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錢鍾書：詩可以怨

Poetry as a Vehicle of Grief

By Ch'ien Chung-shu

Translated by Siu-kit Wong

IT TAKES A LOT of courage to come and lecture in Japan. Even for a Chinese scholar to come and lecture in Chinese studies requires very considerable courage, if not total dauntlessness. The reasons why this is so are plain and simple. The distinguished achievements of Japan in the study of Chinese civilisation are universally recognized. Your findings are deeply admired and with humility turned to account by Chinese scholars conversant with your language. It is obviously no easy task for me therefore to find a topic that would seem novel and of some interest to you. Illiterate in Japanese, confronted with the treasure trove of your Sinology, I feel like a pauper looking at a big safe in a bank, neither knowing the combination, nor having the tools to pry it open, capable of doing nothing but stand and stare.

Ignorance can, however, be the inspiration of derring-do. In Italy it is often said by way of mockery, "he invented the umbrella" (*"ha inventato l'ombrello"*). The story has it that a country bumpkin was on the road one day when it started to drizzle; he happened to have with him a stick and a square of cloth; in a moment of inspiration, he spread the cloth on the top end of the stick to cover his head and succeeded in reaching home without becoming drenched. He congratulated himself, and furthermore was convinced that he had made a notable contribution to human progress and owed it to the world to make his discovery public. Along he came into the city, to the "Patents Bureau" (of which he had vaguely heard), equipped with stick and cloth, full of excitement intending to expound and demonstrate his discovery. When the staff of the Bureau heard what he had come for, they burst out laughing, and produced a real umbrella for him to inspect. My predicament today is really rather like that of the bumpkin going to the Bureau, benighted and ignorant, having never set eyes on an umbrella. But then, when you can't find a house with eaves to shelter you from the rain, spreading a cloth on the top end of a stick should probably be considered an acceptable manner of coping with the contingency.

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到日本來講學，是很大膽的舉動。就算一個中國學者來講他的本國學問，他雖然不必通身是胆，也得有斗大的胆。理由很明白簡單。日本對中國文化各方面的卓越研究，是世界公認的；通曉日語的中國學者也滿心欽佩和虛心採用你們的成果，深知道要講一些值得向各位請教的新鮮東西，實在不是輕易的事。我是日語的文盲，面對着貴國“漢學”或“支那學”

的豐富寶庫，就像一個既不懂號碼鎖、又沒有開撬工具的窮老棍^{（目擊）}看大保險箱，只好眼睛睜地發愣。但是，盲目無知往往是勇氣的

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Poetic expression has been likened by Nietzsche to the hen's cackle, both being "induced by pain" ("*Der Schmerz macht Huhner und Dichter gackern*").¹ This homely but vivid analogy is in complete agreement with a view commonly accepted in the Chinese literary tradition, the view that pain engenders poetry more than pleasure does, that good poetry is, in the main, an expression or discharge of the emotions of unhappiness, anxiety or frustration. In pre-modern China, not only was this view a commonplace in theoretical discourses on literature, it was also a familiar norm in the practical business of writing. As a result we take this view for granted, forgetting its significance, failing to recognize it as an important concept in Chinese literary criticism. I shall confine myself to well-known examples in my attempt to illuminate this view in the rest of my discussion.

"Poetry can be used to stimulate, to observe, to interconnect and to grieve 詩可以興，可以觀，可以羣，可以怨，" says *The Analects* in the *Yang-huo* 陽貨 section. To "grieve" is but one of the four functions of poetry; and it is placed last among them. "In times of peace, the melodies we hear sound contented and joyful In times of war, the melodies we hear are plaintive or agitated And at the fall of a nation, the melodies we hear are sorrowful and contemplative . . . 治世之音安以樂、亂世之音怨以怒、亡國之音哀以思" says the Great Preface of the *Book of Songs*, dealing even-handedly, without favouring any one of the three types of "melodies". In elaborating on the saying "Poetry verbalises the emotions 詩言志", the *I-wen chih* 藝文志 of the *Han History*, shows an equal absence of partiality: "Thus when the emotion of joy or sorrow is aroused, the voice of lyricism is sounded 故哀樂之心感，而歌詠之聲發。"

Ssu-ma Ch'ien 司馬遷 of the Han period is probably the first writer to deny that the claims of pain and pleasure are equal. In the letter "Pao Jen-an shu" 報任安書 and in his personal introduction to the *Historical Records*, he considers some of the greatest works of literature from ancient times to his own day, and points out how they have been written in prison or in disgrace, when the writer has been suffering, generally from misfortune or more specifically from mutilation; in other words, these great works of literature have been produced by hapless persons tormented by poverty, disease and chastisement. Ssu-ma Ch'ien concludes that the classical compilations ranging from the *Book of Changes* to the *Book of Songs* were "mostly written by men of wisdom and ability when they were agitated 大抵聖賢發憤所為作也。" "These were men," he further adds, "who saw their wishes checked and frustrated 此人皆意有所鬱結。" In such arguments, Ssu-ma Ch'ien emphasizes the "grievous" or "painful" nature of poetry, ignoring its "pleasurable" dimensions: poets are men of sorrow, whose wishes have been "checked and frustrated", and poetry consists "mostly" of "agitated" outbursts.

The words "written by men of wisdom and ability when they were agitated" were once cited by Ch'en Chung-yü 陳忠裕 of late Ming and briefly explained thus: "My observation is that, in the *Book of Songs*, poems that appear in the 'glorifying' (*sung* 頌) section are really 'satiric' in nature. They belong to decadent times and reflect a yearning for the good rulers of the golden past 我觀於《詩》，雖頌皆刺也 —

¹ See Also *Sprach Zarathustra*, part 4, chapter 13, on page 527 of volume 2 in *The Complete Works of Nietzsche* (K. Schlechta ed., 1955.)

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時衰而思古之盛上。”² The glorification of the past is no doubt a reflection of a dissatisfaction with the present, and it is in this sense that some of the poems in the *Book of Songs* that appear to be eulogistic are really expressions of grief.

