, trapped within the same "language." Indeed one might wonder why the kind of transcendent qualities Yip talks about—"sound beyond strings," the "antelope that leaves no trace"—would not fit a traditional Western model of poetry as Yu defines it: self-dramatising, self (and world)-transcending fictional discourse. And faced with Yu's feeling that all Western interpretive frameworks are inadequate for Chinese lyric, one might wonder why a Heideggerian model in terms of "poem disclosing world" (or "world disclosing poem," or "language speaking man"), or a loosely phenomenological-hermeneutic model (Yip often refers to Heidegger, Wong Kin-yuen likes Heidegger and Ricoeur), if not indeed some sort of "dialogic" model (Bakhtin? Gadamer?) might not fit her picture of poem as "natural utterance" and as response to an historical context that has occasioned it. Her own example of a Chinese lyrical response—drawn from the ancient ("Confucian") *Book of Odes* and clearly "ideological"⁴⁰—might seem quite amenable to the new historicist perspective. . . . and if not, then surely at least to the common denominator of a deconstructive reading.

If languages and discourses — including poetic and metaphysical discourses — are finally ~~open-ended~~ and non-determinate, grounded in the unground of language's inner gap and difference, then (within that encompassing "difference") there is no *a priori* ground for greater difference between Western and Chinese lyric than between Western and Chinese poetic models, or between fictional and poetic or poetic and metaphysical discourses, or

perhaps (a more radical claim no doubt) between two English poems or even between two lines or two words in the same poem. Here I think of Emily Dickinson's "brain" ("wider than the sky" and "deeper than the sea") and "God," compared by her in a discourse indeterminately metaphysical and poetic yet grounded somehow in "metaphor," in a language-transcending figure or gesture . . . a discourse and/or a gesture that turns language back playfully upon its own incommensurate and unfathomable ground: "And they will differ, if they do/As syllable from sound."

Notes

1. *Literary Theory Today* (Abbas and Wong Editors, Hong Kong University Press, 1981): pp.165-166. The line of poetry, by Wang Wei, is also translated (with slightly more "mediation"): "A home by a stream, quiet. No man."
2. *Ibid.*, pp.166-167.
3. "Alienation Effects: Comparative Literature and the Chinese Tradition, *The Comparative Perspective on Literature* (Koelb and Noakes Editors, Cornell University Press, 1988).
4. Obviously I'm treading tricky ground and run the risk of over-simplifying. Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* distinguishes "indication" (*anzeichung*) from "expression" (*ausdruck*), the latter being meaning's pure (formal) self-presence; this view is deconstructed by Derrida, for whom no meaning is "self-present" and all is reduced to or engulfed by self-different "indication" or generalized "writing," in *Speech and Phenomena*.
5. *Chinese-Western Comparative Literature Theory and Strategy* (John Deeney Editor, The Chinese University Press, Hong Kong, 1980): p.166.
6. This chapter name ("External Things" in Watson's translation) is very interesting in the light of current theories ("contingency," "difference" and so on). The first line of the chapter (Watson) goes: "External things cannot be counted on," and later on Chuang-Tzu explains to Hui Tzu the "usefulness" of the seemingly useless "ground" far beneath his feet by letting him consider the possibility of its being cut away.
7. Can Chuang-Tzu be "logocentric" as well as a deconstructor of other philosophers' logical oppositions? I think so. Chien Chi-huei in "'Theft's Way': A Comparative Study of Chuang-Tzu's Tao and Derridean Trace" has shown how Chuang-Tzu points out the contingency and self-difference (signifier-signified split, groundlessness of signifieds) of language; on the other hand, Chuang-Tzu still likes to use terms like the "One" and the "Axis of Tao," *Ming* 明 -enlightenment and so on: I think he's looking for "centered" meanings that encompass yet cannot escape language – "One and its name make two" – being grounded in its radical contingency yet encompassing the (its) "difference;" that is, the One or Tao is awareness of groundlessness.
8. Ezra Pound, "Terminology" that prefaces his translation of the *Ta Hsueh* and *Chung Yung* in *The Unwobbling Pivot* (New York. New Directions, 1968): p.21.
9. Yip, "Andersstreben," *ibid.*, p.168.
10. See note 7 and note 6: "external things are what we cannot depend on." Meaning

