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Affinities of forms: Chinese poets and Pope, Pound, Eliot and Williams

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AFFINITIES OF FORMS:
CHINESE POETS AND POPE, POUND, ELIOT AND WILLIAMS

by

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ABSTRACT

Despite the tremendous linguistic particularities and cultural differences, Chinese poetry shares some formal and technical similarity with Anglo-American poetry. Through an effective use of the couplet-based verse form well suited for the play of parallelism and antithesis, classic Chinese poets and Alexander Pope achieve precision and concision in emotional and intellectual communications, making extremely precise distinctions between the elements of their thoughts or feelings. In terms of the "aesthetic form," "the relation between the sensuous nature of the art medium and the conditions of human perceptions," a certain type of Chinese Tang poetry and poetry by T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams display affinity, as manifested in the employment of juxtaposition to project a subjective state through presentation of external objects.
Acknowledgement

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Introduction

Although poetry written in different languages and produced in different cultures may exhibit enormous differences due to linguistic peculiarities and cultural differences, Chinese poetry and English poetry display certain similar technical tendencies and formal aspects, despite the cultural gulf separating Chinese and Anglo-American literary tradition. In this study, I intend to address some of the similarities which hitherto have not been adequately discussed.

The paper purports not to establish some overarching theories of comparative study but to observe local, specific similarities. Primarily, the goal of this study is to make a body of Chinese poetry accessible, through highlighting certain aspects of Chinese poetry similar to those of English poetry, to an English-speaking audience who has no access to Chinese poetry other than translations. For this purpose, the discussion will be focused on the specific similar patterns and tendencies rather than the general underlying assumptions about literature by different cultures.

At the outset of the discussion, however, it is advisable to alert the audience to the enormous differences arbitrarily excluded from the discussion but nevertheless presenting difficulties to any attempt at cross-cultural comparison.

Difficulty in cross-cultural comparison can arise from several sources. One is the underlying assumptions about literature which differ from culture to culture. In eighteenth-century England, for example, poetry was regarded primarily as a medium for social conversation. Since the Romantic Age, however, poetry has been regarded alternatively as a
vehicle for self-expression, for the instrument of cultivating minds, for disseminating private vision and for dramatizing an inner state. In China, poetry has traditionally been viewed as a means to express \textit{zhì} (literally will/intention/feeling) has gone through several stages of transformation, varying from generation to generation of poets and scholars.\footnote{1}

Difficulty also arises from the differences in language. Although scholars from different disciplines—linguists, anthropologists and psychologists—have been trying to establish universals of world languages, fundamental linguistic particularities have left their deep marks in national literature. Chinese, for example, is a tonal language, whose basic unit of meaning is a monosyllabic character with a fixed tone. The verbs do not have inflections regardless of the tense or number or gender of the subject. Thus each monosyllabic character is a convenient rhythmic unit which lends itself to certain distinctive formal patterns of verse, as we will see in the next chapter.

Other linguistic particularities distinguish poetry written in Chinese and in English. Metrical patterns in Chinese, for example, are not defined by the number of stressed or unstressed syllables but by the tonal quality of each word. Consequently, instead of "iambic" or "trochaic," the term to describe a Chinese verse line are "level-deflected- deflected" or "deflected-level-level," where "level" and "deflected" refer to the tonal quality of each character in the sequence.

Further, classical Chinese syntax is less rigidly bound by formal grammatical rules than that of a western language. The copula verb "to be," for example, is an indispensible word in the English syntactic
structure; but in Chinese, depending on the context, the copula does not have to be present. Nor does Chinese syntax necessarily require the subject to make a statement grammatically complete. In many Chinese lyric poems, especially the imagistic ones, the subject of action or perception is absent and has to be inferred.

Such linguistic particulars stem from, and reflect, the habits of the mind. One of the possible reasons for the absence of personal pronouns, as Wai-lim Yip suggests, is that "it is in tune with the Chinese concept of losing yourself in the flux of events, the Way (Tao), the million changes constantly happening before us." Hence a dilemma in translating Chinese poems into English. It would be violating grammatical rules if the originally absent subject remained absent in the English translation. Translators often feel obliged to insert a pronoun "I" or "he" depending on the individual interpretation. Then the question of authenticity of tone arises. With the subject absent, the lyric voice in Chinese poetry sounds unassuming and the speaker remains unobtrusive. In the English translation, that sense of anonymity is lost, or, in some other cases, an implied universal experience is ascribed to a single agent when a subject I or she is inserted.

In his discussion on the possibility and necessity of comparative study in various disciplines of the humanities, Professor Richard Smith observes that one of the practical difficulties in cross-cultural comparison is the lack of "an analytical vocabulary that will allow us to converse across academic disciplines and area specialties with reasonable clarity" and finding "meaningful equivalents for unfamiliar concepts." Similarly, this writer feels handicapped for lack of a shared body of terminology in Chinese and
Western literary critical traditions. A common term in the Western literary critical tradition is formed by adding a suffix "-ism" to any word to designate a stylistic tendency or an attempt at a new form in the same medium. Traditional Chinese scholars, on the other hand, categorize literary tendencies or phenomena in terms of interdependent polarities such as shen and ma (appearance and essence), jing and qing (scene and sentiment), etc. For the lack of an adequately established frame of reference, the discussion will use the categorization and terminology of Western literary criticism.

Despite the difficulties, I nevertheless believe that certain poetic techniques and aesthetics are shared between the Western and Oriental poetry, and on the basis of the belief I propose to compare Chinese poetry with certain genres of Anglo-American poetry.

This comparative study takes a bipartite form. In the first chapter, I intend to demonstrate the formal and rhetorical similarities between Chinese poetry and the heroic couplets of Alexander Pope; in the second I attempt to examine some aspects of techniques shared by certain types of Chinese Tang poetry and modern Anglo-American poetry. Although the title of the study indicates a general concern with form, the definition for the word "form" shifts as the discussion progresses from one chapter to another. Chapter One attempts to demonstrate the individual beauty of emotional and intellectual communications achieved by Chinese poets and Pope through the deliberate use of conventional verse forms. Chapter Two deals with what Lessing regards as the "aesthetic form"—"the relations between the sensuous nature of the art medium and the conditions of human perception" or, specifically, the "spatial form" (Joseph Frank) in
Chinese and English poetic works which employ the technique of juxtaposition in the objective presentation of images. No attempt will be made at this point to establish connections between the two apparently unrelated parts. The coherence of the bipartite study, as I see it, comes from the fact that each part treats one or another quality shared by Chinese and English poetry.

Finally, since this study is meant to be a preliminary step toward establishing a cross-cultural perspective for the comparative study of poetry, it remains somewhat open-ended, even though a tentative conclusion is attempted toward the end of each chapter.
Chapter One  Affinity of Precision

Given the tremendous difference between Chinese poetry and English poetry, it is nevertheless possible that similarity in difference, or in Alexander Pope's words, "order in variety," does exist. In terms of formal aspects, Pope's poetry of heroic couplets shows an affinity with a kind of Chinese poetry featuring the couplet-based parallelism. It is the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate that through the deliberate use of a conventional, restrictive verse form, both the Chinese poets and Alexander Pope communicate nuances of emotional or intellectual meaning precisely and concisely.

To demonstrate the similarities, we should first look at the form of the heroic couplet in Pope's age and find its parallel aspects in the Chinese verse form. The heroic couplet, as is well known, consists of two deca-syllabic lines. In the Neo-Classical period in which Pope writes his poetry, these lines are usually end-stopped. A long pause at the end of the second line, which rhymes with the first line of the couplet, closes the couplet off from the next couplet. However, as Professor William B. Piper emphasizes, the persistent closure of the heroic couplet is "only one aspect of the normal metrical organization. This pause, which divides each couplet from the next is...only the strongest in a regular hierarchy of metrical pauses."1 The hierarchy Professor Piper talks about exists because at the end of the first line there is a pause weaker than the one at the end of the second line; and there is a still weaker pause, the caesura, which occurs somewhere within each line. These hierarchical pauses divide the closed couplet into two major segments, that is, two lines, or into four half lines.
Owing to its divided and subdivided closure, allowing segments to work together or against each other, the structure of the heroic couplet lends itself to the dynamic play of parallelism and antithesis.

In general terms, Chinese poetry, which is also highly regulated in form, has some formal aspects similar to those of the heroic couplet. The lines in a Chinese poem are end-stopped and the number of the mono-syllabic characters in each line is fixed. Moreover, a Chinese poem is usually conceived of as a couplet-based structure. For illustration of these aspects, we can look at some examples:

Seeing off a Friend  Li Po

Blue mountains stretch along the northern city wall,
White river winds around the east town.
Here once taking leave of the friend,
The lonely traveller starts his ten-thousand mile journey.
Floating clouds, the way-faring man's mood,
Setting sun, the old friends' feeling.
Waving goodbye here you leave,
Neigh, neigh our horses at parting.