It may be mentioned in passing that Cheng T'an 鄭覃, who upheld the scriptural meaning of the classics against their stylistic interest, in trying to dissuade the Emperor (Wen-tsung 文宗 of T'ang) from indulging in the “ignoble art of chapter-and-sentence analysis”, once had this to say: “The ‘Serious’ 雅 and ‘Glorifying’ 頌 poems of the *Book of Songs* were in all cases composed by those who were socially and politically ‘below’ for the sake of pricking (*tz'u* 刺) the conscience of those ‘above’; they were not composed by those who were ‘above’ for the purpose of educating those ‘below’ 夫《詩》之雅、頌，皆下刺上所為，非上化下而作。”³ These are dangerous words, and Cheng had his own axe to grind, but we do have here an early instance of the belief that the “glorifying” poems in the *Book of Songs* are deep down satirical in nature.

In the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋, there is an entry against the fifteenth year of Duke Hsüan 宣公 which says: “For the first time, a tithe was levied from the acre 初稅畝.” The *Kung Yang Commentary* says in this connection: “The tithe being enacted, glorifying songs were made 什一行而頌聲作矣.” Ho Hsiu's 何休 *Explication* offers a very curious explanation of this passage: “Songs glorifying times of peace are the rulers' delight The reason why mention is only made of the ‘glorifying songs’ is that food is all important to man . . . when men and women feel grievous and disgruntled, they band together and sing: the hungry sing about food, the labouring sing about their labour 太平歌頌之聲，帝王之高致也。……獨言‘頌聲作’者，民以食為本也。……男女有所怨恨，相從而歌：飢者歌其食，勞者歌其事。” Where the *Kung Yang Commentary* merely refers to “glorifying songs” and Ho's *Explication* speaks of nothing less than “songs of grief and disgruntlement”, Ho is already being somewhat irrelevant. But Ho says more: he claims that *all* songs derive from situations in which there exist grief and disgruntlement about something, totally forgetting the “songs glorifying the times of peace” that we had at the outset.

Ch'en Chung-yü believes that the glorifying poems are veiled satirical expressions. Here what Ho Hsiu is doing is something like this: he starts off following the *Kung Yang Commentary* and goes through a lot of high-falutin nonsense; then he refers to actual experience and tells us the truth. The truth is that the “delights” which “songs glorifying times of peace” are, belong to the ideal or fantasy world of history textbooks, while the “songs of grief and disgruntlement” of “the hungry” and “the labouring” belong to life's realities.

The views of Ho Hsiu and Ch'en Chung-yü are mutually complementary. And they are confirmed by certain Chinese proverbs and common expressions. “Instead of weeping, make do with a sad song; Instead of returning, make do with a distant view of home” 悲歌可以當泣，遠望可以當歸, so say the traditional *yüeh fu* lyrics of *Pei ko hsing* 悲歌行. Subsequently, “Instead of crying, make do with a long song 長歌當哭” has passed into common usage. But “Instead of laughing, make do with

² *Shih lun* 詩論 in *chüan* 21 of *Ch'en Chung-yü ch'üan-chi* 陳忠裕全集.

³ *Chiu T'ang shu: Cheng T'an chuan* 舊唐書: 鄭覃傳.

a long song 長歌當笑” is unheard of, although it is known that, in spite of Li Po's great reputation, his “Song of Sorrow” has been travestied into a “Song of Laughter”. The *yin* 吟 in the expression *hsiao yin yin* 笑吟吟 (full of laughter), it might as well be remembered, is very different from the *yin* (to chant) in Tu Fu's well-known line, 新詩改罷自長吟: “Long I chanted my new song when I had done revising.”

Ssu-ma Ch'ien's view of literature is also touched upon by the sixth-century writer Liu Hsieh 劉勰, who gives it expression in an inspired analogy. In the “*Ts'ai lüeh*” 才略 (“Talents”) chapter of the *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* (*Literature's heart carving dragon*), Liu has this to say of Feng Yen 馮衍, a writer of the Latter Han: “Feng Yen had a taste for fine language, but he lived unappreciated and frustrated in an age of general prosperity. Hsien Chih 顯志, the rhymed prose piece in which he communicates his personal experience, is a pearl bred by the sickness of an oyster 敬通雅好辭說, 而坎壤盛世; 《顯志》自序, 亦蚌病成珠矣.” Liu is in effect saying that Feng's writing is a result of his being “agitated” and “frustrated”, to go back to Ssu-ma Ch'ien's expressions. Liu Hsieh is unlike Ssu-ma Ch'ien only in that he speaks rather unemphatically, of only one writer, and without generalizing. If we speak of a writer's “malaise”, the word must refer to suffering and unhappiness in general. It must include mental afflictions such as being “unappreciated and frustrated”, as well as the kind of physical agony Ssu-ma Ch'ien has in mind when he speaks of Tso Ch'iu-ming 左丘明 going blind. “Unappreciated and frustrated, the improverished scholar loses his office and has no peace of mind 坎壤兮貧士失職而志不平.” These are the words of the “Nine Arguments” 九辯, in the *Songs of the South* 楚辭.

Liu Hsieh lived under the Southern Dynasties. Another Liu, Liu Chou 劉晔, who lived under the Northern Dynasties, similarly believed that suffering could activate potential genius. He expressed this belief in a series of four analogies, one of which was, perhaps by chance, identical with the one proposed by Liu Hsieh:⁴ “The cedar droops to develop the most beautiful knobs; the oyster sickens to mature the moon-bright pearl; startled, the bird can soar to touch the blue clouds; thwarted, the arrow can cross the snow-capped ranges 梗柁鬱蹙以成罽錦之瘤, 蚌蛤結疴而銜明月之珠, 鳥激則能翔青雲之際, 矢驚則能踰白雪之嶺.”⁵

In a later age, Su Shih 蘇軾 of the Sung period has said in one of his letters:⁶ “On the trunks of trees are knobs, on rocks can be seen haloes, and rhinoceros horns can in places be translucent. Things can thus be sickly and imperfect to please the human observer with their particular charm 木有癭, 石有暈, 犀有通。以取妍於人, 皆物之病.” Without using the oyster/pearl analogy, Su Shih is nonetheless speaking on the theme that beauty is bred by a condition of sickness, and to say that “on the trunks of trees are knobs” is much of a muchness with saying that

⁴ See his *Chi t'ung* 激通, in the *Liu tzu* 劉子.

