

## A Far/fell/a Gasping. . .

Having come from afar to Taiwan, in order to research Buddhist hermeneutics while teaching western hermeneutics, I fell in with the controversy limned above – the missive from Wai-lim Yip and the re/joinder from William Touponce – non-deconstructionist and deconstructionist in battle regalia arrayed.

*To fell*: “To stitch down (the wider of the two edges left projecting by a seam) so that it lies flat over the other edge and leaves a smooth surface on the under-side of the seam” (6th entry, vb. *to fell*, *O.E.D.*, vol. 4, 1933 ed.; 1978 rpt.).

Since the ‘purpose’ of my book – *Derrida on the Mend* (Purdue University Press, 1984) recently published – is to reinstate logocentrism (thus, “mending” Derrida) while continuing deconstruction (thus, keeping Derrida “on” or “astride” the “mend” in order to rend it open),

I shall, in the few lines below, try

*to fell* (v. supra) the Yip-Touponce alter/cation, while allaying whatever of the *fell* (“gall, bitterness, rancor,” 1st entry, n. *fell*, *O.E.D.*) has clabbered it.

“Whatever is, is,” the ‘principle of identity’ asserts, and it ‘founds’ classical *ratio* (and all ‘logocentrisms’). When we “break the covenant” contracted at this ‘foundational’ level and – using logic against itself – undertake the deconstruction of the ‘founding principle’ itself. . . we de/viate. We ply the off/path ‘between’ logic and outside-of-logic. “Off/logical” are we. “Differentialist” are we.

Nagarjuna (Indian Buddhist ‘rationalist’, 1st cent. A.D.) plies *samvrti* is *paramārtha*, *samsāra* is *nirvāna* – “the logocentric is the differential” (not the

“non-logocentric,” mind you). . . an off/mysticism, *tathatā*, which “reinstates” the logocentric while deconstruction continues. . . (see *Derrida on the Mend*, part three).

Beatitude the ‘logocentric’ is/Beatitude the ‘differential’!!!

Such being so, Wai-lim Yip’s workly work — expert in poetry, expert in language, expert in logocentric criticism — I affirm and celebrate (indeed, that he is a very important poet, that he is beautifully fluent in Chinese and English, that he is contributing so much to a comparative poetics, shouldn’t/cannot be denied). What to make of the rejoinder? William Touponce has a very agile mind. He knows contemporary criticism well. He is be/ginning to alter the East/West dialogue. But deconstruction — I think — deconstructs a logocentric reading and goes on to a ‘deviant’ conclusion which in/turn comes ‘under erasure’ (thus the coming ‘under erasure’ is a self-deconstructive maneuver). Such a stratagem differs/defers from a lapse back into a competing logocentric conclusion, one which is a mere dialectical spinoff from that which has been deconstructed. Moreover (overmore), a *soi-disant* deconstructionist should know — I think — that deconstruction (unlike the ‘phenomenological moment’ frequented so skillfully by Wai-lim Yip) signals from ‘within’ its own text its own self/deconstruction. Other/wise it relapses into what deconstructionists have been calling an “innocent” reading. In what follows, I hope to off/track some of what I ‘mean’.

I think the rejoinder furnishes us with a fine emblem of its own innocence: that Touponce’s “little sunny sarcasm is not out of line” is all too true, for the sarcasm is persistently heliocentric rather than eccentric, logocentric rather than “out of line.” The voice that so soon spoke of “the various rhetorical ways Freud defined for us” (in the review of *Literary Theory Today*, *TkR*, 9:2, 203) goes on to invoke (above) “the existing scholarship on Wang Wei,” the “accepted view of his poetry,” and the “concensus [sic] that has more or less [disjunctive?] been reached about the intent [the poet’s intended purpose?] of his poetics.” Almost needless to say, these assertions are symptomatic of a die/hard logocentrism: deconstruction, shirking (O.E. *shirk*, a “parasite”) a mentality of *fons et origo*, does not categorically ‘appeal to authority’ as if the matter were ‘settled’; and deconstruction, resorting to what has been called the technique of the ‘lever’, pries apart any alleged ‘consensus’ (indeed, it does so precisely by applying the ‘heterogeneous from outside’, an application Touponce himself elsewhere uses/endorse — see p. 204).

And what of Touponce's charge that Yip, borrowing from the early Heidegger and the late, is inconsistent (p. 204)? And of his charge (above) that the existentialist and deconstructive interpretations of Heidegger are "incompatible"? Both charges lodge an indictment which is a summons *back* to consistency (an organic historiology and an organic metaphysics, respectively). But isn't this the 'site', rather, to exploit the breach? To show that what Yip does is a more overt case of what *all* synthesis does? (Indeed, of what Touponce himself is doing? And of what I am now doing?) Isn't this the 'site' to show that the harshness and fragmentation, "defamiliarization," "violent appropriation," and "robbery" (p. 205) which Touponce endorses/celebrates in Wang Wei and Heidegger — when philosophically taken, veer along the very path as the appropriation which Touponce calls (disparagingly) "hodge-podge" (p. 204) in Yip? Rather than relapsing into a defense of organicism, isn't this the site to show (if I may rephrase) that every organicism bears a crack? Is at 'fault'?