No Title  Li Shang-yin

Difficult to see each other and difficult to part,
East winds languid and flowers in hundreds drooping.
The silkworm's thread breaks only when the worm dies,
The candle's tears will not dry until the candle's burnt out.
Sad in the morning to see hair turn grey in the mirror,
Cold in the evening to compose lines in the moonlight.
Penglai [the fairy mountain] is not far from here,
The blue fairy-bird comes often to see how you fare.

These two poems are of a genre called 律诗 or lù-shī, where lù means "regulated" and shī means "poem" or "verse." This genre flourished in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) and remained the most influential in
the later development of various kinds of regulated verse forms ever since. Because of its tremendous formal influence in the Chinese poetry-writing tradition, it is proper to discuss the representative formal aspects of the regulated verse comparable to those of the heroic couplet.

From the original version in Chinese, we can see that each poem consists of eight lines and the word number of each line is either five, as is the case with the first poem, or seven, as with the second. The rhyme scheme, which is untranslatable here, is either a b c b a b d b, as of the first poem by Li Po, or a a b a a a c a, as in the second poem by Li Shang-yin. As a required feature of the regulated verse, at least two of the couplets in each poem have to be parallel in syntax and antithetic in meaning. This formally required regulated parallelism, as exemplified by both poems quoted above, "operated primarily on the level of couplet; the two lines within a couplet are organized as corresponding parts of a balanced and enclosed system." In Li Po's poem, we have Line One and Line Two, Line Five and Line Six in parallel structure respectively. In the first couplet, for example, the adjective "Blue" of the first line matches "White" of the second; the noun "mountains" of the first line matches "river" in the second; the verb "stretch" finds its counterpart in the verb "winds."

Likewise, in the second poem, two couplets, Line Three and Line Four, Line Five and Line Six, are parallel in syntactical structure and antithetical in meaning. The "silkworm" in Line Three, for example, matches the "candle" in Line Four, both being earthy images familiar to a dominantly agricultural population. The "silkworm's thread," moreover, matches the "candle's tears," both being natural phenomena noted for their constancy despite their inherently ephemeral nature. Consisting of two line-defined metaphors of changeless love, the couplet-based parallel structure
enhances the beauty conveyed through the simple earthy image with its formal symmetry.

The syntactical and rhetorical symmetry between each two parallel lines discussed above may be sufficient to indicate the couplet-based structure of the Chinese regulated verse. Unfortunately, one dimension of these regulated couplets' beauty, the prescribed tone pattern that dictates the variation of tones from line to line, is lost in translation due to the irreconcilable discrepancy between the tonal language and a non-tonal one.

An improvised illustration of the otherwise untranslatable tone pattern will help establish the similarity of the couplet-based structure in Chinese poetry and the heroic couplet. Take the sign "-" as the symbol of the level tone and "v" as the deflected tone of each word, the tone pattern for two lines in a sequence would look like this (This pattern is applicable to the pentasyllabic lines with the first two tone units deleted):

- - v v v - -,

v v - - v v -.

and the pattern for the couplet next to the one just illustrated would be:

v v - - - v v,

- - v v v - -.

Although it has no counterpart in English poetry, the tone pattern in Chinese poetry is relevant to our discussion; for it is on the basis of the couplet that the required tonal alternation takes place. As we can see from the illustrated tonal pattern, the lines are meant to be read in pairs to maintain the tonal balance whereas the prescribed variation from line to line in tonal quality helps to avoid monotony. Each couplet, while being closed off by the emphatic pause at the end of its second line, is tonally linked to the couplet next to it in the sequence since the first line of the
second couplet follows the tone pattern similar to that of the second line in the preceding couplet.

Now it may be clear that lu shi, the regulated verse, is a couplet-based structure. A point that needs noting is that the couplet structure is not confined to the genre of lu shi alone but also common to many variations as well. As Stephen Owen observes, "the tonally balanced couplet is the primary unit of all regulated forms. This is true of the fixed genres, but it is even more true developmentally." In poems exceeding the eight-line boundary and of a less strict tonal pattern, the couplet is still the basic structural unit.

Another formal aspect shared by poems in the two languages is the hierarchy of pauses. As in the closed couplet of Pope's poetry, the pause at the end of the second line in a Chinese couplet is the strongest in the hierarchy; and the caesura, which occurs often after the fourth monosyllabic character in a heptasyllabic line or after the second character in a pentasyllabic line, is still less strong than the pause at the end of the first line of the couplet. And as in the English couplet, the similarly divided and subdivided couplet in a Chinese couplet lends itself to parallel syntax and antithetical expressions. For illustration, we can look at these two couplets from two long poems. Literally:

在天愿做比翼鸟,
in sky willing be compete-wing bird
在地愿为连理枝.
in earth willing be link branch tree

The translated version may read:

In the sky we would be birds flying side by side,
On the earth we would be trees intertwined with one another.
This couplet is from a poem of one hundred and fifty-two lines about the tragic love between a deposed emperor and his favorite concubine who was killed by the order of the emperor upon the demand of the rebellious general and soldiers. The two lines of the couplet are parallel in structure. Each line expresses the grieved emperor's wish to be reunited with his love through an image suggesting union. Both images, appearing in the second half of the line, receive an emphasis by virtue of their terminal and therefore more emphatic position.

Now look at another couplet from a poem of thirty-two lines by Li Po, again literally:

前门长摆后门关，
front door long bow back door close

今日结交明日散。
this day make association next day change

and the couplet in an English translation reads:

[They] bow to me in the front door and shut me out at the back door,

[They] make friends with me today and turn their backs to me tomorrow.

This poem by Li Po is an epistle to his cousin in which he describes "friends" who desert him as soon as his fortune falls. In this couplet, there are two line-defined categories of the friends' changing attitudes, the first one in spatial terms and the second one in temporal terms. Each of these two categories in turn is subdivided into two segments which are antithetical in terms of attitudes toward the poet. On the basis of the two-part couplet, the friends' attitudes here and there are balanced with their attitudes now and then. Similarly, each two-part line of the couplet provides a structural basis for contrasting the two opposite attitudes.
From the examples quoted above, we can see that the structure of Chinese verse form is well adapted to parallel and antithetic statements. The reason that Pope’s poetry, out of a huge body of the heroic couplet poetry, is most likely to be compared with Chinese couplets is that the same rhetorical devices of parallelism and antithesis predominate in his works. Look at the following couplets, for example:

Here in full light the russet Plains extend;
There wrapt in Clouds the blueish Hills ascend;

(Williamson Forest)

With too much quickness ever to be taught;
With too much thinking to have common thought;
You purchase pain with all that joy can give,
And die of nothing but a rage to live.

(Of the Character of Women)

In these three couplets, lines are in parallel structure. The general tendency of these couplets is that words or phrases in one line of the couplet match their counterparts in the other line. In the first couplet, for example, the adverb "here" matches the adverb "there;" the prepositional phrase "in full light" as adverbial matches the participial phrase "wrapt in Cloud" as adverbial; then "russet" finds its counterpart in "blueish," as "Plains" in "Hills" and "extend" in "ascend." This close matching in the parts of speech is similar to that of a Chinese couplet. The couplet "Here in full light the russet Plains extend;/ There wrapt in Clouds the blueish Hills ascend" is reminiscent of Li Po’s couplet "Blue mountains stretch along the northern city wall,/ White river winds around the east town."

The pointedly-matched syntactical patterning, however, shows Pope’s parallelism at its extreme. In many occasions, Pope would vary the word order of the lines as in the couplet "The levell’d Towns with weeds tie
cover'd o'er;/ The hollow Winds thro' naked Temples roar;" where the verb in the second line "roar" is suspended to the end of the line. This deliberate alteration of syntactical order is not as great a rhetorical divergence as it seems from the Chinese couplet, which strives to maintain the pointed symmetry between two parallel lines. Rather, the word-order variation is a device to avoid repetitiousness in a way similar to the tonal variation pattern in a Chinese couplet-based parallelism. Underlying this local variation in a general parallel pattern of the couplet may be a recognition that no two similar things in the world are exactly alike and the fine particularities should be acknowledged as well as the general similarity of the pattern.

With Pope, as with those great Chinese poets, parallelism almost always works in conjunction with antithesis and paradox. In the couplet from Windsor Forest discussed above, for instance, the two lines parallel in syntax are antithetic in meaning. In the first line, the poet is describing "here" which is the russet flat land in full light. In the second line, "there" refers to the blueish hilly areas in hazy distance. The contrast presented by the two lines in the same couplet adds to the sense of expansiveness and variety in our mental picture of Windsor Forest.

The second example of Pope's couplet presents a different case in terms of rhetorical pattern. The "too...to" structure parallels one line with the other. Both portray a lady who overhears herself. In this couplet, the antithesis works more between the two segments of each line than between the two lines. A quickness of mind is a desirable quality which enables one to learn fast and constant thinking or mental exercise inclines one to be more comprehensive in thinking; but here the first part of the "too...to" structure, which occurs in the first part of the line, undermines the
idea conveyed by the second part of the "too...to" structure in the second segment of the line. Obviously, the statement made by each line of this couplet is an implied paradox, which is a "special kind of antithesis in which both halves of the antithesis are asserted to be true." 5

Likewise, the third example of Pope's couplet is a pair of paradoxes in parallel structure. In this couplet, the parallel between the two lines is not so much in syntactical structure as in the semantic one. "Pain" is antithetical to "joy" and "die" antithetical to "live." But when joy is identified as the source of "pain" and to "live" as the cause of death, both lines become line-defined paradoxes.

