

The Concept of Naming in the Eastern and Western Poetic Traditions

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores the historical development of the tertiary relationship among language, literary creation, and belief in ultimate reality in the Eastern and Western poetic traditions. At the beginning of the Western tradition, the use of language was firmly based on a belief in deities. Greco-Roman writers generally believed language to be a most effective tool—an inevitable tool—in conveying one's ideas and ultimate reality. Literary creation, which is the most condensed use of language, was considered to be divinely inspired. The use of language, literary creativity, and belief in a deity thus were inextricably linked in the West until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when belief in a deity declined. Because of the weakening of this belief, language began to be conceived as a historical product, and its effectiveness was also doubted. Consequently, literary creation became a self-reflective act involved primarily with itself, rather than with the outside world. All the major Western writers in the twentieth century employ difficult language to express what appears to be a chaotic world to them.

A similarly close relationship between literary creation and the belief in a deity can be found at the outset of the Hindu, Chinese, and Japanese poetic traditions. The decline of the belief in a deity and the rise of humanism, however, occurred early in China. Confucius made the human world his predominant concern; Lao Tzu moved a step further by espousing a worldview based, not on divinity, but on Nature. Because of the weakening of the belief in a deity, what used to be a strong link between language and divinity was greatly shaken. Consequently, Confucius advocated the "rectification of names" with a view to improving the use of language, whereas Lao Tzu simply denied that language can be used to depict ultimate reality. The Taoist notion of non-verbal instruction later exerted considerable influence on both Chinese and Japanese literature, making Chinese and Japanese poetic works all the more condensed and enigmatic.

KEY WORDS

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literary creativity
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difficulty

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Muse
reality
deity
condensation

According to the book of Genesis, creatures from land and sky, shortly after they were created, were brought before Adam so that he could name them: "He brought them to the man to see what he could name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (2:19). A perfect correspondence exists between Adam's act of naming and the objects being named because he received divine authorization to give names. Throughout the Bible, the name of God is greatly celebrated, one noted example of which is the prayer prayed by Christ: "Our father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9). God's name has traditionally been equated by the believer with His Word: "His name is that by which he makes himself known to us, his revelation. God's Word is his *ὄνομα* [name], his complete name, made known to us so that we may know God and enter into communion with him."¹ A similar justification for naming can be found at the origin of the Greek literary tradition. At the beginning of *The Iliad* Homer invokes the Goddess of Song to help him compose a song about Achilles' wrath. The invocation of the Muse also appears at the beginning of *The Odyssey*, where Homer asks her to reveal to him the story of Odysseus' adventure.

In the ancient Greek tradition the Muse appeared to have inspired not only poets such as Homer but also philosophers such as Socrates, as can be seen in *The Dialogues of Plato*. According to Ernst Curtius, the practice of invoking the Muses in ancient times was common in all types of intellectual activity: "Für die antike Anschauung sind sie [die Musen] nicht nur der Dichtung zugeordnet, sondern allen höheren Formen des Geisteslebens."² In addition to the Muses, Zeus and Apollo were sometimes invoked by ancient Greco-Roman writers. After the emergence of Christianity, the trinity became the source of power for various writers during the Medieval Ages. Because of their belief in divine authorization, Western writers felt quite comfortable with the act of naming from the very beginning of their tradition until the second half of the nineteenth century, when the limitation of naming was emphasized and the concept of language as a prison began to emerge. Various reasons—social, political, economic, linguistic, and philosophical—have been offered for such a radical change;³ however, the relationship between deities and the concept of naming has never been systematically explored.

This essay is thus a study of the universal significance of deities to the concept of naming in both the Eastern and Western poetic traditions, focusing specifically on the Chinese, English, and French traditions.

Examples will also be drawn from Hindu and Japanese literature in order to show that the link between deities and naming was indeed a common phenomenon in the Oriental tradition. It needs to be clarified at the outset that the term naming is used in this essay in a broad sense, as in Plato's *Cratylus*, referring to language: "we shall apply letters to the expression of objects,.. we shall form syllables,.. and from a compound of syllables make nouns and verbs, and thus, at last, from the combinations of nouns and verbs arrive at language, large and fair and whole; and as the painter made a figure, even so shall we make speech by the art of the namer."⁴ Although different terms, "signifiant/signifié" (signifier/signified), were created by Ferdinand de Saussure to replace the traditional ones "naming (words)/objects (things)," the term "naming" will be used in this essay primarily for the sake of convenience, since it has been used throughout the Western tradition.

In ancient Indian tradition, literature was generally divided into two categories: *shruti* (revealed literature) and *smriti* (remembered literature). Like the Bible in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the earliest body of Indian literature—the *Vedas*—has been regarded in the Hindu tradition as eternal and revealed scripture. Among various gods worshipped by the ancient Indians, there was also the goddess of speech or holy word, Vāch, a deity reminiscent of the Muse in the Greek tradition. Traditionally regarded as the author of the earliest Indian epic, *The Rāmāyana*, Vālmīki maintained that he composed the poem with help from the god Brahmā, creator of the world:

Then the mighty four-faced lord Brahmā himself, the maker of the worlds, came to see the bull among sages.

Seeing him, Vālmīki rose quickly and without a word. He stood subdued and greatly wonderstruck, his hands cupped in reverence.... With a smile, Brahmā spoke to the bull among sages,... "Brahman, it was by my will alone that you produce this elegant speech. Greatest seers, you must now compose the entire history of Rāma. You must tell the world the story of the righteous, virtuous, wise, and steadfast Rāma, just as you heard it from Nārada, the full story, public and private, of that wise man. For all that befell wise Rāma,... will be revealed to you, even those events of which you are ignorant.... Now compose the holy story of Rāma fashioned into śloka [couplets] to delight the heart."⁵

Because of divine revelation, the author of *The Rāmāyana* was told that his act of naming would create nothing false in his poem: "No utterance of

yours in this poem shall be false" (p. 129). In addition to the epic, drama was believed to have been created by Brahmā: "[God Brahmā said:] I will create the lore of drama which promotes dharma [virtue], material gain, and fame, which will show for posterity all activities, which is enriched with the ideas of all branches of knowledge and presents all the arts; I shall create it, along with the story required for its theme, with its teachings and the summary of its topics."⁶ Because of the close correspondence and relationship between gods and the individual, or between Brahman and Ātman, as presented in the Hindu tradition, naming often appears especially in the form of an incantation as an all-powerful vehicle in one's cognizance of and power over this world. Based on this belief in the tremendous power of naming, there appeared the *Mahābhārata*, the longest epic in the world with approximately one hundred thousand verses.