⁵ These analogies are echoed elsewhere. The *Han tzu* 韓子 as it is cited in *chün* 350 of the *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* 太平御覽 says: “When struck, water develops energy; when struck, the arrow acquires speed.” And Feng Yen, already referred to, is quoted in a note to

his biography in the *Latter Han History* 後漢書 as having written: “As a common saying has it, ‘Without being hit hard, water cannot break a barge; without being struck hard, an arrow will not sink so as to bury its fletching.’”

⁶ See his *Ta Li Tuan-shu shu* 答李端叔書.

“the cedar droops to develop the most beautiful knobs”.⁷

One of the analogies employed by the European critics in discussing the making of literature is surprisingly close to this Chinese one. Poetry is, according to Franz Grillparzer, like the pearls produced by some mute, ailing mollusc (*die Perle, das Erzeugnis des kranken stillen Muscheltieres*). Gustave Flaubert thinks that if a pearl is produced by the oyster in disease (*la perle est maladie de l'huître*), then the style of a writer is fashioned by some deeper sorrow for the expression of that sorrow (*l'écoulement d'une douleur plus profonde*).⁸ Heinrich Heine wonders whether poetry to the poet is not as the pearl to the poor oyster, the malady that causes the pain and the suffering (*wie die Perle, die Krankheitsstoff, woran das arme Austertier leidet*).⁹ And A.E. Housman observes that poetry is “a secretion”, whether “natural . . . like the turpentine in the fir”, or “morbid . . . like the pearl in the oyster”.¹⁰

The oyster/pearl analogy may thus be said to have been very commonly used, perhaps because it accurately suggests how poetry is written in a state of “agitation” and can be regarded as a “vehicle of grief”. It is therefore surprising that the passage in the *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* in which this analogy occurs has never been given the attention it deserves.

Ssu-ma Ch'ien names a considerable number of works as having been written “in a state of agitation”; some of these are argumentative, others narrative. Then he concludes by referring to the *Book of Songs* as a final example, suggesting that all its poems can roughly be regarded as expressions of “grief”. Chung Jung 鍾嶸 of the sixth century is unlike Ssu-ma Ch'ien in that his discussion is confined to poetry; his is a more concrete exploration of the theme that “poetry is a vehicle of grief”. The following is a passage in the Preface to his *Shih p'in* 詩品 which has been unjustly neglected:

“Poetry is fit for the voicing of affections occasioned by happy meetings, as it is for that sense of desolation caused by separation from the flock. Imagine how the faithful servant of Ch'u turned his back reluctantly on Ch'u territories, and how the fair one of Han bade farewell to the palace of Han. Or see with your mind's

⁷Cf. the second of the three poems entitled “*Wen hsün yü ching ti ping feng ch'üeh chi* 聞心餘京邸病風却寄” in Chao I's 趙翼 *Ou pei shih ch'ao* 甌北詩鈔:

*The bark with grain on it is sick,
The stone that can speak is in for trouble.*
木有文章原是病，
石能言語果爲災。

See also *Shih yen* 釋言 in Kung Tzu-ch'en's 龔自珍 *P'o chieh ts'ao* 破寂草:

*The wood with grain on it has been sick,
Animals that make much noise do not live their
natural span.*
木有紋影曾爲病，
蟲多言語不能天。

⁸These two examples are cited on p. 415 of Walter Muschg's *Tragische Literaturgeschichte* (1957 edition).

⁹From “*Die Romantische Schule*” 2.4 on p. 98 of Vol. 5 in *Complete Works and Letters of Heinrich Heine* (East Berlin, 1961).

¹⁰From “The Name and Nature of Poetry” on p. 194 of J. Carter (ed.) *Selected Prose of A.E. Housman* (1961). Housman then goes on to say that his poetry has mostly been written when he has been ill. What he calls “natural” is something which is healthy, not morbid.

Giosue Carducci strongly opposes the Romantic theory that poetry is a “natural secretion” (“*secrezione naturale*”)—see p. 492 of N. Busette's *Giosue Carducci* (1958). What Carducci means by “natural” is something which has been written effortlessly, without artistic refinement.

Housman's “morbid secretion” can, of course, be “natural” in Carducci's sense.

eye the bones of the dead strewn criss-cross on the plains of the wild north, while their ghosts fast follow the tumbleweed. Again think what it would be like to be a lance-bearing warrior, posted at the unfriendly, autumnal frontiers; and, as this stranger to the borderland finds his clothes too light to keep him warm, how his widowed wife, alone in her room, cries till she can cry no more. A man of parts may be dismissed from office, never to be recalled. A lady of such beauty as could conquer a nation may, disporting her sweetness, sail proudly into the love of her prince. All these instances of fickle chance and circumstance do affect the heart and swing the soul into giddy activity. Without recourse to poetry, how could they be fully laid bare? Without the song, is there any way in which the emotions aroused could be allowed to range freely? It has, therefore, been argued: 'Poetry enables one to communicate with many; it also enables one to give vent to one's personal grief.' Nothing functions so efficaciously as poetry in palliating the sufferings of the poor and humble, in giving them a measure of comfort, or in dispelling the loneliness of those who dwell apart." 嘉會寄詩以親，離羣託詩以怨。至於楚臣去境，漢妾辭宮；或骨橫朔野，魂逐飛蓬；或負戈外戍，殺氣雄邊，塞客衣單，孀閨淚盡；或士有解佩出朝，一去忘反，女有揚蛾入寵，再盼傾國。凡斯種種，感蕩心靈，非陳詩何以展其義？非長歌何以騁其情？故曰：'詩可以羣，可以怨。'使窮賤易安，幽居靡悶，莫尚於詩矣。

Strange as it may sound, what we have here is something of an outline of those two well-known rhymed prose pieces by Chung Yung's contemporary Chiang Yen 江淹, the *Pieh fu* (On Separation) and the *Hen fu* (On Sorrow). Of the four functions of poetry proposed by Confucius, Chung Yung does not concern himself with "stimulating" and "observing"; although he does mention "interconnecting" [the meetings and separations], the overwhelming majority of the examples he cites are in the area of "grieving". The only unquestionable examples of joy and happiness he provides are in the "happy meetings" and in "sailing proudly into the love of the prince." But on second thoughts, it may be argued that even these are not the *unquestionable* examples I thought they were, since the lady "disporting her sweetness" and "sailing proudly into the love of a prince" could mean pain and "grief" as well.