- as “betweenness” – between heaven-earth, between lines in the hexagrams (analogous to “words” in another but parallel “language”? . . . “music beyond the notes”?) – is also one way to look at the *I Ching*.
11. Richard Wilhelm’s *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (trans. C.F. Baynes, Harcourt, Brace and World, New York, 1931): p.21.
 12. *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*, literally “the same thing exists for thinking and for being.” Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge U. Press, 1963): p.269.
 13. J.J.L. Duyvendak, tr. *Tao Te Ching: The Book of the Way and its Virtue* (John Murray, London, 1954).
 14. Yip, *ibid.*, p.169.
 15. *Ibid.* p.174. Quoted from *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (New Directions, New York, 1954): p.154.
 16. *Ibid.* From *Ts’ang-lang shih-hua Chaio-chih* (annotated by Kuo Shao-yu, Chung-hua, Hong Kong, 1961): p.23.
 17. This last being of course one of Derrida’s “figures,” reversing the usual linguistic model in which signifiers point to (transcendental) signifieds. . . . Accordingly, signifiers become the only signifieds, and/or there are “only signifiers,” and/or there are “only signifieds,” depending on how you look at it: the point being that we do not really reverse the hierarchical order but deconstruct it by showing that the sign, the basic element of language, is itself split and different/deferred from itself, thus breaking down into indeterminacy and “directionlessness.”
 18. Li Po: is this “shade” (*ying*, 影) a ghost disappearing into a world beyond or beneath language/being (Heidegger’s horizon as difference of beings/Being?) or is it not rather like Chuang-Tzu’s *ying*-shadow (the butterfly of his dream perhaps) who, asked by *Wang lyang* (罔兩)-penumbra (Shadow’s “alter-ego”) “Why don’t you make up your mind to do one thing or the other?” responded “Is it that there is something on which I depend to be so. . . ? How would I recognize why it is so. . . ?” . . . (thus questioning the ground of existence and meaning)? This shadow is “lost in the horizon” of indefinite regress, in his mirror-play of reflection with *wang lyang*, the “neither-this-nor-that.” It’s a purely *horizontal* play of equivalence and alterity: who is real and who shadow, who signifier and who signified?
 19. *Ibid.*, p.168. Yip is here influenced by Lessing’s *Laokoon* (“intermedia”) and by Heidegger’s notion of language as “gesture” in *A Dialogue on Language*. (His “discourse” here though sounds closer perhaps to Merleau-Ponty than to Heidegger.) Basically I like what Yip is trying to do. I’m just not sure if its possible.
 20. Wing-Tsit Chan’s translation in Chapter 5 (“Spiritual Dimensions: *The Doctrine of the Mean*) of *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton U. Press, 1963): p.107.
 21. Pound, *The Unwobbling Pivot*, *ibid.*
 22. Chan, *ibid.*, p.109.
 23. Pauline Yu, “Alienation Effects,” *ibid.*, p.165 and 164 (note). Miner in “On the Genesis and Development of Literary Systems,” *Critical Inquiry* (Winter 1978-Spring 1979).
 24. Yu, *ibid.*, p.173.
 25. Here I use “contextualist” to mean any theory which takes a text as primarily not the “language” that appears “within” the text, i.e. on the printed page, but as a metalanguage which (“outside” the text) explains or grounds it. My own response