Compared with the Western and Indian traditions, Chinese culture originated with a rather different concept of naming. A popular Chinese myth associated with the invention of language makes it clear that the act of naming may actually be a curse rather than a blessing on the human world: "In the past Ts'ang Chieh created language, causing Heaven to send down grain like rain and causing ghosts to cry in the night."⁷ According to this myth, supernatural beings were so disturbed at the prospect of catastrophe which might be caused later by the power of language, that God made certain provisions for the world, in this case grain, and ghosts lamented the possibility of being persecuted by the power of the word. As present in *The Book of Poetry* (*Shih ching*), the earliest anthology of Chinese literature composed during the period 1000-600 B.C., the relationship between deity and man in ancient China was rather tenuous. Like the earliest literature in the Western and Indian traditions, many religious odes in this anthology, the oldest poems in Chinese literature, describe a powerful deity:

Strong and mighty was King Wu,
Unrivaled in his glory.
Great were Cheng and Kang
In whom God rejoiced.
Since Cheng and Kang,
All four corners have been ours.
How brilliant they were.
The bell and drum sound;
The stone-chimes and pipes resound,
Abundant blessings come down,

執競

執競武王
無競維烈
不顯成康
上帝是皇
自彼成康
奄有四方
斤斤其明
鐘鼓喑喑
管笳將將
降福穰穰

And great are the blessings.	降福簡簡
The rite proceeds in order.	威儀反反
Intoxicated and satiated,	既醉既飽
They give blessings and wealth. ⁸	福祿來反

Composed towards the beginning of the Chou dynasty (1122-249 B.C.), this ode celebrates the glory of the founder of the dynasty, King Wu (who reigned 1135-1116 B.C.), and his immediate successors Kings Cheng (1115-1078 B.C.) and Kang (1078-1053 B.C.), during whose reigns the rule of the Chou dynasty was further strengthened. As the fourth line indicates, the glory of Kings Wu, Cheng, and Kang actually came from God, or the supreme being in the Chinese tradition who has been customarily called "Shang-ti" (the Supreme Ruler).⁹ While the first half is devoted to the accomplishments of the founding rulers of the Chou dynasty, the latter half describes a sacrificial ceremony which was conducted in a solemn manner. The sacrifice, according to the poem, was well received by the deities, who enjoyed their offerings and rewarded the worshipper with abundant blessings. Although the term "shang-ti" is normally translated as God, the description in the penultimate line, "Intoxicated and satiated," is actually based on the ancient Chinese understanding of the supreme being as one who, like humans, may need physical nourishment, rather than the Judeo-Christian conception of God as a spirit whose essence requires no earthly sustenance. The deity mentioned in *The Book of Poetry* was by no means an all-powerful being like its near-counterparts in both the Western and Hindu traditions. Furthermore, ancestors, especially those who have achieved great feats, tended to be regarded in ancient China as the intermediators between heaven and earth. Very often they were worshipped along with deities:

	我 將
I bring my offerings,	我將我享
My sheep and bulls;	維羊維牛
May heaven accept them!	維天其右之
My rules follow the statutes of King Wen.	儀式刑文王之典
My order daily reaches the four corners.	日靖四方
O great is King Wen;	伊嘏文王
He came down to enjoy them.	既右饗之
Day and night	我其夙夜畏天之威
I fear the might of heaven,	于時保之
And thus am able to keep the land. (p. 483)	

While a vassal under King Chou of the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.), Wen, King Wu's father, greatly strengthened the power of his fiefdom, thereby laying a solid foundation for the eventual establishment of the Chou dynasty. Similar to God-fearing people in the Bible, the speaker in this poem also fears the might of heaven, a virtue which, according to the poem, enables him to possess the land. In their celebration of Heaven's power, the authors of these religious odes regarded the establishment of the Chou dynasty as preordained by Heaven. As reflected in the traditional name of the rulers of the Chou dynasty ("T'ien-tzu" meaning The Son of Heaven), a particularly close relationship existed between deities and the ruling monarchs to the extent that ordinary people had little, if any, access to deities. Consequently, towards the end of the Western Chou dynasty (1122-771 B.C.), when nomads from the West of China invaded the capital, killed the king and eventually ended the dynasty, people experienced great difficulty in their lives and began to doubt the justice of the supreme deity.

The following lines from *The Book of Poetry* are good examples: "Remote and vast Heaven/Is said to be our parents./I commit no sin or crime./And yet face such great disasters./The vast heaven is too cruel;/I truly am not guilty./The vast heaven is too absurd;/I truly am not at fault" (p. 297). It is further explained in the second stanza that the complaint against heaven is rooted in a grievance against the earthly ruler: "Disorder first occurs,/When slander is well received;/Disorder recurs,/When my lord believes in libel./If my lord could be offended,/Disorder would stop right now/If my lord could be pleased,/Disorder would soon cease." Like "heaven" in the first stanza, the term "my lord" can refer to both heavenly and earthly sovereigns. The speaker believes that disasters came from the ruler's corruption. A suggestion is hence made in the last four lines: if the sovereign could show his anger towards evil and his pleasure with good, disorder would stop. It becomes clear in the third stanza that "lord" explicitly refers to the king: "My lord takes vows time and again,/Disorder thus spreads;/My lord believes robbers,/Disorder becomes worse./Robbers' words are very sweet,/Disorder feeds on them./They are not respectful/But only the king's disease." The king is described at the beginning of this stanza as someone who has repeatedly failed to keep his promises.

While this poem focuses primarily on the speaker's own situation, a different poem expresses concern for the world: "Vast and mighty Heaven/Does not show its virtue./It sends down chaos and famine,/Destroying countries in four quarters./Mighty heaven is cruel;/It neither thinks nor

plans./It frees the guilty,/And hides their sins;/And yet the innocent/Sink in pain and illness" (p. 285). According to the second stanza, this poem was most likely written after the Western Chou dynasty was destroyed: "The kingdom of Chou was destroyed,/I have no place to stay." Mainly because of political chaos and social disorder, people expressed for the first time in Chinese intellectual history their doubt concerning the virtue of the deity. Grievances against heaven like the poems above occurred rather often in the later works collected in *The Book of Poetry*, as can be seen in another poem: "People are now in danger;/They see a muddled heaven./It is able to decide;/None can surpass it./O great God—/Whom do you hate?" (p. 275) Unlike the God portrayed in earlier odes, who was the benevolent arbitrator of justice, the same deity is described in these poems as undependable, absurd, or sometimes even cruel.

As a result of the change in the concept of deity, God gradually receded from the foreground to the background of the ancient Chinese mind. In the latest works collected under the category "feng" (folk songs) in *The Book of Poetry*, God was hardly mentioned. A closer look at the following poem may corroborate this view that the Chinese at this time already felt estranged from God:

There is a withered willow tree,
Which offers no shade for rest.
God is capricious;
Don't ask for trouble.
He made me to rule,
But later hated me.

莞 柳

有莞者柳
不尚息焉
上帝甚蹈
無自疆焉
俾予靖之
後予極焉

There is a withered willow tree,
Which offers no shade for repose.
God is capricious;
Don't get into trouble.
He made me to rule,
But later banished me.

有莞者柳
不尚偃焉
上帝甚蹈
無自療焉
俾予靖之
後予適焉

A bird flies high
All the way to the sky.
That man's mind—
How far can it go?
Why am I made to rule
And yet have my life endangered? (p. 353)

有鳥高飛
亦傳于天
彼人之心
于何其臻
曷予靖之
居以凶矜

At the beginning of the poem the deity is compared to a willow tree, which is expected to provide shade but fails to do so because of its withered state. Although God is still depicted here as a powerful being, people are advised not to come too close to him so as to avoid unwanted problems, an idea which, as will be seen, eventually becomes the basis for Confucius' thought concerning deities. At the beginning of the last stanza the image of a bird flying high, which links God with an earthly sovereign, may serve both as an analogy of and contrast to the earthly sovereign. In the sense that the bird reaches heaven, it is an emblem of the supreme status of the ruler. In the sense that the bird can fly predictably as high as the sky, it is a contrast to the capricious ruler, whose mind simply cannot be fathomed: "That man's mind/How far can it go?" The association of a deity with a ruler makes it clear that the decline of the belief in a deity occurred primarily as a result of the corruption of the government and a dissatisfaction with the Son of Heaven. The poem eventually ends on a note of anxiety and mistrust.