In Tso Chiu-p'in's 左九嬪 *Li ssu fu* 離思賦 (On Separation),¹¹ we find her lamenting her fate, saying how since "entering the purple villa", she has been "from [her] closest kindred forever separated 骨肉至親，永長辭兮!" how "sighing and sobbing, [she] could not check her tears 歎歎涕流!" Similarly, in chapter 18 of *The Story of the Stone*, we find Yüan-ch'un the Imperial Concubine bewailing her lot in these words: "Though rich and exalted, I find it such a wretched business to be separated from my own kith and kin 今雖富貴，骨肉分離，終無意趣." On the contrary, according to the message we see in the well-known contemporary play *Wang Chao-chün* 王昭君, "the fair one of Han bidding farewell to the palace of Han 漢妾辭宮" has nothing to do with "grief". It is, to say the least, a case of "interconnecting"; perhaps it is a case of "happy meeting", a case of blessed union—full cheerily, the lady, "disporting her sweetness, sails proudly into the love prince"—a prince of Hsiung-nu extraction. Of course, we do not have to subject allusions like this in the *Shih p'in* to such close scrutiny, just as, in everyday social life, we do not

¹¹ See *chüan* 139 of *Ch'üan Chin wen* 全晉文.

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have to put everyone we meet through a fluoroscopic examination. What is to be noted is that the "Preface" to *Shih p'in* concludes this part of the discussion with a list of exemplary literary compositions and among these—always excepting Chung Jung's less specific references and works no longer extant—more than a half are what we should regard as "grief" poems.

Among the poets in the "Upper" of Chung Yung's three grades, Li Ling 李陵 is described thus: "He knew no harmony in his life; personally disheartened, he developed a dejected style. Had Li Ling never encountered suffering, his poetry could never have been what it is 生命不諧，聲顏身喪，使陵不遭辛苦，其文亦可能至此。" This, too, is an example of what Liu Hsieh calls "a pearl bred by the sickness of an oyster"; it is also in agreement with a very popular saying of a later age, that "a poet has to be frustrated and deprived if his poetry is to be good".¹²

I move on now to another theme of very considerable significance in Chung Jung's Preface. The same thing that to Ssu-ma Ch'ien is an anticorrosive and preservative for dead bodies is to Chung Jung an analgesic and tranquillizer for living men. In the *Pao Jen-an shu* already alluded to, when Ssu-ma Ch'ien speaks of writing books and poems to give vent to his sense of frustration, his purpose is to preserve his name from being obliterated, or to prevent the best that is in him from being forgotten by posterity. In other words, what interests Ssu-ma Ch'ien is the difference that literature makes when its author is dead, the way it immortalizes him. Chung Jung's emphasis is quite different: "Nothing functions so efficaciously as poetry in palliating the sufferings of the poor and humble, in giving them a measure of comfort, or in dispelling the loneliness of those who dwell apart 使窮賤易安，幽居靡悶，莫尚於詩。" The emphasis is on the difference that literature makes when its author is still alive, the way it enables him to compromise and live with deprivation and loneliness. In Chung Jung's view, if you are down and out, it is possible for you to find solace and a sort of compensation in "poetry, the vehicle of grief".

With the development of new literary forms in later periods, this understanding of the efficacy of literature and the author's motive in writing becomes applicable to fiction and drama as well as poetry.

In "*Wu Yüeh wang tsai shih so Chiang shan* 吳越王再世索江山" ("The Princes of Wu and Yüeh claim their kingdom in a new reincarnation", from *chüan* 1 of *Hsi-hu er-chi* 西湖二集) Chou Chi 周楫 describes how Chü Yu 瞿佑 came to write *Chien teng hsin-hua* 剪燈新話, and how Hsü Wei 徐渭 came to write *Ssu sheng yüan* 四聲猿 (both works of fiction) in these terms: "They really could neither laugh nor cry, nor could they scream or leap to show their feelings. Would you not agree they were to be pitied? All that was left for them to do was to play along, to write their fiction as a thing of no consequence. . . . In their fiction they could vent their pent-up emotions, finding an outlet for each and every one of their urges to wail, to scream, to gambol, to burst into song 真個哭不得，笑不得，叫不得，跳不得，你道可憐也不可憐！所以只得逢場作戲，沒緊沒要，做部小說。……發抒生平之氣，把胸中欲歌欲哭欲叫欲跳之意，盡數寫將出來。滿腹不平之氣，鬱鬱無聊，借以消遣。"

¹² See pp. 935-7 of my *Kuan chui pien* 管維編.