Other faulted sites to be cited? Why does Touponce play the American New Critic of the 1940s, protecting the organic unity of the single poem (as he does when he protests Yip's quotation of one line "out of context" — p. 205) when he could be citing this 'same' appropriation as a more overt example of the *bricolage* which "patches together" every text? Instead, because of Touponce's recidivism one can even apply the *levier à la renverse*: on the subliminal ("below the threshold") level it may be Yip who is frequenting the busier deconstruction (since it is he who violates the 'unity of the poem' by embedding one of its lines in his 'own' discourse, his 'own' context, his 'own' intertextuality), and it may be Touponce, with his oft/times positivist demand for "sufficient evidence" who is doing the *recovery* of logocentrism *underground*.

In those parts of the intertext where Yip is not performing deconstruction, he can at least rest assured that his *logocentrism* is being 'mirrored'. When Touponce laments (p. 204) the 'universalism' whereby Yip finds "the Taoists and Heidegger speaking the same language" (the language of the 'prepredicative given'), he himself — instead of stressing discontinuity — is busy finding that the Taoists and Heidegger speak the same language (the language of forceful defamiliarization). If Touponce inveighs against Yip's closed dialectic of "decreation-creation" (closed dialectics, because they control their subject-matter absolutely, are logocentric), he himself is busy building elsewhere (v. *supra*) a closed dialectic of his own (that of Derrida or the existentialist, "*differance* or the jargon of authenticity," a closed model

he thrusts on Yip, though 'Yip's Heidegger' surely is more heterogeneous than this).

The preceding is not to say that Touponce's text does not act out covert/overt performances of *différance* — it does, and in several ways. There is a curious sort of usurpation of what was falsely projected in the 'first' place: the rhetoric of Touponce's first treatment of the Wang Wei poem (p. 205, 206) persistently works to identify Yip with the Robinson translation ("lotus flowers do not grow on trees, a fact that may have slipped Professor Yip's mind. . . . It may be that the poem can be read in a recuperative manner which would have it end in the blossoming of presence, aletheia, but. . ."), even though Yip cites the Robinson translation of only one line and rejects it as reductive! And all the while, it is really Touponce who is identifying himself — though cryptically — with the Robinson translation! (he uses the Robinson translation exclusively in his review, and defends it in the rejoinder).

There is the floating signifier: when — in his rejoinder — Touponce treats the Robinson translation, his rhetoric works to establish an opposition between "To have 'slipped it in'" and "Actually, it is there, together with the Chinese text of Wang Wei, because I deliberately put it there." Nonetheless the attentive reader, after his initial confusion, can construe what is happening in the textual underground: "to have 'slipped it in'" and "Actually, it is there . . . because I deliberately put it there" are two signifiers which project a fiction of *two* signifieds. But it suddenly occurs to the reader, agasp, that a purposeful *slipping in is done deliberately* (the notions are not oppositional). There is only *one* signified here, and there is an 'overdetermination' of signifiers.

There is the floating signified: when — in the same treatment of the Robinson translation — Touponce says that "Yip's argument is based on only one *line* from Wang Wei's Chinese" (italic mine), and then says "there is no sense of the Chinese *text* in Professor Yip's argument," and then says "the *lines* can be translated as Robinson has them" (italic mine), the rhetorical development is such that the reader clusters together *line*, *text*, and *lines* into one general signifier (that *lines* is, morphologically, just the plural of *line*, helps this rhetorical maneuver along). And this general signifier fabricates the fiction of one signified. If the reader brackets out rhetorical force, however, and regards only the semantic (grammar and referents), he can figure out that the *line* has as its signified the 'third line' of Wang Wei's Chinese poem, *text* has as its signified all four Chinese lines and their historical textuality, and

*lines*, though plural, has as its particularized signified the first line of the Chinese poem (thus Touponce immediately attaches the modifying clause — “if Professor Yip will only look in any Chinese botanical dictionary, he will find that 芙蓉 is another word for the lotus flower.” But — with the rhetoric subverting the semantic as it does — there is an underdetermination of signifier, so that rhetorically there is only one signifier generating a single fictive signified; and rhetorically, the actual signifieds, all three of them, are ‘too many’ and thus ‘float’ . . . .

Thus Touponce’s

text

too,

— flamboyant

of CLUE

foundational

cracks

which

fault us

all —

acts out its (innocent?)

*différance*. . . . .

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