Poems expressing similar sorrows to and about God also appeared early in the Western tradition in the Book of Psalms: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?/How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?/Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;/Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved./But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation./I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me" (Psalm 13, King James version). Although sorrow and doubt are expressed at the beginning of this psalm attributed to David (1010-970 B.C.), faith in God is reaffirmed at the end. Compared with the later Chinese odes in *The Book of Poetry* that express doubt concerning the deity's virtue, the psalms, as represented by the one above, convey a strong faith even in times of adversity. Because of the tenuous relationship between deity and man in ancient times the imagination of Chinese writers rarely soared beyond this world and their concept of naming was primarily justified by the historical process. As a result of the special nature of their imagination and their concept of naming, epic poetry, a genre normally of great scope both in length and in subject matter, failed to appear in the Chinese tradition. Most of the poems in *The Book of Poetry* except some concerning the dynastic legends are fairly short.

As the political situation worsened during the Eastern Chou dynasty

(770-249 B.C.), its rulers gradually lost their power, and the old socio-political system based on divine right to sovereignty changed drastically. As a result of the numerous cultural changes, great gaps occurred between names and reality, signifier and signified; thus, naming became problematic. Born into this age of great changes, Confucius (551-479 B.C.) endeavored to uphold the old cultural system by basing it on humanism rather than on deities:

Fan Tzú asked about wisdom. The Master said, "Be concerned with what pertains to mankind, be respectful to ghosts and gods, but stay away from them; this can be called wisdom."

The Master did not talk about terror, violence, disorder, or gods.¹⁰

The deities receded into the background of Confucius' thought, even though he still acknowledged their existence. Adopting a renovative rather than a creative approach, he advocated the idea of "rectifying names" (*cheng ming*) in dealing with the problem created by the gap between naming and reality.

Tzú Lu asked: "The ruler of Wei plans to let you take charge of his government. What would you do first?" The Master said, "It is necessary that names be rectified!" ("Tzu Lu," 2)

Consequently, a person should be particular with the use of his language: "a virtuous person is not casual with his use of words" ("Tzú Lu," 87). This means not only the precision but also, and especially, the economy of words: "A virtuous person wants to speak little" ("Li Jen," 24). What concerned Confucius the most appears to be each individual's ethical conduct in society, which, according to him, was based on five dominant ethical relationships: sovereign and subject, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger brothers, and friends. Only when each person is able to act in a manner that befits his or her social title or name can society, in Confucius' view, be in perfect order: "The sovereign should act like a sovereign and the subject a subject; the father should act like a father and the son a son" ("Yen Yüan," 82). Once perhaps frustrated with the limitation of language, Confucius expressed a desire to remain silent: "I wish to say nothing." The justification of remaining silent is to be found in Nature: "What does Heaven say?"

The four seasons move on and myriads of things come into existence. What does Heaven say?" ("Yang Huo," 5-6)

Despite this occasional kind of remark, however, Confucius firmly upheld the power of language elsewhere and emphasized the importance of being true to one's own words: "I know nothing positive about a person who fails to keep his word" ("Wei Cheng," 11). Nowhere else is the belief in the effect of language better expressed than in his dialogue with Duke Ting, in which one word is described to have such an effect as to be able to bring either prosperity or destruction to a country: "People said, 'It's difficult to be a sovereign; it's not easy to be a minister either.' If you know the difficulty of being a sovereign, isn't this a case in which a word can bring prosperity to a state?" ("Tzŭ Lu," 90) What Confucius attempts to explain to Duke Ting is that a sovereign, upon hearing some enlightening comments, may act upon them for the improvement of his own administration, so much so that his country may eventually become prosperous.

Whereas Confucius occasionally speculated on the limitations of language, the Taoist thinker Lao Tzŭ who is commonly believed to have been born a few centuries later than Confucius, greatly emphasized the inadequacy or even the futility of language.¹¹ The distrust in naming occurred, in my view, as a result of the crumbling of the old belief in a deity at the time of political chaos in China. Writing approximately during the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.), Lao Tzŭ created a philosophy based on a self-contained Nature rather than one sustained by deities. In his tremendously influential book the *Lao Tzŭ*, Nature instead of God becomes the ultimate guiding principle for one's behavior. Lao Tzŭ subjugation of Heaven to Nature "Heaven follows the Way, and the Way follows Nature"¹² is further removed than Confucian humanism from the old tradition based on deities. Once the notion of a deity was removed from the Taoist system of thought, naming was consequently based on changeable historical processes, a new foundation which inevitably rendered the act of naming questionable: "The Way can be talked about, but it is not the permanent Way once it has been talked about; the name can be named, but it is not the permanent name once it has been named" (p. 1.)

According to *Lao Tzŭ*, the absolute essence of this world is nameless: "The Way is permanent and nameless" (p. 18). Naming, in his view, is simply a limited, contingent act representing the reality of this world, the ultimate principle of which is termed Tao: "I do not know its name, but contingently call it the Way; I am forced to name it Great" (p. 14). As Confucius

occasionally remarked on the necessity of silence, Lao Tzŭ often advocated the importance of non-verbal instruction: "The sage acts according to the principle of non-activity and teaches in a non-verbal fashion" (p. 2). In order to comprehend the essence of the world (Tao, the Way), Lao Tzŭ maintained, one has to employ intuition and discard learning, which includes naming: "Renounce learning, then you will have no worries" (p. 11). The emphasis on intuitive comprehension very often renders verbal expression superfluous: "The one who knows does not speak; the one who speaks does not know" (p. 34). Lao Tzŭ himself did not remain silent; he was, however, certainly brief in his expression. His book, which consists of only five thousand Chinese characters or so, well illustrates the principle of brevity even when discussing sophisticated issues regarding the universe. His statements on the limitation or futility of language naturally made naming not only a contingent act but also, and especially, a highly selective and in frequently-used art: "Great eloquence is like inarticulateness" (p. 12).

The limitation of naming together with the importance of intuition is explained in greater detail by another major Taoist thinker, Chuang Tzŭ (369?-286? B.C.). Like Lao Tzŭ, Chuang Tzŭ also maintained that ultimate reality cannot be named: "The way has never had a boundary, and the word has never had permanence The great Way cannot be named."¹³ The ineffability of ultimate reality thus makes naming a limited, contingent act: "The name of Tao is borrowed so that things may function" (p. 396). Because of the futility of language, books should not be valued for their own sake:

What the world values are books, which are nothing but language. There is something valuable about language. What is valuable about language is its meaning, and meaning follows something. What meaning follows cannot be conveyed through words. The world transmits books because it values words. Although the world values them, I do not value them because what it values is not truly valuable. What one can hear is name and sound. Alas! People in this world thought that through form, color, names, and sound one is able to comprehend reality. Form, color, names, and sound are not enough for one to comprehend reality; therefore, the one who knows does not speak and the one who speaks does not know. How could the world know this? (p. 217)

After stating the inadequacy of language, Chuang Tzŭ, like Confucius and

Lao Tzú, asserts the necessity of silence. Again, like them, Chuang Tzǔ expressed his views of naming in words; he did not become silent. What Chuang Tzǔ advocated is not so much perennial silence as effective expression, be it verbal or non-verbal: "If one speaks adequately, one speaks all day long and everything will concern the Way; if one speaks inadequately, one speaks all day long and everything will concern the object. The wonder of Tao is not to be conveyed through either words or silence" (p. 396). Because of the inadequate nature of language as a medium of expression, one would thus be concerned with what language may convey rather than mistakenly identifying language with the object, the signifier with the signified: "The net is intended for fish. Once the fish are caught, the net should be forgotten. The trap is intended for a rabbit. Once the rabbit is caught, the trap should be forgotten. Words are intended for meaning. Once meaning is obtained, words should be forgotten" (p. 407). The idea of forgetting words once meaning is obtained greatly contributed to the development of the poetic representation of meaning beyond words.