In a spoken passage in *chüan* 2 of *Li-weng ou-chi* 笠翁偶寄, Li Yü 李漁 speaks even more eloquently about his own experience in writing drama: "Born into hardship, plunged into destitution, from childhood to maturity, and from maturity to old age, never for a moment have I been content. And yet, when I am engaged in the making of melodies, the composition of lyrics, not only is my depression alleviated and my sense of outrage appeased, I do sometimes fancy myself the happiest of men Nothing in the world of reality can compare with the freedom of the world of imagination. There if I want to hold office, I have it in the twinkling of an eye There if I wish to be a genius, why I *am* a Tu Fu or Li Po reincarnate. And if I wish to acquire a fabulous beauty for a wife, Wang Chao-chün and Hsi Shih are equally ready to become my lawful wife 予生憂患之中, 處落魄之境, 自幼至長, 自長至老, 總無一刻舒眉。惟於製曲填詞之頃, 非但鬱藉以舒, 愠爲之解, 且嘗僭作兩間最樂之人。……未有真境之所爲, 能出幻境縱橫之上者。我欲做官, 則頃刻之間便臻榮貴。……我欲作人間才子, 即爲杜甫、李白之後身。我欲娶絕代佳人, 即作王嬌、西施之原配。”

Just as Ch'en Chung-yü believes that the glorifying poems of the *Book of Songs* are deep down satirical in nature, so Li Yü recognizes that the world of imagination, or fantasy, of his drama is a reversed image of the cramped conditions of the world of reality—that drama shows us “the other side” of ordinary life. There is a well-known Freudian theory which should be familiar to us all. According to this theory, those of us whose desires cannot be fulfilled in life often retreat from life to create art; and the art thus created serves the purposes of a substitute (*Ersatz für den Triebverzicht*) so that fantasy becomes a kind of fulfillment (*Phantasiebefriedungen*).¹³ If I argue that this Freudian theory is already discernible in Chung Jung and becomes more palpable in Chou Chi and Li Yü, I don't think I am being far-fetched: I am merely trying to draw your attention to a curious resemblance.

It is interesting to note that while Chung Jung and Freud can be imagined to be engaged in dialogue, two Chinese writers, Han Yü of the T'ang period and Ssu-ma Ch'ien of the Han, can be so far removed from one another.

Han Yü's *Sung Meng Tung-yeh hsü* 送孟東野序 (a “dedication” to Meng Tung-yeh) is an essay that used to be included in anthologies for schoolboys as a specimen of “classical” prose to be learned off by heart. Han Yü declares at the beginning of this essay: “Whatsoever thing loses its calm and balance, is bound to make a noise The human voice, condensed and purified, becomes language, and literature is language further condensed and purified 大凡物不得其平則鳴。……人聲之精者爲言, 文辭之於言, 又其精也。” He continues by citing great writers like Chuang Chou, Ch'ü Yüan, Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju as examples of men who are “good at making noises” 善鳴. Then he introduces the main character with great ceremony: “Meng Chiao (Tung-yeh) first made a noise with his poetry 孟郊東野始以其詩鳴。”

It is commonly supposed that “making a noise as a result of losing calm and balance 不平則鳴” contains the same underlying meaning as “writing when one is agitated 發憤所爲作”. In actual fact, Han Yü and Ssu-ma Ch'ien are talking about two entirely different things. Ssu-ma Ch'ien's “being agitated” should be understood in the sense of “being unappreciated and frustrated”, being generally “disgruntled”. Han Yü's “losing calm and balance” is not the same thing as “being disgruntled”,

¹³See p. 355 and p. 433 of the *Complete Works of Freud* (London, 1950).

in that it does not refer exclusively to a sense of discontent but includes the sense of happiness as well.

Chinese psychology since the pre-Ch'in period has consistently held that man's Nature 性 is ordinarily in a tranquil state, and that it is when this tranquillity is disturbed that man's Nature "loses its calm and balance" and becomes Emotion 情. The *Yüeh chi* 樂記 (*On Music*) says, "Man is by nature in a tranquil state; he is stirred to activity in reaction to things outside 人生而靜, 感於物而動." This is characteristic of Chinese psychology, and in the Taoist and Buddhist scriptures, too, can be found the metaphor of waves and billows being caused in still water by the wind.¹⁴ K'ung Ying-ta 孔穎達, the classical scholar of early T'ang, commenting on the pronouncement "What is ordained by heaven is Nature 天命之謂性" (from the *Chung Yung* 中庸 chapter of the *Li Chi* 禮記), quotes from Ho Yang 賀瑒 (a "doctor of the classics" of the Liang period) and says: "Man's Emotions to his Nature are as waves to water. What in tranquillity is water when activated becomes waves. What in tranquillity is human Nature when activated becomes human Emotion 性之與情, 猶波之與水, 靜時是水, 動則是波, 靜時是性, 動則是情." Li Ao 李翱, a pupil of Han Yü's, says, "Man's Emotions are his Nature in activity. Water running through sand becomes impure even though it was pure. Human nature when influenced by the Emotions becomes evil even though it was good 情者, 性之動。水汨於沙, 而清者渾, 性動於情, 而善者惡." (*Fu hsing shu* 復性書, or "On Restoring Human Nature") Even Ch'eng Yi 程頤 the Confucianist of the Sung period, who would have feared being contaminated by the heresies of Taoism and Buddhism, braved the charges of heterodoxy and said this: "It is in the nature of water to be profoundly still, like a mirror. When checked by sand and pebbles or affected by the uneven surface of the land, water can become turbulent; and when the wind moves above it, water can become quite torrential. But such behaviour is not in the nature of water. . . . But then how can there be waves if there is no water, and how can there be human Emotions if there is no human Nature 甚至深怕和佛老活邊的宋儒程頤也不湛然平靜如鏡者, 水之性也。及遇沙石或地勢不平, 便有湍激, 或風行其上, 便為波濤洶湧, 此豈水之性也哉!然無水安得波浪, 無性安得情也?"¹⁵

The metaphor we are dealing with is a widely accepted one. That this is the case can be seen in the regular use of the expression *hsin hsüeh lai ch'ao* 心血來潮 (meaning "on the impulse of the moment" but more literally "with the tidal flow of heart's blood") in popular fiction. In the description of the Immortal T'ai I 太乙 sitting in contemplation in the thirty-fourth chapter of the *Feng shen pang* 封神榜, there is this explanation: "Readers, it is true of all immortals that they are totally oblivious of desire, wrath and anxiety. The mind (or 'heart') of an immortal, being rock-like, is immovable. What is known as 'the tidal flow of heart's blood' refers to the unexpected movement of the mind (or 'heart') 看官, 但凡神仙, 煩惱, 嗔癡, 愛慾三事永忘, 其心如石, 再不動搖, '心血來潮' 者, 心中忽動耳." The "tidal flow 來潮" here is similar to the notion behind the expression "when activated becomes waves". According to ancient Chinese psychology, all Emotions evolve from Human Nature

¹⁴ See pp. 1211-2 of my *Kuan chui pien*.