After this demonstration of Pope's characteristic rhetorical patterns, we are probably more prepared for Rebbeca Parkin's generalization that there "is no major poem of Pope's in which all three--parallelism, antithesis, paradox--are not in some degree exemplified." 6 This phenomenon of three devices working together, as we may recall, is common with Chinese poems too. In this connection, what Parkin says about Pope's workmanship is true to that of a Chinese poet: "Parallelism is the element which makes for stability and repose. Its basic function is the establishment of a fixed and harmonious framework against which complicating factors like antithesis and paradox can play off. The three elements, therefore,...are structurally complementary." 7

To illustrate further Parkin's observation of the structural complementarity of the three rhetorical devices, we need to read the couplet in conjunction with the others in a sequence. For the purpose of comparison, we can look at two sequences of couplets, one being a Chinese poem and one from a poem by Pope, together.

A literal translation of the Chinese poem reads:
不向長安路上行，
not toward Chang'an road on travel
却教山寺厌逢迎。
but make mountain temple satisfied meet welcome
味无味中求吾乐，
taste no taste amid seek my pleasure
材不材间度此生。
talent no talent between live this life
宁为我，毋为卿。
rather be me, than be official
人间走遍却归耕。
man-world travel over but return ploughing
一松一竹真朋友,
one pine one bamboo real friend
山花山鸟好兄弟。
mountain flower mountain bird good younger-brother older brother.

In grammatical English the poem reads:

Not travelling on the road to Chang'an,
But cajoling welcome from the temple in the mountain.
With a taste for the tasteless I seek my pleasure,
On the talent for being untalented I live my life.
[I would] rather be myself, than an imperial minister be.
Having been the world over, I return to ploughing.
Finding true friends in pine and bamboo,
Enjoying kinship with mountain birds and flowers.

This sequence of couplets is an eight-line poem by a Chinese poet, Xin Qi-Ji, of the Song Dynasty (960–1279 A.D.). The poem is written in a genre different from lu shi, the regulated verse, but retaining the couplet-based structure.
Now read the passage from Pope for comparison:

The Groves of Eden, vanish'd now so long,
Live in description, and look green in song:
These, were my breast inspir'd with equal fame,
Like them in beauty, should be like in fame;
Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
Here earth and water seem to strive again;
Not chaos-like together crushed and bruis'éd,
But, as the world, harmoniously confus'éd:
Where order in variety we see,
And where, tho' all things differ, all agree.

(Windsor Forest)

Although different from Xin's poem in theme and tone, this passage from Pope's poem is nevertheless comparable in rhetorical patterns. One apparent parallel between the two poems is that two places are presented in parallel terms in both poems. In Xin's poem, the capital city Chang'an and the temple in the mountain are two images of places evoking antithetical responses. The ancient capital city stands for fame and position, while the mountain temple suggests quietude and retirement. In Pope's poem, likewise, Eden and Windsor are supposed to be parallel places. But as Professor Piper points out, any "paralleling of just two items carries an antithetical flavor."\(^8\) Eden is immortally famous, Windsor may not be.

The structural similarities between the two poems, however, are to be found in specific rhetorical practices. First, both poems have line-defined antitheses in parallel structure. In Xin's poem, there are lines like "Rather be myself, than an imperial minister be," or the implied antithesis of "a taste for tasteless" which sounds like oxymoron. In Pope's lines, similarly, we have "Live in description, and look green in song;" or oxymoron-like "harmoniously confus'éd" and "order in variety." All these are line-defined
antitheses.

Second, in both poems there are couplet-defined antitheses in parallel terms. In Xin's poem, the first two lines are antithetical to one another. The coordinate phrasing "Not...But" beginning the two lines respectively suggests a corresponding level of the two ideas but at the same time sets the two ideas in contrast. Just because the phrase emphasizing contrast occupies the front position in each of the two lines, our attention is called immediately to the emphatic antithesis the poem aims at. Similarly, in Pope's passage, we have a couplet where each line begins with a coordinate term of the contrasting phrase "Not...But...." The effect, likewise, is the emphatic contrast of ideas to which the poet wants to call our attention.

Now what we have from either line-defined or couplet-contained antithesis is an effective use of metrical pattern, or in Professor Piper's words, the "emphatic combination of rhetoric and meter, called 'correctness' by the Augustans."9 In the hands of a lesser poet, the strictly regulated form of either the Chinese or heroic couplet can be an uncomfortable restraint. But for a classic poet like Xin or Pope, the couplet is (as Peter Quennell says of Pope) a perfect vehicle of expression in which the poet's "antithetic turn and his love of precision and symmetry found an outlet, no less than the sensuous and visionary qualities by which they were accompanied."10 In Xin's poem, for example, the poet seems to be talking about making a choice between office and resignation, fame and obscurity. So he uses two evocative images of both actual and symbolic places. From his preference for the mountain temple to the political center Chang'an, we know that he prefers retirement to office or position. In the line-defined antithesis "Rather be myself, than an imperial minister be," the poet makes an explicit statement which seems to leave no doubt
whatever as to the poet's preference.

However, the choice is not as clear-cut as it sounds. The ambivalent feelings of the poet are ingeniously suggested by two line-defined implied antitheses: "With a taste for the tasteless I seek my pleasure, / On the talent for being untalented I live my life." Yes, the poet prides himself on having taste and talent. But this tone of self-congratulation is qualified immediately by the objective of his "taste" and the "talent." After all, what is left by his choice is merely "the tasteless" or the role of being "untalented." It is hard to believe that the speaker could really relish his "choice." Our scepticism, if we read the poem biographically, is not groundless. The poet was a one-time warrior and had fought on the battlefield in defence of his country against foreign invaders. However, patriotism was not appreciated at the time. The neglected patriotic poet was not in a position to serve the country with his full valor and talent. Hence "the taste for the tasteless" and "talent for being untalented." The expressions are paradoxical, but they reflect more poignantly the poet's bitter disappointment at the royal court and the hopelessness of the individual patriot. So beneath the parallel structure maintaining order and stability, we sense the tension and complication conveyed by the paradoxes.

In the passage from Pope's poem, the rhetorical devices work in a similar way. Parallel syntactical structure or symmetrical coordinating phrases suggest order and harmony, but antithesis and paradox are at work within the same structure of order. In the couplet-contained antithesis "Not chaos-like together crushed and bruis'd, /But, as the world, harmoniously confus'd," one line introduces the possibility of chaos by negating it and the other reinforces the position of order with a paradoxical
phrase "harmoniously confus'd." In the couplet next to the one just discussed, both lines contain line-defined paradoxes. Two parallel clauses in the second line, "all things differ, all agree," are antithetical to each other. But because the first one "all things differ" is introduced by the conjunctural word "though," which indicates a concession to the following statement, the phrase in the ending and hence emphatic position gains the dominance in the two apparently dichotomous statements. Hence order reigns over variety.

Between Xin's poem and Pope's, we might notice a difference in the style of the two speakers. In appearance, the form of the Chinese poem is in a more orderly symmetrical pattern than the English form and seems therefore more to suggest harmony. However, the semantic nature of the paradox "the taste for the tasteless" and "the talent for being untalented" undercuts the sense of harmony or contentment in which the speaker seems to announce his intention of resignation and implies the complex feelings with which the speaker takes this stance of retirement more by necessity than by choice. Conversely, the passage from Pope's poem seems to be in a less symmetrical form and introduces explicitly the theme of confusion and variety. But all these possible confusions and tensions implied by the antithesis are resolved into the paradox of "order in variety." About this contrast, we can say that different styles or approaches reflect different world views or states of mind. But if we penetrate below the surface of the topical difference, we may find the common ground between the two poetic practices: by similar means of parallelism, antithesis and paradox both speakers make complex, subtle, and precise statements that acknowledge the complexity and contradictions of nature or of man.
Through this brief survey of Pope’s poetry and some classical Chinese poetry, we can see that both Pope and the Chinese poets can “make extremely precise distinctions between the elements of their thought,” “balance these elements as they oppose one another, and line them up as they agree.” Within the limit of a strict metric or verse form, the poets in different languages perform feats of highly disciplined workmanship. The result of this exertion is poetry marked by clarity, precision and economy of statement or expression. Many couplets, when taken out of the context, become epigrams or bons mots, “the climax of social conversation.” Couplets like “A little learning is a dangerous thing;/ Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring” or “Good-nature and good-sense must ever join;/ To err is human, to forgive, divine” are quoted in a variety of situations. Likewise, in Chinese, “The silkworm’s thread breaks only when the worm’s dies;/ The candle’s tears will not dry until the candle’s burnt out” has become a frequently quoted saying applicable to not only someone who remains faithful to his love but also a person who is determined to be true to his cause or goal.