At this point a comparative look at Socrates, or the Socrates in Plato's *Dialogues*, a near-contemporary of Lao Tzú and Chuang Tzǔ, may highlight this drastic change in the concept of naming that occurred early in the Chinese tradition. Between Confucius and the Taoist thinkers, Socrates as portrayed in the *Cratylus* was definitely closer to the former in his positive view of language. Like Confucius, who emphasized the affinity between names and objects, Socrates also maintained that a natural bond existed between them: "the correct name indicates the nature of the thing" (p. 92). Unlike Confucius, who focused on the names indicating socio-ethical relationships and gave no account of the language of deities, Socrates, citing Homer, made a clear distinction between the names given by gods and those given by humans. The names given by gods, according to Socrates, cannot but be correct with respect to the objects: "For the Gods must clearly be supposed to call things by their right and natural names" (p. 50). By contrast, names given by humans are inevitably liable to error: "falsehood dwells among men below" (p. 69). Although the reasons for all the names given by deities may not be always clear to Socrates, their correctness remains unquestionable. This kind of faith exhibited by him in the perfection of naming by gods, as has been shown, was not shared by the major Chinese thinkers of his time. Consequently, while the Chinese thinkers all expressed in one way or another their views concerning the limitation of language, Socrates felt quite at home with naming. For Socrates, language is not merely an indispensable tool for

communication but also, and especially important, the vehicle by and through which one comprehends truth. His idea that language is the imitation of the essence of things endowed language with a prestige denied by Chinese thinkers. In his dialogue with Hermogenes, Socrates states: "Then a name is, it seems, a vocal imitation of any object; and a man is said to *name* any object when he imitates it with the voice. . . he [the imitator] has to imitate the essence by syllables and letters, . . . and from a compound of syllables. . . arrive [s] at language" (86-88).

Such a theory emphasizing the profound correspondence between names and objects, a system of understanding based on a divine foundation in both the Bible and *Cratylus*, renders words and things equally essential for the deciphering of truth. In his study of the ancient view of language in Western culture, Michel Foucault has observed this close bond between the word and the world, a bond that was thought by ancient writers to be enveloped in and sustained by a divine light: "dans le trésor que nous a transmis l'Antiquité, le langage vaut comme le signe des choses. Il n'y a pas de différence entre ces marques visibles que Dieu a déposées sur la surface de la terre, pour nous en faire connaître les secrets intérieurs, et les mots lisibles que l'Écriture, ou les sages de l'Antiquité, qui ont été éclairés par une divine lumière, ont déposés en ces livres que la tradition a sauvés. . . s'il a pour nous la valeur d'un signe précieux, c'est parce que, du fond de son être, et par la lumière qui n'a cessé de le traverser depuis sa naissance, il est ajusté aux choses mêmes, il en forme le miroir et l'émulation . . . c'est pourquoi la nature et le verbe peuvent s'entrecroiser à l'infini, formant pour qui sait lire comme un grand texte unique."¹⁴ The theory of imitation, which, as Erich Auerbach demonstrates in *Mimesis*, persisted throughout the Western literary tradition, makes it natural for writers to represent reality as closely and fully as possible. This is also the fundamental reason, I believe, why the Western literary tradition is replete with so many works of tremendous scope and length such as the epic.

Compared with epics in Western poetry, Chinese poetry, which lacks the epic, is noticeably short. The short length of Chinese poetry may in part be explained in terms of the Confucian and, especially, the Taoist concepts of naming. The Taoist idea of non-verbal instruction as discussed above, when applied to Chinese literary theory, gives rise to the poetics of paradox, which emphasizes the use of the fewest words to present the richest of meanings and the conveying of profound meaning beyond words. When applied to Chinese poetry, it gives rise to a short, highly condensed kind of writing, in

which the first person pronoun "I" is often absent and only various emphasized. For example, the following short poem by Li Po (701-762), which consists of twenty-eight syllables, well illustrates the principle of implication through images.

Bidding Farewell at Yellow-Crane Tower to Meng Hao-jan, who is leaving for Kuang Lin. 黃鶴樓送孟浩然之廣陵

An old friend turns west, bidding farewell
to Yellow-Crane Tower;

Sailing down to Yang Chou in the mist
and flowers of March.

A lone boat, a distant shadow, and the far
end of the green mountain;

All that can be seen is Long River
flowing at the end of the sky.¹⁵

故人西辭黃鶴樓
煙花三月下揚州
孤帆遠影碧山盡
唯見長江天際流

Although the speaker does not explicitly mention his feelings, various images bespeak his mood. The name of the tower, Yellow Crane, at the beginning of the poem is based on a Taoist legend, which states that the Taoist immortal Tzū An once rode a yellow crane and landed at the site where the tower was to be built.¹⁶ Because of its association with the Taoist religion, the image of the yellow crane may thus imply the speaker's possible interest in the transcendental thought of Taoism, according to which the highest spiritual state that one can achieve is a union with Nature. The image of mist and flowers in early spring not only represents the beautiful misty landscape in the exterior world but also implies a corresponding mental state of nebulous splendor. The word "lone" is employed to describe the sail of the boat which is taking Meng, the speaker's friend, to eastern China. Because of the close association between the boat and Meng, one suspects that the speaker may suggest a sense of loneliness, the loneliness that may possibly be experienced by both Meng and the speaker. The departing boat, which conveys the speaker's feeling associated with his friend at their parting, however, gradually fades away like "a distant shadow," finally replaced with the speaker's grand vision of nature—the mountain, river, and sky. The replacement of the boat with nature at the end of the poem signifies that the speaker's concern with his friend—the human world—is eventually superseded by his thoughts of nature, which often helped the poet forget or transcend his frustrations or sorrows in this world. Because of the absence of

a personal pronoun, the landscape presented in the last line can also be interpreted as a vision to be shared by many others. Presaged by the Yellow Tower at the beginning, the Taoist theme thus implicitly recurs in the last line, underlying this poem and many others by Li Po.

Another example from Wang Wei (701-761) may make the poetic technique of implication in Chinese poetry more clear.

Bird-Cry Ravine

A person idles, and cassia flowers fall;
The night is quiet, and the springtime mountain empty.
The moon emerges, alarming the bird;
It cries in the springtime ravine off and on.¹⁷

鳥鳴澗

人閑桂花落
夜靜春山空
月出驚山鳥
時鳴春澗中

Consisting of twenty syllables only, with five syllables in each of the four lines, Wang Wei's "Bird-Cry Ravine" (*Niao ming chien*) is a "chüeh chü," the shortest poetic form in Chinese poetry. As in Li Po's "Bidding farewell at Yellow-Crane Tower to Meng Hao-jan. . .," no explicit remarks are made on the speaker's own personal feelings in this poem. Through the description of natural scenery, however, traces of the speaker's feelings can be detected. First of all, the idle person in the opening line may well refer to the speaker himself, suggesting his own quiescent mental state, an ideal state which was often pursued by the poet as a Buddhist. The falling of the cassia flowers, as James Liu points out, may well be a symbolic scene since cassias normally do not blossom in the spring.¹⁸ The scene presented here is likely to correlate with the speaker's idleness in that the flower has reached the end of its growing process and entered a state of seeming inactivity. This theme of idleness recurs in the following line in the description of the quietness of the night and the emptiness of the mountain. As Pauline Yu has observed, the word "kung" (emptiness)—a Chinese word often used to translate the Sanskrit "sūnyatā"—is employed in Wang Wei's poetry primarily in a Buddhist sense to refer to the illusory essence of this phenomenal world.¹⁹ Like the falling of the cassia flowers, the emptiness of the mountain is highly symbolic since the mountain can hardly be empty in the spring.