¹⁵ See *I chuan yü* 伊川語 in *chüan* 18 of *Ho-nan er Ch'eng i-shu* 河南二程遺書.

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temporarily losing its calm and balance: not only is being agitated or depressed a case of human Nature being disturbed; being happy, too, may be likened to water "becoming quite torrential", to the "tidal flow". What we have seen of Han Yü's argument so far can perhaps be best understood when placed in this kind of linguistic context.

Elsewhere, in *Sung Kao Hsien Shang jen hsü* 送高閑上人序 (also a "dedication", to a monk) Han Yü says, "Whether happy or angry, frustrated or distressed, whether joyful or sorrowful, whether in love's yearning or drink's boredom, whenever his mind (or 'heart') loses its calm and balance and is activated, he seeks expression in the writing of the grass script 喜怒窘窮，憂悲愉快，怨恨思慕，酣醉無聊，不平有動於心，必於草書焉發之。" Here, "to be activated" and "to lose its calm and balance" are two ways of describing the same condition, one positive, the other negative; emphatically, both joy and sorrow are included in this condition.

Similarly, Han Yü says towards the end of *Sung Meng Tung-yeh hsü*, "it is not yet clear whether heaven will harmonize their voices (meaning those of Tung-yeh and two others) to sing the praises (cf. 'to make noises') of a prosperous nation, or put their persons through hunger and deprivation and make their minds suffer so that they will make songs (or 'noises') of their suffering 抑不知天將和其聲而使鳴國家之盛耶？抑將窮餓其身，思愁其心腸，而使自鳴其不幸耶。" This clearly informs us that to sing the praises of a prosperous nation when one has one's way and to make songs of one's suffering when one does not are equally examples of "making a noise at the loss of calm and balance." In including both the brighter and the darker emotions, Han Yü agrees with the *I wen chih* 藝文志 of the *Han History* in associating "the voice of lyricism" with both "joy" and "sorrow", and parts company with Ssu-ma Ch'ien, the advocate of the "agitation" theory.

This view of literature entertained by Han Yü has been carped at by a number of critics.¹⁶ It seems to me that these critics have failed to see the full implications of the expression "losing calm and balance" and mistakenly identified it with the narrower concept of "agitation". Unlike these critics, Huang T'ing-chien 黃庭堅 of the Sung period has written this couplet: "Sinking and floating with the world; wine alone I find agreeable; / In pain and pleasure with others, with poetry I make my noise 與世浮沉唯酒可，隨人憂樂與詩鳴。"¹⁷ Now the inspiration of the second of these two lines is precisely Han Yü's *Sung Meng Tung-yeh hsü*. Huang could of course have, instead, written such lines as "Out of tune with the times in hunger and poverty with poetry I make my noise 失時窮餓以詩鳴", or "In discord with the times and frustrated with poetry I make my noise 違時侘傺以詩鳴." That he should write "pain and pleasure", as a synonym for "loss of calm and balance", goes to show what a scrupulous reader of Han Yü Huang was.

The concept of "poetry as a vehicle of grief" is undoubtedly given a clearer definition by Han Yü than anyone before him, especially in his *Ching T'an Ch'ang he shih hsü* 荆潭唱和詩序. This Preface is essentially a tribute paid to two mandarins

¹⁶Cf. Shen Tso-che 沈作喆 *Yü chien* 寓簡, *chüan* 4, Hung Mai 洪邁 *Jung chai sui pi* 容齋隨筆, *chüan* 4, Ch'ien Ta-hsin 錢大昕 *Ch'ien yen t'ang wen chi* 潛研堂文集, *chüan* 2b, and Hsieh Chang-t'ing 謝章铤 *T'eng yin k'o chui* 藤陰客贊.

¹⁷The second of the two poems *Tsai tz'u Yün chien chien lü chung nan yü* 再次韻兼簡履中南玉 in *chüan* 13 of *Shan ku nei chi* 山谷內集.

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for their ability to write poetry, and the highest compliment is that they should write poetry that matches in quality the poetry of impoverished scholars—"such august personages, that they should compare so favourably with the sallow-countenanced, meanly garmented scholar living in the narrow alley 與韋布里閭樵悴之士較其毫釐分寸。” The implication is that the poetry of the "sallow-countenanced scholar" should be taken as a yardstick and the major premise is this: "The voice of the unperturbed is light and thin, that of the sorrowful is refined; those who are happy can hardly make skilful use of language, while those who suffer from frustration and poverty can easily write well."

"The voice of the unperturbed is light and thin" is a sentiment that had been given expression earlier on in the Six Dynasties period. In a letter, *Yü tsung ti seng ch'o shu* 與從弟僧綽書, Wang Wei 王微 writes, "Without the animation of feelings of grief, one's style flows lightly and is insipid 文詞不怨思抑揚, 則流淡無味."¹⁸ The same belief is put more succinctly by a later writer: "The little formula is plain and open: You have to be ecstatic or heart-broken 其中妙訣無多語, 只有銷魂與斷腸."¹⁹

And why is it hard to "make skilful use of language 難工" in some cases and easy to "write well 易好" in others? A loyal servant of the house of Ming at the end of the Ming period and a literary attendant of the court at the beginning of the Ch'ing period both attempted along the same lines to provide a psychological answer to this question. Chang Huang-yen's 張煌言 explanation runs thus: "Those who are happy can hardly make skilful use of language, while those who suffer from frustration and sorrow [sic] can easily write well! This is utterly true, for poetry is an expression of the emotions, and when you are happy, you are emotionally relaxed, and, being emotionally relaxed, you cannot think or feel deeply; on the contrary, when you are in sorrow, you are emotionally pressed down, and, being emotionally 'depressed', you allow your natural voice to sound, often to tune in with the voices of the universe. That is why it is said that 'a poet has to be frustrated and deprived if his poetry is to be good.' It is all a question of one's experience in life 甚矣哉! '歡愉之詞難工, 而愁苦之音易好也'! 蓋詩言志, 歡愉則其情散越, 散越則思致不能深入; 愁苦則其情沉著, 沉著則舒籟發聲, 動與天會。故曰: '詩以窮而後工,' 夫亦其境然也."²⁰