Admittedly, there are striking differences in theme and tone between Pope’s heroic couplet and the Chinese poetry. Pope’s poetry is generally of a conversational style; the Chinese poetry is in general marked by lyric qualities such as imagination and emotion. This difference in tone and emphasis is largely due to the cultural difference in conception of the poetry’s function. In Pope’s England, during the age that champions common sense, poetry was ideally a vehicle for social discussion of intellectual problems; for a Chinese poet, the classical conception of poetry was that poetry is a vehicle through which a person communicates “zhì” (feeling/intention). Consequently, the focus of interest differs. Social
manners and behavior are often topics of Pope's poetic discourse, with
social or intellectual pretensions as the target of his witty gentle satire.
The focus of interest in a Chinese poem, on the other hand, is often of a
private nature, usually about a subjective state. Even when the individual
poet's concerns are of a communal nature, such as concerns over the
territorial integrity of the nation, these communal concerns are uttered
often in voices marked by lyric power.

However, this does not mean that Chinese poetry lacks a
conversational quality, for Chinese lyric poems are usually part of a social
exchange in the circle of literate men and women in traditional times. As
Stephen Owen notes, "In Chinese classical literature the poet and his reader
were on the same level—'someone speaking to someone else.' In the
continuity of extrapoetic experience, the poem asked for participation and
response." Just as Pope's tone implies an inclusion of the audience into
the intellectual conversation, the Chinese regulated verse is often the
medium of polite, graceful communication, even when a poem is charged
with emotion. Many poems are written to and for friends or relatives.
Even the solitary poems are "a special category of social poetry" in that
they are circulated among friends and are often answered by the friends's
poems matching the rhyme and addressing the same subject or
sentiments.13

In conclusion, we can say a few words about the poets' achievements
through verse form. As Yu-kung Kao points out in his discussion of the
aesthetics of the Chinese regulated verse, the form can have its own
"formal significance." "In its most powerful state," observes Kao, "poetic
form plays a necessary role in shaping the creative process. Consequently,
in a successfully executed poem, the form is an integral part of the poet's
intention and is inextricable from the realization of the poet's vision."\textsuperscript{15}

This comment on the effective use of the Chinese poetic form is applicable to the case of Pope. Both Pope and the Chinese poets "achieve effects of individual beauty through the deliberate use of a conventional aesthetic idiom."\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, the conscientious employment of a prescribed verse form indicates a two-fold intention of the poet: on one hand it has social ramification—the adoption of a pre-established form indicates a poet's cultural integration; on the other hand it has intellectual radiance—a regulated form entails a meticulous, coherent arrangement of the materials.

An articulate form is a step toward achieving precision. The choice of form helps to sharpen focus and narrow enormous discursive possibility. On the common ground of the closed couplet and the predominance of parallelism and antithesis, both Pope's poetry and that of Chinese poets champion the classic ideals of simplicity, symmetry and regularity. If what Arthur O. Lovejoy says is true, that the loss of the neo-classical ideals in the late eighteenth century was "initially due to the influence and example of Chinese art,"\textsuperscript{17} then Chinese art was incompletely, if not mistakenly, presented to eighteenth-century English society.
Chapter Two  Affinity of Energy

I

Having discussed the formal similarities between Chinese poetry and English heroic couplet poetry, we can turn our attention to another area of comparability. In terms of the aesthetic form—"the relations between the sensuous nature of the art medium and the conditions of human perception"—a certain type of Chinese Tang poetry has affinities with modern Anglo-American poetry. Since both "Chinese Tang poetry" and "modern Anglo-American poetry" are very general terms, it is necessary to define the terms and delimit the range of reference before the discussion.

In general, "modern literature" refers to works produced from the turn of this century onward and is marked by distinctive features which can be roughly designated by the term Modernism. Traditional literature, as opposed to the modern, is characterized by linearity. Events are arranged in a sequential order to fit into the well-designed pattern of plot development. Causal relationships are made explicit. Thanks to the conscientious guidance of the authorial voice, the reader is left in no doubt as to how one event at a certain point of time leads to another at the next moment.¹

Modernism, on the contrary, is characterized by what literary critics call the spatial form, an outcome of the modern writers' attempt to erase traces of time-value. The emphasis is on simultaneity, the instantaneous perception of all constituent elements at once. But since the medium the writers work with is language consisting of a linear chain of individual words, the writers have to find a way to "undermine the inherent
consecutiveness of language" so as to frustrate the reader's normal
expectation of a sequence and force him to perceive the elements of a work
as adjacent in space rather than unrolling in time.\textsuperscript{2} And that way is
juxtaposition, to set disparate elements side by side with connectives
omitted. In The Banquet Years, Roger Shattuck observes that there are two
kinds of juxtaposition: heterogeneous and homogeneous. The former refers
to the practice of setting mutually reacting elements together to produce an
explosive exciting texture. The latter, the practice of juxtaposing uniform
elements, results in a style of circularity.\textsuperscript{3} In either case, the traditional
linear progression is absent; the text is characterized by atemporality,
discontinuity, and non-causality. In such modern literary work "unity
becomes not progression but intensification by standing still."\textsuperscript{4}

Germinated in this climate, Anglo-American poetry of the early
twentieth century participates in the "spatial form" experiment. Many
poetic works produced at that time consist of disconnected, fragmentary
events or speeches juxtaposed in the manner of a collage. A poem
representative of modern juxtaposition is The Waste Land, in which
disparate details from imaginary legends or historical events and
fragmentary speeches by unidentified voices are set side by side without
connectives. Take two consecutive passages from this poem for
illustration:

What is that sound high in the air
Gambrel of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings.
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

(The Waste Land)

As we can see, the causal relationship between the images in each stanza or each line or between the consecutive stanzas is very tenuous. In the first stanza, "sound high in the air," "hooded hordes swarming/ Over endless plains," falling towers and big cities are juxtaposed without explanation. In the second stanza, disparate details, a woman fiddling music on her tightly-drawn hair and "bats with baby faces in the violet light" and "voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells" suggest no overt unifying principle either. The metaphysical and historical discontinuity between the two stanzas is accentuated by the striking contrast in the scope of vision and in temporality. In the first stanza, images in the present tense are of a wider scope and suggest a macrocosmic vision, while the minute details presented in the past tense in the second stanza suggest a microcosmic interest. Amid these fragments of visual or auditory impressions there is no indication of an ordering principle or unifying perspective. Rather, the elements or images seem to be perceived from a shifting or multiple perspective and patched together on one plane.

From this example one can see that the juxtapositional method allows
a limited textual space to include more aspects or elements than a normal perspective would allow; in Cubist paintings or traditional Chinese landscape paintings aspects normally perceived from different angles are included on the same plane. As a result of the juxtapositional mode, the style of modern literary works is characterized by ellipsis, by gaps and condensations, a style that testifies to the modern writer's effort to approximate the "form" of consciousness, which is said to function by leaps.

Another distinguishing feature of modern Anglo-American poetry is its emphasis on intensity of perception. As many critics recognise, modern poetry received its momentum from a literary movement in the early twentieth century—imagism. Though short-lived as a movement, imagism influenced modern poetry with its technical and aesthetic principles. "imagisme" is the word ezra pound used first to refer to h. d.'s poem "hermes of the ways" in which, as hugh kenner observes, "perception slides over perception" and "narrative implication [is]...compressed to the uttermost." In the particular case of "hermes of the ways," "imagisme" refers to the poetic practice of articulating a psychic relief through images of tangled grasses and the sea's gnashing teeth; in general, the term "imagisme" refers to a poetic technique that relies on details of the objective world for representation of the inner states of human beings.

In Pound's definition of imagisme, an image may be a natural object or "luminous detail" out of history which should be treated directly in succinct diction. However, the technical dictum is not to be confused with the doctrine of the literary movement. The former, as Hugh Kenner observes, can help any talented person who follows it to write a trivial poem while the latter "is not applicable to triviality." The image is not
some visual detail important for its pictorial effect but "that which presents
an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." Imagism
means energy and effort; it "does not appease itself by reproducing what is
seen, but by setting some other seen things into relation."7

To set "other seen things into relation" is to establish a structure that
generates meaning, to set up an ambience for a new element to come into
being, or to create a vortex, "from which, and through which, and into
which, ideas are constantly rushing."8 For this idea, Pound found his
inspiration in his study of Chinese ideograms, which enabled him to see
that what matters in the outcome of two or more visual details perceived
simultaneously is not the sum of the two put together but a new element
resulting from the relation of the interacting elements. For example, the
sun tangles in the branches of the tree signifies the east. The sun and the
tree are two distinct, temporally unrelated entities. When the two visual
entities are perceived together simultaneously, the perception is not the
sum of the sun plus the tree, but a conceptual idea. The "definiteness of
perceptual images" is transformed into "the essentiality of a conceptual
image."9 It is this creation of a new element through the juxtaposition of
the sun and the tree, or between any other interacting or inter-predicating
images, "Luminous Details," or visual events, that matters. This perceiving
act is similar to the film technique of montage, the technique of sliding two
shots together to produce an effect which is "qualitatively distinguishable
from each component element viewed separately."10

The static, mute images's capacity for signification is embedded in the
cultural tradition. In Pound's conception, "words are like great hollow
cones" "charged with a force like electricity." The energy which fills the
cones is "the power of tradition, of centuries of race consciousness, of
agreement, of association. In this aspect, Imagism is similar to pictorial
analogy, to Impressionism, and to Symbolism--its cousins, which also
employ images for communication. But to have these word-cones radiate
meaning, different schools use different ways or methods. We can have a
brief look at the Imagism and its three cousins to see the subtle
differentiations manifested in the different methods of releasing the
energy.