This reading is soon verified by the presence of the bird in the next line. The appearance of the moon at the beginning of the second half of the poem initiates a scene of dynamism—the alarming of the bird and its constant cries—sharply contrasting with the scene of quiescence in the first half. The bird's cries at the end, which are rendered all the louder in contrast to the

scene of quietness, point back to the title, highlighting its meaning as well as giving the poem a circular structure. The organization of the poem on the basis of the dichotomy between stillness and movement, quiescence and dynamism, a rhetorical device which frequently occurs in Chinese poetry, can be explained in terms of the yin and yang philosophy, according to which the essence of the universe manifests itself in the ceaseless interplay of the opposite yet complementary yin (female) and yang (male) principles.²⁰ By employing the Buddhist concept along with the yin and yang principles in his description of the scenery, Wang Wei turned the landscape poem into a vehicle of expression for his philosophical vision, signifying that the ceaseless movement of the universe based on the yin and yang principles is essentially characterized by emptiness—one of the fundamental doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism.

According to James Liu, the poetics of paradox appeared during the Tang dynasty (618-907): "The poetics of paradox may be said to have emerged during the Tang period, the golden age of Chinese poetry, although hints at such a poetics are already discernible in Liu Hsieh *The Literary Mind*."²¹ Concurrent with the appearance of the poetics of paradox in Chinese literary history was the formal establishment of *chüeh chü* as a new subgenre,²² a quatrain, which, as mentioned before, consists of twenty or twenty-eight syllables, though traces of such a form can be found in the poetry of the Southern dynasties (420-589). The nearly simultaneous appearance in the Tang dynasty of the poetics of paradox and the sub-genre *chüeh chü* was most likely indebted to the official popularization of Taoism.

A similar development regarding the concept of naming can be ascertained in the Japanese poetic tradition, which had been heavily influenced by Chinese culture. Like the Chinese monarchs in the Chou dynasty, Japanese sovereigns, who had long been regarded as descendents of the sun goddess Amaterasu, enjoyed a special relationship to the deities. Unlike the Chinese monarchs, who traditionally claims their right to rule on the basis of a mandate from heaven, according to which heaven not only selected but also removed a ruler, the Japanese emperors based their reign on the belief that they were descendants of the country's founding deity. While different families founded various dynasties in Chinese history, the line of ruling emperors is thought to be from the same family from the beginning of Japanese history.

During the Nara period (A.D. 710-794), when Japanese writers first learned how to write poetry using the written language acquired from China,

many works were devoted to the celebration of the divine nature of the imperial family. The longer poetic form *chōka*, which is composed of an unlimited number of lines based on the alternating pattern of five and seven syllables, are commonly seen in *Records of Ancient Matters (Kojiki, 712)* and *Collection of Myriad Leaves (Manyōshū)*, the earliest extant Japanese poetry. The Shintoist belief in the divine authority of the Japanese monarch recounted in *Records of Ancient Matters* and *Chronicles of Japan (Nihongi, 720)*, however, made it quite unlikely for Japanese writers to seek for themselves inspiration or authorization from heaven: "Then she [the sun goddess] commanded her August Grandchild, saying: 'This . . . land [Japan] is the region which my descendants shall be lords of. Do thou, my August Grandchild, proceed thither and govern it. Go! and may prosperity attend thy dynasty.'"²³ As a result of the limitation of the imagination, epic poetry thus also failed to appear in Japanese literature.²⁴ During the Heian and medieval periods (794-1185), when Chinese culture was gradually assimilated into the Japanese tradition, a shorter poetic form called *tanka*, which is arranged in a pattern of 5 7 5 7 7 syllables, making thirty-one syllables in all, became a favorite form of various poets represented in *Collection of Poems of Ancient and Modern Times (Kokinshū)*.

As Chinese culture became deeply rooted in the Japanese tradition and Buddhism became the national religion of Japan, the Taoist concept of naming, very often aided by the teaching of Zen Buddhism, became all the more familiar to Japanese society. Owing to the effort of Eisai (1141-1215) and Dogen (1200-1253), both of whom studied in China, Zen became a dominant Buddhist sect, whose influence was eventually felt in almost every aspect of Japanese culture. Non-verbal instruction, which characterizes the Zen sect, heightened many Japanese writers' sense of the limitation of language. In addition, the twelfth century witnessed the loss of imperial power and the triumph of the shogunate, which was to last until the Meiji restoration (1868-1912). As in China, the fall of the emperors in Japan, who became nominal rulers, shook the foundation of the old faith, namely Shintoism, causing people to become aware of the limitation and instability of institutions in the human world, including language. Consequently, the seventeen-syllable poetic form called *haiku*, shorter than *tanka*, became the popular vehicle of expression for poets such as Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) and Kobayashi Issa (1763-1827) during the Edo period (1600-1868). When the popular form became shorter and shorter in the Japanese poetic tradition, the technique of implication or suggestion became increasingly important.

As in Chinese poetry, a landscape would often be presented in Japanese poetry without the speaker's explicit comments. The ultimate principle in the art of poetry, as Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114-1204) advocated in medieval Japan, should be the creation of an "obscure and profound," or *yugen*, effect.²⁵ The following poem by Fujiwara well illustrates his aesthetic principle of the "obscure and profound" style.

The mountain stream,
half frozen, half thawed—
its voice at daybreak
sobbing among the boulders²⁶

The stream is described in the poem as flowing among boulders—difficult terrain which may convey an impression of obscurity and profundity—rather than, for example, on a plain where things can be viewed clearly. The intermediary state of the stream—half frozen, half thawed—signifies a subtle ambiguity resisting a distinct definition, which, as commonly acknowledged, characterizes a poem of the *yugen* style. The theme of ambiguity is reinforced in the choice of time: neither broad daylight nor total darkness, but a time in between, daybreak. Furthermore, the sound of the stream is compared to sobbing, a state between loud crying and complete silence. This comparison of the sound of the stream to a human voice also establishes a link between the natural and human worlds, endowing the stream with a semi-alive state. To one's common sense this imaginary association may appear obscure yet profound. The subtle ambiguity represented by the landscape thus serves as an emblem of expression for Fujiwara's "obscure and profound" style.

The principle of condensation and suggestion is probably employed to the utmost degree in the shortest form, haiku. Notice the following ones by Matsuo Bashō:

This white chrysanthemum doesn't have a speck of dust that hits the eye

— — —

An old pond: a frog jumps in—the sound of water²⁷

Written a fortnight before his death, the first haiku is commonly interpreted as an illustration of his own mental state.²⁸ In both the Chinese and Japanese

poetic traditions, the chrysanthemum is often employed as an image of the speaker. The image of dust, which first appeared as an emblem of spiritual contamination in the sacred text of Hinduism, *The Upanishads*,²⁹ was later introduced into Chinese and Japanese literature. Through the description of the white chrysanthemum, the speaker seems to imply that he himself has succeeded in cultivating a spiritual state free from impurity. Most renowned in Japanese literature, the second poem is thought to "capture at once the eternal and the momentary."³⁰ The ancient pond, an emblem of quiescence and permanence, is juxtaposed with the frog's jumping, an act symbolizing dynamism and transience. Through the presentation of the sound of water, the speaker merges the two opposite principles—quiescence and dynamism, permanence and transience—thereby indicating that tension between differences, especially between permanence and transience, can be resolved in a harmonious manner, a holistic vision characteristic of Taoism and Zen Buddhism.