Ch'en Chao-lun's 陳兆崙 explanation is, perhaps, simpler: "Those who are happy can hardly make skilful use of language, while those who suffer from frustration and sorrow [sic] can easily write well. This is a familiar argument to many of us, but nobody seems to understand how it is true. It is true because happiness disperses and once it is dispersed nothing is left; on the other hand, sorrow stays, it lingers on and is never quite exhausted. This accounts for the difference in depth of mood and flavour engendered by the two conditions '歡娛之詞難工, 愁苦之詞易好。' 此語聞之熟矣, 而莫識其所由然也。蓋樂主散, 一發而無餘; 憂主留, 輾轉而不盡意味之淺深別矣."²¹ This explanation by no means settles the question of good and bad poetry as something related to the poet's fortunes, but shows great understanding of the tastes of joy and sorrow.

¹⁸ See *chüan* 19 of *Ch'üan Sung wen* 全宋文.

¹⁹ *Meng yü Shi Yü-shan lun shih hsing er yu tso* 夢與施愚山論詩醒而有作 by Fang Wen 方文 in *chüan* 5 of *T'u shan hsü chi* 塗山續集.

²⁰ See *Ts'ao Yün-lin shih hsü* 曹雲霖詩序 in *chüan* 1 of *Chang Ts'ang-shui chi* 張蒼水集.

²¹ See *Hsiao han pa yung hsü* 消寒八詠序 *chüan* 4 of *Tzu chu shan fang chi* 紫竹山房集.

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Ch'en Chi-ju 陳繼儒 of the Ming period is known to have contrasted Ch'ü Yüan and Chuang Chou in these terms: "The sorrowful belong to *yin* and therefore is the *Li sao* solitary and profound, running deep; the joyful belong to *yang* and therefore is the *Chuang tzu* free and unrestrained, soaring high 哀者毗於陰，故《離騷》孤沉而深住；樂者毗於陽，故《南華》奔放而飄飛。”²² An Italian poet has recorded a similar observation; to him joy tends to be expansive while sorrow tends to contract (*questa tendenza al dilatamento nell'allegrezza, e al restringimento nella tristezza*).²³ We often say "hsin hua nu fang" 心花怒放 (meaning "very happy" but literally "the flowers of the heart blooming profusely"), "k'ai hsin" 開心 (meaning "happy" but literally "the heart being open"), "k'uai huo te ku t'ou tu ch'ing le" 快活得骨頭都輕了 (meaning "so happy that the bones seem to have become light") and "hsin li ta ko chieh" 心裏打個結 (meaning "depressed" but literally "a knot being tied in the heart"), "hsin shang yu le k'uai shih t'ou" 心上有了塊石頭 (meaning "heavy-hearted" but literally "with a stone on one's heart"), "i k'ou ch'i pieh tsai tu tzu li" 一口氣憋在肚子裏 (meaning "unhappy" but more literally "to shove a lot of air or discontent into the belly"), and so forth. All these expressions suggest that it is characteristic of happiness to disperse, to vanish, whereas it is a characteristic of sorrow to condense and precipitate.²⁴ As happiness "disperses and nothing is left", it is something you cannot retain. And as sorrow "lingers and is never quite exhausted", it is something you cannot entirely get rid of. In Goethe's analogy, happiness is spherical (*die Kugel*) and sorrow is polygonal.²⁵ A spherical object rolls past you, while a polygonal object tumbles and stops. Of this difference both Chang Huang-yen and Ch'en Chao-lun seem to have been aware.

Han Yü holds up the poor scholar's poetry as a yardstick, so that in praising the "august personages" he in effect raises the status of the "sallow-countenanced scholar". Paying compliments without fulsome flattery, being worldly-wise without being excessively snobbish, he demonstrates how to write with restraint in dealing with grand mandarins. Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Chung Jung have only pointed out that suffering inspires one to write poetry, perhaps to write good poetry, and Wang Wei has said no more than that a literary style cannot be good without an element of grief, but Han Yü supplies the other side of the coin and tells us that happiness, too, can inspire us to write poetry, although what gets written is probably not the best poetry, or not even very good poetry. With this additional touch, Han Yü rounds off the discussion by saying the last thing that can be said on the subject.

Han Yü's major premise is not without its factual basis. It would be safe to say that the "poetry of pain" beats the "poetry of pleasure" in quantity, if not always in quality. If, however, we are to conclude that the "poetry of pain" alone constitutes good poetry, on the basis that we have more of it, we would be com-

²² See *Kuo chu Chuang tzu hsü* 郭註莊子叙 in *chüan 9 of Wan hsiang t'ang hsiao p'in* 晚香堂小品.

²³ See p. 100, vol. 1, *Leopardi Zibaldone de Pensieri* (F. Flora ed. 1957 edition).

²⁴ These can be compared to "Happy is up; sad is down" and "Happy is wide; sad is narrow" on pp. 15

and 18, in *Metaphors We Live By* by G. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980).

²⁵ See p. 60, *Goethe the Critic* by G.F. Senior and C.V. Bock (ed.) (1960). Also, cf. the poem "Das Glück ist eine leichte Dirne" on p. 79, vol. 2, the *Complete Works and Letters of Heinrich Heine*.

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mitting a logical error. It is this little logical error that Han Yü can be said to have committed—in distinguished company though.