In the practice of visual analogy, the images function as subordinate
elements to make a central abstract idea perceivable in terms of some
objects. In such case, the object or image always accompanies a
propositional statement which it helps to support or to illustrate. To show
the contrast between the two modes--the visual analogy versus projection
of a state of mind through presentation of images--we can look at the
following poem:

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich, proud cost of outworn buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss and loss of store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay,
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
That Time will come and take my love away.
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

(William Shakespeare, Sonnets)

This poem employs imagery to make a visual analogy. The images of
a 'lofty tower' being "down-razed" or "the hungry ocean gain[ing] /
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore" are not allowed to act on the reader by themselves. The speaker himself is overtly interpreting or re-presenting the images. Only through the speaker, who is conspicuously making explanatory connections and analogies, does the reader see the image analogous to the idea. In this example, the perceptual images are not objectively but arbitrarily linked to the idea that love will inevitably die. The image of a visual analogy, in Pound's words, is an "explanatory metaphor."13 In contrast, Imagism combines "the essentiality of the conceptual image with the definiteness of the perceptual image" so that no authorial attempt at establishing explicit connections is made to enlighten the reader.14

Although Imagism inherits the mode of juxtaposition from Impressionism, it does not adopt the Impressionistic tendency toward superficial recording of impressions. On the contrary, the objective presentation of Imagism is very selective about details and is marked by the presentational concentration. To convey his impression of an underground train station in Paris, for example, Pound first wrote a thirty-line poem. But he destroyed it because of what he called "the second intensity" of the poem. Then he wrote a poem half that length. The final version of the poem "In a Station of the Metro," however, consists of only two line-defined images as a result of the poet's conscientious effort "to select impressions that would dart inward without discarding the sense of simultaneity in his presentation."15

Imagism and Symbolism share the premise that selected external objects carry a subjective significance. Both schools presume that objects of the phenomenal world are important for the possibilities of meaning fused with them, for their potential to point to or suggest some conceptual,
abstract ideas or feelings. The essential difference between the two, as imagists such as Pound see it, is that while the relationship between the object as Symbol and the referent is one-to-one and therefore fixed, the image presents "an emotional or intellectual complex." "The symbolist's symbols have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7. The imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs a, a and x in algebra." 16 To see how objects as the Image function, we can look at the following poem:

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

( T. S. Eliot's Preludes )

This poem demonstrates that unlike the symbol which stands for some object or idea in a fixed relation, the image presents a whole "system of emotionally toned ideas" operating unobserved in the mind which caused random trains of thought to return continually to one object or feeling." 17 "The smell of steaks in passageways," the "grimy scraps/ Of withered leaves" and "newspapers from vacant lots," for example, do not have fixed or specialized significance. It is only when placed in a specific context that defines their mutual, complementary relationship that these selected objects or images with culturally embedded connotations constitute "an
emotional or intellectual complex."

After this brief survey of the characteristics of modern Anglo-American poetry, it is time to turn to Chinese poetry produced in the Tang Dynasty, especially to that of the High Tang period, "The Great Age of Chinese Poetry." In her book on the imagery of Chinese poetry, Pauline Yu summarizes the distinctive qualities for which the Tang poetry is noted: "its concentrated vision and form; its precise yet evocative imagery, its preference for the concise and concrete as opposed to the discursive and abstract; its mode of presentation which places as much value, if not more, on what is implied as on what is stated directly." Two tendencies in the poetic use of concrete images co-exist in the Tang Dynasty. One is to use an object of the world as an emblem of moral qualities established by cultural convention. In this case, a pine tree, for example, would stand purely for a person's moral integrity. The other tendency, which prevails in High Tang poetry, is to "bring together images from an ostensibly observed natural scene and integrate them into a coherent tableau" so that the images function in combination to communicate unstated emotional and/or intellectual meanings. In the Tang poetry of this kind, overt explanation of the exemplary significance of the image is absent. It is poetry of this latter tendency that will be looked at in this comparative study here.

In the Chinese poetic practice, as Yu notes, the persistently preferred mode has been "juxtaposition that left connections implicit rather than spelled out". Formal features of the specific verse form may have contributed to this preference. The regulated verse marked by the couplet-based parallelism, as discussed in Chapter One of the study, is one of the predominant poetic forms of the Tang Dynasty. Its binary structure, demanding that the reader pay attention to the corresponding lateral line,
structurally frustrates a narrative flow. "The onrushing forward movement is stopped in order to look backward and side ways, generating a retrospective lateral movement, dwelling within an enclosed space, and forming a circle. This form, or rather this form of reading, may serve as the most perfect illustration for depicting 'spatiality' and 'circularity' in poetry." And the restrictive verse forms, reinforced by a tendency to eliminate the function words, entail the compression of each poem. To illustrate these qualities, we can look at a poem by Du Fu first in literal translation then in a grammatical version:

Night Thoughts on the Journey

细草微风岸,
slender grass light breeze, river-bank
危樯独夜舟。
tall mast single night boat
星垂平野阔,
star fall flat wilderness widen
月涌大江流。
moon surge big river flow
名岂文章著,
name how writings make-known
官应老病休。
office should old sick resign
飘飘何所似?
float float what what like
heaven earth one sand gull

Slender grass, light breeze, river-bank,
Tall mast, alone at night on the boat.
Stars hang low, the flat wilderness stretches,
Moon surges, the big river rolls.
Can a name be made through writing,
Office should be resigned when one is old and sick.
Floating, floating, like what?
A seagull between heaven and earth.

This poem by Du Fu typifies one kind of Tang poetry. If we use Yu's terms of distinction between the two categories within the imagistic mode in Chinese Tang poetry, this poem by Du Fu belongs to the latter category where the objects do not necessarily have culturally established one-to-one relationship with some moral ideas but stand as they are perceived.

Several remarks can be made about the distinctive features of this typical poem. First, objects of the world—grass, breeze, mast, single boat, moon, star, sea gull—predominate in this poem. These images are important not only for their concreteness but for their interaction. Obviously, the technique employed here is juxtaposition. There are no connectives or transitional words to make clear the logical connection between the disparate objects. The rigorous elimination of grammatical or logical links results in a paratactical structure that, de-emphasizing syntactical time logic, compresses disparate elements into a compact space. Viewed separately in a sequential order, the images seem banal: "Stars hang low" or "the big river flows" may be a commonplace statement; "Moon surges" or "flat wilderness stretches" may not make sense. But when the two visual events "Stars hang low" and "the flat wilderness
stretches” are viewed simultaneously, they convey a sense of marvel or awe over the mystery, magnitude and fathomlessness of the cosmos. Similarly, when “Moon surges” and “the big river flows” are seen together, they communicate a feeling of mysterious motion or commotion beneath the quiet appearance of the cosmos. One possible emotive meaning, the tension between a purposeful cosmic force in motion and the purposeless wandering of an insignificant human individual, depends on the simultaneity in which the objects are perceived. The very interaction, the dynamic inter-relation between them, endows these commonplace elements with significance.

Second, though highly lyrical in tone, the poem retains the impersonality of the voice. This impersonality is a logical consequence of the avoidance of value-laden words or commentaries. The adjectives chosen here—"slender" "light" "tall" "single"—are all non-evaluative or, in the terms of Pound's definition, "primary epithets," the epithets that denote the objective physical quality of the things. For projection of a state of mind, the poet relies heavily on the images embodying emotional or intellectual meaning rather than on abstract propositional discourse and lets the selected details communicate for themselves.

From this analysis of Du Fu’s poem, we can see that the images in Chinese poetry may function similarly as those of Imagism as distinguished from pictorial analogy, Impressionism and Symbolism. The distinctions between Imagism and its three cousins underscore the comparability of Imagist poetry with some Chinese Tang poetry. Like the Image in English Imagist poetry, images in most Chinese poems of the High Tang Period distinguish themselves in function from the explanatory metaphors in a visual analogy. The images in Du Fu’s poem quoted above
are essential constituent elements from which implicit meaning, rather than explicit authorial interpretation, emerges.

The image in Chinese poetry can also differ from that in a Symbolist poem. In the imagistic kind of High Tang poetry typified by Du Fu’s poem, the “scenic elements are striking...for the fact that they are not single images functioning purely in a one-to-one relationship as vehicles for some conventional coded abstract quality but are combined into an integral whole.”23 To reconfirm this statement, here is another poem by Du Fu in which selected details function in a way similar to Imagism.