As has been shown, the concept of naming changed when divine authorization was rejected in the Chinese tradition. A similar change also took place in the Western tradition, but not until the second half of the nineteenth century, when, as A. O. Lovejoy indicates in *The Great Chain of Being*, "the idea of God was itself becoming predominantly this-worldly, tending towards a fusion with the conception of 'Nature' infinitely various in its manifestations and endlessly active in the production of differing kinds of beings."³¹ Taoist thought, according to Lovejoy, contributed to the development of the Western Romantic movement.³² Rather than seeking inspiration or authorization from a deity, a practice of which Curtius states that "Jedes Blatt in der Geschichte der europäischen Literatur spricht von ihnen,"³³ writers in the nineteenth century turned to Nature for guidance. William Wordsworth's apostrophe to "the gentle breeze" at the beginning of *The Prelude* exemplifies this Romantic tendency.³⁴ When the idea of God is identified or replaced with the conception of Nature, as is seen in Taoist thought, the foundation of naming appears problematic.

The turning point in the development of the concept of naming occurred with the Symbolist movement towards the end of the nineteenth century. "So far as the Western tradition goes," according to George Steiner, "an underlying classicism, a pact negotiated between words and world, lasts until the early 1870s. . . . After Mallarmé nearly all poetry which matters, and much of the prose that determines modernism, will move against the current of normal speech."³⁵ A major Symbolist poet, Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-

1898), most conscientiously practiced the cult of difficulty in his poetic creation, a practice which has had far-reaching influence on modern Western poetry. Like Taoists, he greatly emphasized the limitation of language: "Les langues imparfaites en cela que plusieurs, manque la suprême: penser étant écrire sans accessories, ni chuchotement mais tacite encore l'immortelle parole, la diversité sur terre, des idiomes empêche personne de préférer les mots qui, sinon se trouveraient, par une frappe unique, elle-même matériellement la vérité. Cette prohibition sévit expresse, dans la nature (on s'y bute avec un sourire) que ne vaille de raison pour se considérer Dieu; mais sur l'heure, tourné à de l'esthétique, mon sens regrette que le discours défaille à exprimer les objets par des touches y répondant en coloris ou en allure, lesquelles existent dans l'instrument de la voix, parmi les langages et quelquefois chez un."³⁶

The inadequacy of language occurs, according to Mallarmé, not only on the metaphysical level but also on the aesthetic level. Metaphysically speaking, he says no one can express the absolute truth due to the diversity of language; aesthetically speaking, certain nuances of feelings simply cannot be expressed. Because of the impossibility of using language to depict certain things, Mallarmé, like many Chinese poets, thus preferred suggestion to description: "Les monuments, la mer, la face humaine, dans leur plénitude, natifs, conservant une vertu autrement attrayante que ne les voilera une description, évocation dites, *allusion*, je sais, *suggestion*."³⁷ The mode of description to him is more appropriate for philosophy than for poetry. In "The Evolution of Literature" Mallarmé further explains why he is opposed to explicit naming: "La contemplation des objets, l'image s'envolant des rêveries suscitées par eux, sont le chant: les Parnassiens, eux, prennent la chose entièrement et la montrent; par là ils manquent de mystère; ils retirent aux esprits cette joie délicieuse de croire qu'ils créent. *Nommer* un objet, c'est supprimer les trois quarts de la jouissance du poème qui est faite du bonheur de deviner peu à peu; le *suggérer*, voilà le rêve."³⁸ The following poem by Mallarmé demonstrates his aesthetic credo, which dictates the new direction in which modern poetry would proceed:

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui
 Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d'aile ivre
 Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre
 Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui!

Un cygne d'autrefois se souvient que c'est lui
Magnifique mais qui sans espoir se délivre
Pour n'avoir pas chanté la région où vivre
Quand du stérile hiver a resplendi l'ennui.

Tout son col secouera cette blanche agonie
Par l'espace infligée à l'oiseau qui le nie,
Mais non l'horreur du sol où le plumage est pris.

Fantôme qu'à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne,
Il s'immobilise au songe froid de mépris
Que vêt parmi l'exil inutile le Cygne.³⁹

With the French syntax greatly strained, the narration in this sonnet moves falteringly. Because of such words as "blanche (white)," "l'espace (space)," "songe (dream)," and "plumage (feathers)," which connotes "plume (pen)," the swan trapped in the frozen lake may represent the poet struggling with the process of poetic creation. Furthermore, since the word "cygne" connotes the meaning of its homonym "signe," the swan may also represent the sign, or language, which the poet seeks for the conveyance of his poetic ideal—a task which proves to be extremely difficult if not impossible, as is symbolized by the bird's futile attempt to fly. This is perhaps the reason why the swan is referred to at the beginning of the concluding tercet as "Fantôme," something which exists in appearance yet actually has no substance. Rather than describing the situation in a straightforward manner, Mallarmé creates a symbolic landscape to "suggest" and "evoke" his meaning, using relevant words such as "stérile hiver," "agonie," "l'horreur," and "inutile" to suggest the difficulty of writing.

The bond between naming and objects, words and things, which was rendered doubtful by Mallarmé, was totally dissolved by Saussure, a renowned linguist whose influence is greatly felt in both linguistics and literature in the twentieth century. Renouncing the tradition of regarding language as a naming process oriented towards the establishment of a proper bond between words and things—the tradition well represented by Socrates in *Cratylus* — Saussure employed the terms "*signifiant*" and "*signifié*" in place of names and things to characterize language, maintaining that the "*signe*" which combines a concept and a sound-image should be the focus of the study of language: "Pour certaines personnes la langue, ramenée a son principe essentiel, est une nomenclature, c'est-à-dire une liste de termes

correspondant à autant de choses.... Le signe linguistique unit non une chose et un nom, mais un concept et une image acoustique.... Nous appelons *signe* la combinaison du concept et de l'image acoustique: mais dans l'usage courant ce désigne généralement l'image acoustique seule,... L'ambiguïté disparaîtrait si l'on désignait les trois notions ici en présence par des noms qui s'appellent les uns les autres tout en s'opposant. Nous proposons de conserver le mot *signe* pour désigner le total, et de remplacer *concept* et *image acoustique* respectivement par *signifié* et *signifiant*.⁴⁰

Saussure's further suggestion—that a linguistic sign is arbitrary and that there is no natural bond between the signifier and the signified—totally severed in his theory the tie between deity and language, making the latter only a cultural product subject to the changes of social convention—a severance which, as discussed above, occurred early in the Chinese tradition: “Le lien unissant le signifiant au signifié est arbitraire, ou encore, puisque nous entendons par *signe* le total résultant de l'association d'un signifiant à un signifié, nous pouvons dire plus simplement: *le signe linguistique est arbitraire*.”⁴¹ This new concept of language, as Frederic Jameson indicates, puts an end to the oldest linguistic theory based on the close tie between names and objects as the most influential one in modern times: “the very construction of the concept of a sign [by Saussure]clearly strikes down the most archaic language theory of all, one still occasionally revived by poets, that of the indissoluble link between words and things, which is to say the apprehension of language as names and naming.”⁴² As a result of the total severance of names from objects, words from things, the signifying act or process is interpreted by A. J. Greimas as primarily that which translates from one level to another in the same language, or the translating of one language to another: “La signification n'est donc que cette transposition d'un niveau de langage dans un autre, d'un langage dans un langage différent, et le sens n'est que cette possibilité de *transcodage*.”⁴³ Reflected in Western theories of literature, the new concept of language resulted in the emergence of the objective theory, according to which a work of art, as M. H. Abrams illustrates in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, is not an imitation of the world, but rather a self-contained world in and for itself.