- to all ideological theories including new historicism is: "fine and useful, but why do you analyze 'literary' texts rather than newspaper articles or political speeches? Whatever makes you think literary texts are more complex or more interesting is something only a 'formalist' theory can identify."
26. Yu, *ibid.*, p.170.
 27. *Ibid.*, p.168. Yu says "This preface has been traditionally attributed to Wei Hong (ca. first century A.D.)."
 28. *Ibid.*, p.170. Yu first alludes to Chapter 6, "An Exegesis of Poetry" of *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (trans. Vincent Shih, The Chinese U. Press, Hong Kong, 1983) which begins (pp.60-61) with the line, "Great Shun said: 'Poetry is the expression of sentiments,' *shih yen chih* where *chih*^X is really "will, intention." (See below.)
 29. *Ibid.*, pp.173-174. Yes, but what *is* this "unarticulated yet *a priori* category – something beyond language, or beneath it? "*A priori* category" suggests formal logic. (And for that matter what are "things" – physical objects but not words or meanings)?
 30. Baynes' translation of Wilhelm's text (Bollingen Series XIX, Princeton U. Press, 1950), Book Two, *Ta Chuan, The Great Treatise*, XI.8, p.320.
 31. *Ibid.*, I.1 p.280.
 32. Yip's "moon in water, image in mirror" figures for him (as presumably for Yen Yu) a transcendent, "luminous world beyond the words" . . . But finally which is image (simulacrum, signifier) and which is "reality" (signified)? Is there any way to "measure" this, or is it not rather incommensurable and indeterminate, an open-ended, indefinitely extended mirror-play? Isn't this the "real" meaning of the "antelope that leaves no trace"? (The "trace" was what we could have measured or recognized him by.)
 33. Peterson's translation in "Making Connections: 'Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations of the *Book of Change*,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42 (1982). "Numinous": I assume we are closer to Rudolf Otto's sense than to Kant's sense here.
 34. A paper presented at a conference at National Taiwan U. in Taipei in May, 1990; I have no further reference for it.
 35. Wong, *ibid.*, p.3. No reference to Yu's book beyond the year (1981) and page (216).
 36. *Ibid.*, 5-6. De Man in *On Metaphor* (Ed. Sacks, U. of Chicago Press, 1978) and *Allegories of Reading* (Yale U. Press, 1979).
 37. *Ibid.*, p.6. Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Indiana U. Press, Bloomington, 1979).
 38. *Ibid.*, pp.6-7. Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* (trans. Czerny *et al.*, U. of Toronto Press, 1974) and *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Texas Christian U. Press, 1976).
 39. *Ibid.*, p.2. Wong ties *hsing* to "the idea of 'surplus of meaning' in Chinese poetics," but on a Derridean view "surplus of meaning" may be nothing but "floating signifiers" – surplus is deferral of meaning, non-presence of meaning. Wong also mentions in this context Hans Lipps' "ring of the unexpressed' around every word" and Heidegger's "vast distance in which the nature of saying assumes its radiance, the infinity of what is unsaid" in *On the Way to Language* (trans. Hertz, Harper and Row. N.Y., 1971), p. 53. But this is clearly our fundamental question

and our crux, beginning with Lao-Tzu and Chuang Tzu: can “what is unsaid” really lie outside of language in some kind of “infinity” (Being or Nothingness?) Is not Heidegger’s “saying,” like his “Being” and perhaps Lao-Tzu’s and Chuang Tzu’s “Tao,” another “unique word, a master name” which, while it tries somehow to name the difference between beings and Being, “speaks always and everywhere throughout language”? See Derrida, “Difference,” *Margins of Philosophy* (trans. Alan Bass, The Harvester Press, U. of Chicago, 1982): pp. 23-27. That is, can these “unique words” (aiming in spite of themselves to express transcendent meanings) get beyond the inner gap and breaking-down of language itself, the inner difference they were in fact trying (hopelessly) to name?

40. Yu, “Alienation Effects,” *ibid.*, p.171. Yu emphasizes, rightly I think, the extreme political/historical consciousness (largely to the exclusion of “formalist” interpretations) of the Chinese secular Confucian cultural tradition – something hard for a child of the West to fully grasp (at least before the dawning of this present “new historical” age). But again: doesn’t an ideological, discourse-based Western theory thus lend itself well to this sort of poetry, to this cultural “tradition”?