Chin Chou Poems: No. 17

Fall in border area, overcast sky settles in evening darkness,
No longer discernible is the morning light.
Rains off the eave wrinkle the dripping curtain,
Clouds over the mountain float across the low wall.
Cormorant peeps into the shallow well,
Earthworms crawl far into the hall.
Carriages and horses, how few and slack they are,
Weeds and vegetation grow tall at the front gate.

In terms of selectiveness about details, Chinese poetry also parallels the English imagist poetry. T. S. Eliot’s concept of the “objective correlative” describes Chinese and English imagistic practice alike. The poems by Du Fu quoted above demonstrate that one effective way (although not “the only way”) “of expressing emotions in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; ... a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which should be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.”24
II

So far, we have surveyed some general characteristics common to modern Anglo-American poetry and Chinese poetry from the Tang Dynasty. With some common ground established, it is time to illuminate the affinities on the basis of individual poems. The discussion will proceed in categories of comparative interest or emphasis: lyric emotion or subjectivity in objective presentation; impersonality of the lyric voice; immediacy or instantaneous impact of the poetic effect on the reader; the implied multiple possibility of meaning. As we will see, these categories are arbitrary and, because the categories are inter-related with or presuppose one another, discussion of a poem in one category overlaps that in another.

One characteristic shared by some Chinese poetry and modern Anglo-American poetry is the impersonality of the lyric voice or objectivity in projecting inner human states. This argument sounds self-contradicting because lyric voice implies subjectivity; but if we make a distinction between method and content, we can see that straightforward presentation of external objects serves to accentuate implicit lyric emotions. The technical rules of Pound's Imagism—"direct treatment of the things" and "To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation"—do stress directness and clarity of method. But the means is not to be confused with the end. The objective of Imagism is to communicate inner human state, though obliquely, through presentation of evocative objects or images.

Different aspects of straightforward presentation contribute to the
impersonality of the poetic voice. Among them the rigorous avoidance of
value-laden adjectives and of commentary or explanation is probably the
most common. Although Pound’s assertion that “a natural thing is an
adequate symbol” needs a lot qualifying, it indicates the resolution of the
Imagist poet to avoid authorial intervention in confronting the reader
directly with the image or mental landscape. Take a representative poem,
“The Jewel Stairs’ Grievance,” for example:

The jewelled steps are already quite white with dew,
   It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings,
And I let down the crystal curtain
   And watch the moon through the clear autumn.

Note.—Jewel stairs, therefore a palace. Grievance, therefore there is
something to complain of. Gauze stockings, therefore a court lady, not a
servant who complains. Clear autumn, therefore he has no excuse on
account of weather. Also she has come early, for the dew has not
merely whitened the stairs, but has soaked her stockings. The poem is
especially prized because she utters no direct reproach.

This is Pound’s “translation” of a Chinese poem by Li Po. Without
knowing Chinese, Pound translated the poem on the basis of a
twice-translated version of it and made some variations from the Chinese
original probably owing to the translators’ insufficient understanding of the
linguistic and cultural peculiarities of another nation. What is remarkable is
that despite the language barrier Pound manages to divine the spirit of the
original poem and recapture it in his translation. For illustration, we can
look at the Chinese original in literal word-for-word translation:

玉阶生白露,
jade step grow white dew
夜久侵罗袜。
night deep invade gauze stockings

却下水晶帘。
yet let-down crystal curtain

玲珑望秋月。
clear/dainty watch autumn moon

A person who has knowledge of Chinese might translate the poem this way:

On jade steps white dew grows,
The late night air moistens the gauze stockings.
Yet letting down the crystal curtain,
She stares at the clear autumn moon.

In terms of content, the poem is of a traditional genre of "complaints" where a neglected or deserted female--wife, concubine, mistress--utters her grievance over the wrongs inflicted by the man she is affiliated with or subordinated to. In a patriarchal society with a strictly observed hierarchical order, however, a woman is considered inferior to men and an inferior person is not supposed to question the authority of his or her superior. Under such social restraints, a subordinate female's grievance can be vented only in a disguised or oblique way. The poetic genre of "complaint," characterized by a style of understatement and indirect reference, poignantly reflects the repression of that society. In the hand of Li Po, as well as of some other great poets, the genre of female "complaint" becomes an effective vehicle to voice implied protest against patriarchs and social superiors alike.

This comparison between Li Po's original and Pound's version indicates that Pound intuitively appreciates the underlying aesthetics of the Chinese poem and his interpretative note on the translated poem
confirms his perceptivity. As Pound's note implies, this poem by Li Po is "prized" for its reticence. The understated intense feeling of grief comes through the external objects presented in a straightforward manner.

As one can see from either version of "The Jewel Stair Grievance," the apparent directness or objectivity is deceptive; the straightforward presentation of things does not mean a vacuum of human contents. In poems featuring juxtaposed images, "the human content is implied rather than stated. It is implied in the very choice of image, as well as in the tone with which the image is treated." 26 To illustrate the aspect shared by both Chinese and modern English poetry, we can review two more poems, one by Du Fu and the other by T. S. Eliot.

Heptasyllabic Quadrain

Du Fu
Two yellow orioles sing among green willows,
A line of white egrets rises across the blue sky.
The window frames thousand-year-old snow over the western peak,
Front door, anchors the ten-thousand-league-sailing boat of Eastern Wu.

Morning at the Window

T. S. Eliot
They are rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens,
And along the trampled edges of the street
I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids
Sprouting despondently at area gates.

The brown waves of fog toss up to me
Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,
And tear from a passer-by with muddy skirts
An aimless smile that hovers in the air
And vanishes along the level of the roofs.

Each of these poems consists of a view seen from the window, a scene
composed of visual details of the outside world. In both poems, the dominant impressions are a series of juxtaposed images. There is no expositional element. The speaker, the agent of perception, remains hidden or faceless. Neither poem makes direct reference to the lyric speaker's state of mind. But in each poem the reader finds the poet thinking through images. In Du Fu's poem, the images of yellow orioles, white egrets, green willow, blue sky may indicate the seasonal joy over spring, which, in the Chinese cultural tradition, is a season associated with rebirth, revival, with joy of life and hope. In Du Fu's particular historical case, the hope may be that rebels will be put down, the political situation stabilized, order restored, and that the poet's exile will be over. But none of these sentiments is explicitly stated. They come through the selected images that evoke a particular state of mind—a delight in springtime, perhaps, or in a revival of hope. The boat that can travel all the way from Eastern Wu, the ancient kingdom far from Chengdu where the refugee poet was staying, suggests order and stability, the very conditions of the political situation under which the exiled poet can return home.

Similarly, the objects of the world in T. S. Eliot's poem function as indices to a state of mind, though the mood evoked is different from that projected in Du Fu's poem. To rattle breakfast plates in the basement suggests hurry, impatience, discontent, irritability, et cetera. The basement kitchens, situated along "trampled edges," suggests the shabbiness of kitchen maids' working conditions. "The brown waves of fog" tell of the air pollution, the smog that permeates the industrialized urban areas. "Twisted face," "aimless smile" indicate weariness, despondency—the defeated, alienated urban dwellers. Located within
such an ambience of concrete images fused with feeling, the conceptual idea "soul" is concretized with the adjective "damp". The mode is imagistic, reminiscent of the montage technique where one shot slides into another. Although the speaker does not say what he is thinking, the visual and auditory details he chooses constitutes an "objective correlative" for a state of mind.

The examples above illustrate that the choice of images implies human significance; the direct treatment of the things, the avoidance of value-laden words and commentary, only serve to empty the scene of the sense of an imposing ego. Now it is time to examine how the tone in which the selected images are treated implies human contents. Look first at "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams, then at "West Stream in Xu Chou" by Wei Yingwu, another Tang poet:

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

West Stream in Xu Chou

Pity only shady grass by the stream,
Above, the oriole sings deep in the tree.
Spring tide bringing rain in evening-rush,
Deserted ferry, nobody in sight, the boat swept astray.

In "The Red Wheelbarrow," the poetic voice not only presents a scene consisting of objects of the farming-world, "a red wheel/barrow/glazed with rain/water/beside the white/chickens," but also articulates an unspecified sentiment. The wheelbarrow, an ordinary farming instrument, is presented not as a trivial or inconsequential item but as something upon which "so much depends." The articulated sentiment implies the human presence in the scene, though the voice remains anonymous. The tone, indicated by the emphatic word "so", belies the hidden subjectivity of the vision. The assertion that a common agricultural instrument is something on which much depends already suggests a subjective perspective. The emphasis made with the adverb "so" accentuates this human presence.

Wei's poem, similarly, articulates a sentiment without specifying it. The emphatic word "only" distinguishes the "shady grass" below from the oriole above. A preference for the former over the latter is made, and the preference emphasizes the implicit human contents of the scene. The objects of the world are presented in a manner of off-handed detachment, but the tone of elliptic assertions suggests the subjectivity of perspective. These two examples from English and Chinese poetry demonstrate that the visual contents of a language, either the well-chosen image or the way in which the images are presented, can communicate the lyric feeling of the poet.