After the change in their concept of naming, some Western poets, like Chinese writers, advocated a laconic use of words. The emphasis of Western poets on the principle of condensation at the beginning of this century gave rise to a style in which imagery became the dominant element, thereby bringing Western poetry particularly close to Chinese and Japanese poetry.

This highly condensed poetry consisting mainly of "images" found its most effective exponent in Ezra Pound (1885-1972), the one-time leader of the Imagist movement and "the inventor of modern poetry in English." Like Mallarmé, Pound was aware of the imperfection of language as a vehicle for conveying and comprehending human experience: "The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is CAPABLE of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension. This is a very unpalatable and bitter doctrine. But I cannot omit it."⁴⁴ As part of his effort to renovate the Western poetic tradition, Pound turned to classical Chinese poetry for its use of highly suggestive imagery: "the maximum of phanopoeia [throwing a visual image on the mind] is probably reached by the Chinese, due in part to their particular kind of written language" (p. 42). Created especially with the Japanese poetic form haiku in mind, the following poem is a good illustration of Pound's poetic tenet of condensation, the expression of a single image:

IN A STATION OF THE METRO

The apparition these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.⁴⁵

As Hugh Kenner indicates in his study of the process of creation of this poem,⁴⁶ the metro station may refer to the one at La Concorde in France, where the poet "saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another." In the context of the verse, however, the subway station—a place where the train, a vehicle of communication, arrives and departs cyclically—may also indicate the cyclical form of the poem. This reading becomes more likely since an analogy can be established between the concluding image (the black bough) and the opening one (the subway station), a link which clearly gives the poem a cyclical structure. The word "apparition" at the beginning of the first line endows those faces which the poet observed in a subway station with an ethereal quality somewhat removed from the human world, thereby paving the way for the appearance of the flowers in the second line. Furthermore, the word highlights the visual sense, which characterizes an entire poem composed of two images.

Like the imagery in many Chinese poems, an image in Pound's view is more than just an ornament; it conveys both idea and feeling: "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of

time."⁴⁷ The juxtaposition of petals with faces in the crowd—the ideogrammic method based on an organizing principle of Chinese characters—makes it clear that each face becomes an aesthetic object like a flower for the poet to appreciate. In addition, the association of the human world, which is represented by the faces, with the natural world, which is represented by the petals, indicates that the poetic world of imagination—the poem—comprehends and correlates the human and natural worlds in a harmonious manner. As mentioned earlier, the image of “a wet, black bough” hearkens back to the title, rounding up the poem as a whole. Taken metaphorically, the black bough may also refer to the poem or the process of poetic creation, an organic one bearing analogy to a plant. Like Mallarmé’s poem discussed above, this work by Pound can also be read as a poem about itself. In its condensation and use of highly suggestive imagery as the dominant vehicle of expression, this poem by Pound is an embodiment of the Chinese poetic principle.

Apart from advocating the principle of condensation, Western writers, unlike Chinese writers in this case, also attempted to create a new, very often difficult language, as in the case of Mallarmé, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and Paul Celan.⁴⁸ As Steiner has observed, this kind of difficult poetry, which sometimes cannot be elucidated by public reference, is characteristic of modern Western literature only: “There had been almost no ‘difficulties’ of this nature in Western literature before the 1880s” (p. 182). At times, Western writers simply became silent, as in the case of Arthur Rimbaud in his later life. The Eastern and Western traditions eventually shared similar poetic features when the Symbolist movement spread to the East and initiated the creation of similarly difficult poetry in the Orient around the turn of the century.⁴⁹

In conclusion, this paper has shown the divine foundations of naming at the beginning of both the Eastern and Western poetic traditions. It has also attempted to demonstrate that the distrust of naming normally occurred as a result of the weakening or even disappearance of the belief in this divine foundation. This lack of trust in naming had various implications in different poetic traditions. Whereas in the West hermeticism along with the renewal of language appeared to be the dominant practice, in the East shorter poetic forms rooted in the poetics of paradox tended to become the favorite vehicle of expression. Interestingly enough, the Chinese aesthetics of “distrust” originally influenced the change in the concept of naming in the Western tradition. Then, a century or so after this change, Western poetry was intro-

duced to the East, exerting great influence on the Eastern poetic tradition. The communication between East and West has thus certainly enriched both cultures' perception of the relation of language to the world, exposing both to a totally new realm of human experience.

Notes

1. R. C. H. Henski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1964), 265.
2. Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1967), 235. "In the view of antiquity, they [the Muses] belonged not only to poetry but to all higher forms of intellectual life besides" (*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask [New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1953], 228. For information concerning the historical development of the topos of invoking the Muses, see *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, 235-252.
3. George Steiner has written a number of works concerning the distrust in language in modern Western literature, of which three books are particularly pertinent to this paper: *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975); *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1974); and *Extra-Territorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* (New York: Atheneum, 1971).
4. *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett, V. III (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964), 50.
5. *The Rāmāyana of Vālmīki: An Epic of Ancient India*, trans. Robert P. Goldman (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 128-129.
6. Bharata, *Nāṭya Shāstra*, ed. Joanny Grosset (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898), I, 14-15.
7. Liu An, *Huai-nan tzu* (Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chū, 1964), "Pen-ching-hsün," 5. All translations in this essay are mine unless otherwise indicated.
8. *Shih ching chin chu*, annotated by Kao Heng (Shanghai: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1980), 481.
9. Although *Shang-ti* may not have exactly the same attributes as God, the Chinese themselves, including believers, use this term to refer to God (*The Holy Bible: Today's Chinese Version* [United Bible Societies, 1975]). I follow the conventional practice for the reason that "Shang-ti" is the most commonly used term to signify the supreme divine being in the Chinese tradition.
10. *The Variorum Four Books (Ssü-shu chi-chu)*, ed. Chu Hsi (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chū 1965), "Yung yeh," 8 and "Shu Erh," 5.
11. In general, Confucius' thought is radically different from Lao Tzu's; nevertheless, there are a few similarities between them.
12. *The Variorum Lao Tzu*, ed. Wang Pi (Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chū, 1968), 14. The identity of the author of Lao Tzu was and still is an unsettled issue. The name of Lao Tzu has traditionally been used to designate the author of this work.
13. *The Variorum Chuang Tzu*, ed. Kuo Ch'ing fan (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chū, 1968), 40-41.
14. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966), 48-49. "...in the treasure handed down to us by Antiquity, the value of language lay in the fact that it was the sign of things.

There is no difference between the visible marks that God has stamped upon the surface of the earth, so that we may know its inner secrets, and the legible words that the Scriptures, or the sages of Antiquity, have set down in the books preserved for us by tradition... if it has the value of a precious sign, that is because, from the depth of its being, and by means of the light that has never ceased to shine through it since its origin, it is adjusted to things themselves, it forms a mirror for them and emulates them... this is why nature and the word can intertwine with one another to infinity, forming, for those who can read it, one vast single text." (*The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [New York: Vintage Books, 1973], 33-34.)

15. *Li Po shih*, annotated by Fu Tung-hua (Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1970), 105.
16. *An Ocean of Phrases (Tzū Hai)*, ed. Liu Ke-huan (Taipei: Chung-hua Bookstore), II, 3356.
17. *Wang Wei shih*, annotated by Fu Tung-hua (Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1970), 76.
18. James J.Y. Liu, *Language—Paradox—Poetics: A Chinese Perspective*, ed. Richard Lynn (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988), 115.
19. Pauline R. Yu, *The Poetry of Wang Wei* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1980), 167.
20. For the use of the yin and yang principles in classical Chinese poetry, see James Liu *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: The U of Chicago), 146-150; Hans Frankel, *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976), 144-185; and Lin Shuen-fu, *The Transformation of the Chinese Lyrical Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 106-133.
21. Liu, *Language—Paradox—Poetics*, 58.
22. In *A History of Chinese Literature*, Liu Ta-chieh explained that *chüeh chü* emerged as a result of the influence of the folk song which was a favorite form during the Southern dynasties (Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1964, pp. 262-63). He did not explain, however, why poets were at that time particularly interested in the shorter form of folk songs.
23. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia UP, 1964), I, 76-77. In his study of the historical development of Japanese religion, H. Byron Earhart writes: "These mythological accounts show us that from early times there was a clear notion of Japan as a divine country led by a sacred emperor and inhabited by a people who had a special relationship to kami (a deity)" (*Religions of Japan: Many Traditions Within One Sacred Way* [New York: Harper & Row, 1984], 28). See also "Early Shinto" in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia UP, 1964), I, 21-33.
24. In *A History of Japanese Literature* Jin'ichi Konishi states: "Yamato literature has no epic poetry" (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 17. Yamato literature refers to the literary works created by the Japanese people who lived on the major islands of Japan, excluding the works of the Ainu people who inhabited the northern part of the Japanese archipelago.
25. For the importance of the concept of *yugen* in Japanese art see *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia UP, 1964), 277-85. My study of the similarities between the Chinese and Japanese poetic traditions by no means suggest that these two traditions are completely identical. My purpose here is simply to point out some elements in the Japanese tradition which bear similarities to those in the Chinese tradition.
26. *From the Country of Eight Islands: An Anthology of Japanese Poetry*, ed. & trans.

- Hiroaki Sato and Burton Watson (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), 165.
27. *From the Country of Eight Islands*, 289.
 28. Cf. Makoto Ueda, *Matsuo Bashō* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), 67. Consult also Donald Keene, "Haiku Poetry: Matsuo Bashō" in *World within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era, 1600-1867* (New York: Grove Press, 1976) for the stylistic significance of Bashō's haiku.
 29. *The Upanishads*, trans. Juan Mascaró (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), 88.
 30. Keene, *World within Walls*, 89.
 31. A.O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974), 316.
 32. Taoist thought, which informed the aesthetics of the traditional Chinese garden, was indirectly introduced to Europe in the eighteenth century through the Europeans' study of the Chinese garden. See Lovejoy's "On the Chinese Origin of a Romanticism" in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 32 (1933): 1-21.
 33. *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1967), 235: "every page in the history of European literature speaks of..."
 34. For the transcendent implication of Wordsworth's use of the wind, see M.H. Abrams, "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," *The Kenyon Review* 19 (1957): 113-130.
 35. Steiner, *After Babel*, 178.
 36. Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crise de vers," in *Oeuvres de Mallarmé* (Paris: Éditions Garnier, 1985), 273. "Languages are imperfect because multiple; the supreme language is missing. Inasmuch as though consists of writing without pen and paper, without whispering even, without the sound of the immortal Word, the diversity of languages on earth means no one can utter words which would bear the miraculous stamp of Truth Herself. This is clearly nature's law—we stumble on it with a smile of resignation—to the effect that we have no sufficient reason for equating ourselves with God. But then, esthetically I am disappointed when I consider how impossible it is for language to express things by means of certain keys which would reproduce their brilliance and aura—keys which do exist as part of the instrument of the human voice, or among languages, or sometimes even in one language." (*Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays, and Letters*, trans. Bradford Cook [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins P, 1956], 38.)
 37. Mallarmé, "Crise de vers," in *Oeuvres de Mallarmé*, 276. "It is not description which can unveil the efficacy and beauty of monuments, seas, or the human face in all their maturity and native state, but rather evocation, allusion, suggestion" (*Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays, and Letters*, 38).
 38. Stéphane Mallarmé, "Sur l'évolution littéraire," in *Igitur Divagations Un Coup de dés* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard), 391-392. "Poetry lies in the contemplation of things, in the image emanating from the reveries which things arouse in us. The Parnassians take something in its entirety and simply exhibit it; they fall short of mystery; they fail to give our minds that exquisite joy which consists of believing that we are creating something. To name an object is largely to destroy poetic enjoyment, which comes from gradual divination. The ideal is to suggest the object" (*Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays, and Letters*, 21).
 39. *Stephanè Mallarmé: Selected Poems*, trans. C. F. MacIntyre (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 82-83. "The lively, lovely and virginal today/will its drunken wings tear for us with a blow/this lake hard and forgotten, haunted below/ the frost by the clear glacier of flights not made?| A swan of past times remembers

- he's the one/magnificent but striving without hope/for not having sung a land where he could stop/when the ennui of sterile winter has shone./All his neck will shake off this white death by space/inflicted on the bird for whom it is not,/but never the horror of clay where his feathers are caught./Phantom whose pure white dooms it to this place,/swathed in futile exile with a chill/dream of contumely, the Swan is still." For a textual analysis of this poem, see Robert Greer Cohn, *Toward the Poems of Mallarme* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1965), 124-132.
40. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: fifth edition, 1962), 97-99. "Some people regard language, when reduced to its elements, as a naming process only—a list of words, each corresponding to the thing it names. . . . The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. . . . Ambiguity would disappear if the three notions involved here were designated by three names, each suggesting and opposing the others. I call the combination of a concept and a sound-image a sign, but in current usage the term generally designates only a sound-image, a word. . . . I propose to retain the word *sign* to designate the whole and to replace *concept* and *sound-image* respectively by *signified* and *signifier*" (*Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin [New York: Philosophical Library, 1959], 65-67).
 41. *Cours de linguistique générale*, 99-100. "The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by sign the whole that results from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary*" (p. 67).
 42. *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972), 30.
 43. Algirdas Julien Greimas, *Du sens: essais sémiotiques* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), 13.
 44. *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1960), 34.
 45. *Erza Pound: Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1957), 35.
 46. Hugh Kenner *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1971), 184.
 47. Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagist," *Poetry* 1 (March 1913), 220.
 48. For a detailed analysis of modern Western writers' practices with respect to a distrust of language, see *After Babel*, 176-205.
 49. Some Oriental poetry became similarly difficult because of the influence of the Symbolist movement in the West. See Krishna Kripalani, "Modern Literature" in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. A.L. Basham (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975); Tu Kuo-ch'ing, "The Introduction of French Symbolism into Modern Chinese and Japanese Poetry" in *Tamkang Review* 10 (Spring 1970): 343-367; Vincent Yang, "From French Symbolism to Chinese Symbolism: A Literary Influence," *Tamkang Review* 17 (Spring 1987): 221-244; and Earl Jackson, Jr., "The Metaphysics of Translation and the Origins of Symbolist Poetics in Meiji Japan," *PMLA* 105 (March 1990): 256-272.