In both Wei's and Williams's poems, as one notes, the articulation is of an elliptical style. The hidden, reticent speaker does not specify the suggested sentiment. In "The Red Wheelbarrow," the speaker does not explain "so much" of what depends on those agricultural objects or why so
much is dependent on those objects. In place of an explanation is a scene of juxtaposed images—"the red wheel barrow glazed with rain water" beside "the white chickens." The gap is intentionally left. The wheel barrow has a striking "red" color. When glazed with rain water, the shiny quality of red is emphasized. And this shiny red farming instrument is "beside" the "white chicken". Why does so much depend on these two juxtaposed images? Is it because of a sharp contrast of color and shape between the two clearly-defined objects, and that this contrast suggests the possibility of complementary co-existence of incongruities? Or are the common objects, devoid of any conventional association, to be appreciated as pure aesthetic experience? It is up to the reader to infer the meaning by filling in the gaps between the juxtaposed fragments.

Similarly, the presentation of objects in "West Stream in Xu Chou" creates a tantalizing riddle. Apparently, the poem is about a scene whose focal point is clearly-defined objects. But the real focus of interest is the strongly felt absence of a perspective. The voice will not say on what basis the preference for the grass to the oriole is made. Instead, it proceeds to present an evocative scene where the spring tide, reinforced by rains gaining momentum in the evening, is juxtaposed with the unsteered boat swept across the rushing stream.

In terms of aesthetic experience, the presentational condensation results in an immediacy of the poetic impact on the reader. The absence of elaborate authorial interpretations or intrusion makes ample room for the reader to experience the scene or event for himself; the intentionally left gaps force the reader to take a more active part in conceptualizing the elliptical text and therefore to exercise his own imagination more
vigorously.

Another implication of the reticence or condensation in the direct presentation is the possibility of meaning. The intentional detachment of the authorial voice leaves options of interpretation open for the reader. To demonstrate how ellipsis keeps possibility of meaning relatively open, we can look at the following examples:

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

(Ezra Pound)

Floating cloud, the traveler's mood,
Setting sun, the friends' feeling.

(Li Po)

In this pattern, the relationship between the two juxtaposed elements is unspecified, as between "The apparition" and "Petals" or "Floating clouds," and "the traveler's mood". The poet would not say whether one element "is" or "is like" the other. In Pound's poem, it is "an uncommitted resemblance" between a realistic image of nature and a metaphorical one of subjective vision. In the lines from Li Po's poem, the relationship between an external object and a state of mind is implied in each line but remains unspecified. This "uncommitted resemblance" between the juxtaposed elements invites the reader to speculate upon all possible relationships, the relationships from which meaning radiates. For further illustration of this aspect, look at some examples of a more extensive scope.

Ascending the Phoenix Terrace  Li Po

The Phoenix Terrace, phoenix haunts
Phoenix gone, terrace deserted, the river flows on.
Flowers and weeds invade the shady paths in the Wu palace,
Robes and crowns of Jin Dynasty turn into age-old mounts.
Three mountains half falling beyond the blue sky,
Two stream currents, divided by the White-Egret Isle.
As floating clouds always hide the sun,
Not seeing Chang'an saddens man.

The presented landscape, both literal and imaginary, is a collage of fragmentary geographical or historical details. Obviously, the external scene is there to evoke an inner state. Only the last line of the poem introduces a specific sentiment to the scene. But the poet does not spell out any connection between the external scene (jing) and the sentiment (qing). The reader has to infer possible meaning by making connections between the juxtaposed fragments. A phoenix-deserted terrace juxtaposed with an ever-flowing river, for example, may suggest a contrast between the vicissitudes of human conditions and an eternal indifference of the cosmic force beyond the realm of human experience. Viewed in a cultural context, the juxtaposed details in the second couplet may have a tenuous metaphysic continuity between them. Both the weed-invaded garden paths of the royal palace of the Wu Kingdom (222-280 A. D.) and the mounts formed by the dirt turned from the officials' robes and crown worn in the Jin Dynasty (265-420 A. D.) point to the transcience or impermanence of the human state, be it of distinguished power or glory.
The mountains stretching beyond the reach of human vision and the ever-flowing river divided by an isle expand the scope of vision and suggests perhaps a corresponding psychic state. But immediately comes another abrupt leap. A literal image of the floating clouds shrouding the sun is juxtaposed with or superposed by a metaphorical image of the
absent capital city of Chang’an. There is no explicitly stated relationship between the scene where the clouds hide the sun and the fact that one feels sad when unable to see Chang’an. One of many possible connections between the two elements is that the inaccessibility to the national capital, where power and fame reside, distresses one as much as the unavailability of the sun, the life-giving, hope-inspiring source.

In a manner similar to that of Li Po’s poem, Ezra Pound writes the following lines:

    and that day,
    And for three days, and none after,
    Splendour, as the splendour of Hermes,
    And shipped thence
    to the stone place,
    Pale white, over water,
    known water,
    And the white forest of marble, bent bough over bough,
    The pleached arbour of stone,
    Thither Borso, when they shot the barbed arrow at him,
    And Carmagnola, between the two columns,
    Sigismundo, after that wreck in Dalmatia.
    Sunset like the grasshopper flying.

(Cantos XVII)

In this passage, as is common in Cantos, disparate elements are patched together. Between these fragmentary images, whether objects of the world or “Luminous Details” of history, there are no obvious logical links. One may say that the images of nature—“Splendour”, “the stone place,/Pale white”, “water,/known water”, “the white forest of marble, bent bough over bough,/ The pleached arbour of stone”—are appositive or complementary to each other. In Shattuck’s terminology, it is a homogeneous juxtaposition wherein the same or similar elements form a style of circularity. But what is the relation between these images of nature and the details in the last
four lines of this passage, which are also the last lines of Canto XVII? The
three legendary or historical figures (Luminous Detail) from different
historical periods in the western tradition--Borso shot at by the barbed
arrow, Carmagnola the alleged traitor, the shipwrecked Sigismundo--have
no causal relationship between them, or with the details of nature in
previous lines. The voice does not indicate any connection between these
figures or explain why they appear side by side. Instead, another image of
nature--"Sunset like the grasshopper flying"--concludes the presentation of
this series of elements.

At first sight, this last image of nature, more familiar and therefore
more accessible, seems to offer a key to the riddle of three juxtaposed
figures, but it is a key that needs decoding itself. Even though the word
"Sunset" evokes a scene of splendour in the sky, the reader has to stretch
or strain his imagination to visualize a grasshopper flying and to envision
the evening glows in the shape or spirit of the visualized flying
grasshopper. Suppose the reader succeeds in sliding the sunset image
mentally into the image of a flying grasshopper, the riddle remains as to
what the three human figures have to do with this setting sun-flying
grasshopper juxtaposition. In Shattuck's terminology, this is an example of
heterogeneous juxtaposition, as is the case of Li Po's juxtaposition of the
sun shrouded by clouds and the visual event that one grieves over the
oblivion of Chang'an. The unspecified connection or "uncommitted
resemblance" serves to prescribe an energizing reading process by inducing
the reader to exert his imaginative faculty.

Having examined these individual poems comparatively, one can say
that the similar use of visual details or events and employments of the
technique of juxtaposition in both Chinese High Tang poetry and modern English poetry produce similar aesthetic effects. Heavy reliance on visual details and events results in a concrete kind of poetry. Straightforward presentation of selected details on one hand confronts the reader with the phenomenon and on the other hand enables a poet to make an intense personal statement without seeming to do so. The technique of juxtaposition revitalizes the commonplace objects through defamiliarization and "recreation," and intensifies the reading process by forcing the reader to make meaning-generating relationships between disparate fragments.

III

By now affinities between certain type of Chinese Tang poetry and modern Anglo-American poetry may have become obvious to us. However, the two kinds of poetry are by no means identical. They are like two different paths diverging further and further after running across each other at the intersecting point. All Chinese Tang poetry of the imagistic mode does not resemble Anglo-American Imagist poetry. The diversity of the theme and technique in Chinese Tang poetry is not reflected here. Many Chinese poets, including Li Po and Du Fu, also wrote poems in which the lyric voice alternated with a narrative voice. Among the English-speaking poets, similarly, it is hard to say who is exclusively an Imagist. Poets often utilize different techniques alternately or simultaneously.

One difference between Chinese poetry and modern Anglo-American
poetry is similar to that between the traditional Chinese landscape painting and Cubist painting. Although both schools specialize in adopting a multiple perspective, the visual effects differ. The lines in Cubist paintings are usually thick and emphatic and therefore have geometrical clarity; the lines in a Chinese landscape painting are often oblique or less emphatic. Similarly, images presented by English-speaking poets seem to have a hard geometrical edge, such as the tree in "Young Sycamore" by Williams, whereas Chinese imagistic poetry presents images often in a more synecdochic form with the outline of the detail blurred.

Another disparity between Chinese poetry and modern English poetry can be seen in the print. Chinese poetry maintains formal regularity. Tang poets seldom ignore the formal requirements prescribed by traditional rules. The traditional end-stopped lines, the closed couplet and quatrain or octave verse forms, for instance, provide a systematized framework for the formal control of materials and enhance the intelligibility of presentation. Modern English poets, on the other hand, emphasize "aesthetic form" at the expense of external arrangement provided by a set of traditional rules, rejecting the "externals of technique" as "a strait jacket."²⁸

Still another striking difference is between the kinds of elements to be juxtaposed. In Chinese lyric poetry the juxtaposed elements are more of a homogeneous nature. The Chinese terms involved in describing polarities such as "heaven" and "earth", "north and south", "white" and "blue", "river" and "mountain", etc. usually imply either complementary opposition or cyclical alternation."²⁹ The differences between two juxtaposed elements are usually the different aspects belonging to the same category such as color, number, direction. With the implied interest relatively more focused
and within a realm of shared experience, the images provide for the reader a more identifiable focal point, if not a center of meaning, and give him a surer sense of direction. In contrast, the directions which the modern Anglo-American poet's sensibility takes are less defined. The imaginative mind bounces back and forth between more diverse epistemological or ontological concerns. Pound's *Cantos*, for example, are in effect a recording of the poet's long meditations over philosophical, sociological, historical issues and personal experiences through a span of several decades. The juxtaposed elements, either fictional or factual, legendary or historical, have less discernible categorical continuity between them. A text addressing so many diverse issues at once is naturally characterized by abrupt shifts and turns, which can be followed by only a few minds that encompass the same scope of concerns and operate with a similar rhythm. Consequently, the text of an involved style leaves an impression that intelligibility is not a primary concern for the poet. In this sense, the modern English poetry is of a more self-reflexive, or narcissist nature than Chinese poetry.

As a way of concluding, we can speculate upon the historical, social, and psychic sources of the affinities discussed early in this chapter. A ready explanation for the similarity in technique is that modern Anglo-American poets like Pound conscientiously imitated the aesthetic forms of Oriental poetry. But there may be reasons other than technical apprenticeship that account for the affinities in aesthetics. What people call "the national traits," for example, may have to do with the appeal of Oriental aesthetics to the poets from a different culture. Chinese as a whole are a reticent people. With their traditional sense of dignity and
honor, the traditional Chinese intellectuals constantly exerted self-control and disciplined their feelings. Their communications of an emotional state were often in a style of understatement. Even when an individual of great lyric impulses such as Li Po was caught in an emotional situation, the articulation of his emotions was often regulated by virtue of a controlled form. Selfhood was seldom blatantly asserted. In this respect, the fact that Imagism originated in England rather than in the United States may not be coincidental. Out of the three principle figures of the Imagist movement, two of them are Americans who came to England at the turn of the century. These impressionable young Americans probably found the understatement characteristic of English gentlemen particularly appealing in contrast with the overt sentimentalization of Romantic poetry. 30

Another possible reason for the technical similarities may be that certain human minds, including those of the Chinese and modern Anglo-American poets, share the same form of consciousness. "The history of the attitude that produced simultanism reaches as far back as human consciousness": 31 The I Ching (The Book of Changes), a Chinese classic originated five thousand years ago, generated a set of traditional Chinese views concerning the concept of Tao (literally Way), which can be briefly described as "the unitary principle of all things and the totality of all being" and is regarded as The Way of Life in accordance with the Way of Nature. 32 Since the time the I Ching came into being, traditional Chinese intellectuals have regarded literature as something linked with the configurations of natural phenomena and elevated to a status of cosmic significance. A most influential literary critic Liu Xie, drawing his ideas from the I Ching and other sources, evolves the theory of multiple
correspondences between the mind of heaven and earth, the cosmic order, and the human mind. 33

Significantly, western literary critics such as Shattuck and psychologists such as Carl Jung have been sympathetic with the position of the I Ching. Based on his observation of "the simultaneous happenings of psychic phenomena and apparently unconnected outer events which could not be explained by the law of cause and effect," 34 Jung postulates that there is law other than causality that explains relationships of certain seemingly unconnected events of nature and the human state:

My occupation with psychology of unconscious processes has forced me to search after another explanation, because the principle of causality appeared to me insufficient to explain certain curious phenomena of the unconscious psychology. I found, for instance, first that there are psychological parallel phenomena which cannot be related to each other, but must stand in a different connection with each other. This connection appeared to me mainly to consist in the fact of a relative simultaneousness, therefore the expression 'synchronicity'. 35

Jung argues that the underlying assumptions of the I Ching involve the principle he termed as synchronicity--as opposed to causality--which "takes the coincidence of events in space and time as meaning something more than mere chance, namely a peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as with the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers." 36

Just as Jung believes that the position of the I Ching involves the principle of synchronicity, so Shattuck maintains that simultanism (his term for juxtaposition), "reaches a position comparable to that of Chinese I
Ching. " Juxtaposition in the arts, "like Jung's synchronicity, seizes upon what is...a new kind of coherence, a new unity of experience." 37 Moreover, Shattuck asserts that it is the modern artists' interest in "the inaccessible resources of the human mind" that gives rise to the technique of juxtaposition. If we accept Shattuck's assertion, and if we believe that there are alogical, non-causal connections between apparently unrelated external events or between the psychic phenomena and the outer events, the principle of synchronicity probably explains for us the interest in the technique of juxtaposition shared by both Chinese Tang poets and modern Anglo-American poets.
Notes

REMARKS

In transliterating Chinese names, I have followed the Chinese Pin-Yin system, with the exception of Li Po (Li Bai in the Pin-Yin system), which is better known to my English professors. However, the names of authors whom I quote retain their forms of Wade-Giles romanization system as they appear in the original works.

Notes to Introduction

1 About the early practices of voicing zhi in poetry, Zhu Zi-Qing observed four categories in terms of contents and audience: political ideals or ambitions by ministers to the emperor; diplomatic speeches to ministers or dukes from different "kingdoms;" didactic admonitions; lyrics about an inner world, an individual's subjective state of mind. Of the four categories of zhi, the last led to the full development of Chinese poetry. See Cheng Liang-Yun, "An Outline of the Development of Ancient Chinese Poetics," Literary Heritage, No. 1 1985.


Notes to Chapter One


2 The translations of Chinese poems throughout the paper are mine, though undoubtedly they are rendered under the influence of many scholars in both the U.S. A. and China, including that of Wai-lim Yip and Liu Yan-Bang.


12 Piper, The Heroic Couplet, p. 139.
16 Quennell, The Pleasure of Pope, xxiv.

Notes to Chapter Two

1 I am following Roger Shattuck's outlines of the major points of departure of twentieth-century art from nineteenth-century conventions, see Chapter Eleven, "The Art of Stillness," of The Banquet Years (New York: Vantage, 1955).

2 Joseph Frank, The Widening Gyre, p. 10. For different explanations for the causes that give rise to the spatial form, compare Joseph Frank's discussion in Chapter One of this book, Roger Shattuck's version in Chapter Eleven of The Banquet Years, and the explanation in the first chapter of Dionysius and the City, by Monroe Spears, which is similar to that of Frank.

3 About the aesthetics of the two categories of juxtaposition, see especially pp. 337-49 of The Banquet Years.

4 Shattuck, The Banquet Years, p. 347.


6 See Hugh Kenner's discussion in the section "Imagism" of The Pound
Era, pp. 173-91.


8 Pound, as quoted by Kenner in The Pound Era, p. 185.


11 Yip, Ezra Pound's Cathay, p. 78.

12 The distinctions are partially based on Yip's discussion on the subtle difference as well as similarity between Imagism and Impressionism, Imagism and Symbolism. See pp. 43-52, Ezra Pound's Cathay.


Herbert N. Schneidau, Ezra Pound, p. 47.

14 Schneidau, Ezra Pound, p. 45.

15 Yip, Ezra Pound's Cathay, p. 50.


17 Bernard Hart, as quoted by Schneidau, Ezra Pound, p. 33. In a note on the same page, Schneidau explains: "Bernard Hart, M. D., was a pioneer in London psychiatry.... Hart defined [complexes] as systems of 'emotionally toned ideas,' operating unobserved in the mind, which caused random trains of thought to return continually to one object or feeling."

18 Pauline Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition
19 Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition, p. 170. Yu notes that of the two tendencies the second has been recognized as the primary achievement of the poetry of the Tang Dynasty. For Yu's distinction on the two tendencies, see discussion in pp. 168-170 in particular.


22 For an explanation of Pound's distinction between "primary epithets" and "secondary epithets," see Yip's definition in the chapter "Precision or Suggestion" in Ezra Pound's Cathay.

23 Yu, The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition, p. 170.


27 Yip, Ezra Pound's Cathay, p. 22.


30 Schneidau is among those who speculate that the habitual understatement of the British educated classes may have played a role in the germination of Imagism. See Schneidau, Ezra Pound, p. 32.
31 Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, p. 345.


33 See the comments by James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, pp. 22-3.


36 Carl Jung, as quoted by Shattuck in *The Banquet Years*, p. 346.

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