I have here a few quotable quotes culled from the usual anthologies used in one's student days: "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts"; "True poetry comes only from the human heart burning in profound sorrow" (*und es kommt das echte Lied / Einzig ans dem Menschenh' Herzen, / Das ein tiefes Leid durchgluht*); "The most beautiful poetry is also the most despondent; some of the immortal poems we have are tears unalloyed" (*Les plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux, / Et j'en sais d'immortels qui sont de purs sanglots*).²⁶

An American poet, writing about theories of poetry in prose, has made the remark that "true beauty" is always associated with a "certain taint of sadness"; and that "melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones."²⁷ A more recent American poet argues that "grievances" should be the subject matter of prose, while "griefs" should be the subject matter of poetry, since "poetry is an extravagance about grief."²⁸

I mentioned Nietzsche and Freud earlier on. Croce, who admired Nietzsche and disagreed with Freud, saw poetry as a product of disappointments (*La poesia, come e stato ben detto, nasce dal "desiderio insoddisfatto"*).²⁹ And the Swiss scholar Walter Muschg, great admirer of Freud's literary style, went so far as to write a great tome entitled *A Tragic View of the History of Literature*, in which he seeks to prove that concealed or unidentified distress is often the source of poetry: it is a pity that he was innocent of what the Chinese had to say on the subject.³⁰

Nobody would wish to embrace sorrow, if they could help it; nobody would *not* wish to write beautiful poems, even if they were not particularly gifted; and everybody would be glad of an easy way out, especially when this would not do anybody harm. If the "poetry of suffering" easily pleases, then, obviously, in order to write good poetry, one must write about suffering. Unfortunately however, it takes a "sallow-countenanced scholar" to tell of hardship and suffering; moreover, despite the formula for composition we saw, we do not get many opportunities to be "ecstatic or broken-hearted", not to mention that it must be pretty uncomfortable to be in either of those states!

*Without talents, rejected by the sage liege;
Many illnesses, distanced by my old friends.*

不才明主棄·
多病故人疏。

²⁶"To a Skylark" by Shelley; "Poésie" by Justinus Kerner; and "La Nuit de Mai" by Musset.

²⁷"The Poetic Principle" and "The Philosophy of Composition" by Edgar Allan Poe, on pp. 177 and 195 of the Oxford 1945 edition of his poems and essays.

²⁸See Introduction to the *Poems of E.A. Robinson*

and "On Extravagance" by Robert Frost, as quoted on pp. 129 and 137 of *Lives of the Modern Poets* (1980) by William H. Pritchard.

²⁹See p. 158, *La Poesia* (1953 ed.).

³⁰See p. 16, *Tragische Literaturgeschichte*.

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Reading these lines by the T'ang poet Meng Chiao, Feng Shu 馮舒 of the Ch'ing period was prompted to say: "They mark the disappointments of a lifetime but will stand as a literary triumph from age to age 一生失意之詩，千古得意之句。"³¹ In a similar vein, Po Chū-i 白居易 of the T'ang period has written in response to the poetry of Li Po:

*Without public offices,
In wartime pained by separations,
In old age still a fugitive,
An unfrocked immortal on earth, a sorry sight.*

不得高官職，
仍逢苦亂離；
暮年適客恨，
浮世謫仙悲。

.....
*To heaven's will you should defer:
Good poems are much needed among man.*³²

天意君須會，
人間要好詩。

For good poems to be written, a necessary condition is to have gone through such sorry businesses as war and separation and personal humiliation. A "literary triumph" in the form of a couplet has to be paid for by "the disappointments of a lifetime". This is costly, a price not every practising poet would be willing to pay.³³

That is why it is so often the case that a poet secretly aspires to writing good poems at low cost, or at no cost at all. Some young fellow moans on about the inconveniences of age; some fat cat wallowing in lucre bewails the trials and tribulations of poverty; an ordinary person experiencing a nice, ordinary day waxes lyrical on the subject of "spring sorrow" or the "melancholy of autumn", and so on. In *Hsiang shan yeh lu* 湘山野錄, the monk Wen-ying 文瑩 says of the poetry of the Sung poet K'ou Chun 寇準: "But then everything he wrote when he was a rich and successful person was sad and plaintive Elsewhere I have said that it is common for those who are truly accomplished in the art of poetry to imitate the melancholy note of the early poets 然富貴之時，所作皆淒楚愁怨。 余嘗謂深於詩者，盡欲慕騷人清悲怨感，以主其格。"

What Wen-ying says is hardly surprising. Language has a social function whereby we substitute words for actions, fabricating facts, disguising our thinking and feeling. What should be noted is that in poetry, this sort of "fabulation" is often biased, emphasizing the sad tidings, ignoring the glad tidings, giving us the croco-

³¹ See *Han t'ing shih hua* 寒亭詩話 by Ku Ssu-li 顧嗣立. (Ed: see also p. 3 above)

³² *Tu Li Tu shih chi yin t'i chūan hou* 讀李杜詩集因題卷後.

³³ In a letter to Sarah Jeffrey, Keats writes: ". . .

the English have produced the finest writers in the world", and the reason he gives is that "the English world has ill-treated them during their lives." See p. 115, vol. 2, *Keats' Letters*, edited with notes by H.E. Rollins (1958).

dile's tears, and not the "gently smiling jaws" of the crocodile in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. I am reminded of a couple of lines in *San ko tz'u* 三閣詞 in which the T'ang poet Liu Yü-hsi 劉禹錫 is describing the lady:

*Little chance any remorse she should know,
It's her charm that grows into sorrow.*
不應有恨事，
嬌甚卻成愁。

The traditional poet knows no "remorse" but has to "sorrow", to prove that he is talented, just as the lady, knowing no "remorse", has to "sorrow", to prove her "great charm".³⁴ Reacting to Ssu-ma Ch'ien's remark about "writing when agitated", Li Chih 李贄 of the Ming period muses: "Judging by this, we may conclude that in ancient times, men of wisdom and ability never wrote when they were *not* agitated. Writing when you are not agitated must be rather like shivering when you are not cold, or groaning when you are not ill. But if you really write when you are not agitated, you cannot expect to produce anything remarkable 由此觀之，古之賢聖不憤則不作矣。不憤而作，譬如不寒而顫、不病而呻也。雖作何觀乎。"³⁵

The "ancient times", however, can never be recalled, and "men of wisdom and ability" are not what most of your poets would like to become, or could become: "groaning without being ill" is a hard fact of literature that must be squarely faced. "When your heart is not suffering from a dark depression," concedes Liu Hsieh, "... this is a case of fashioning feelings for the sake of literature 心非鬱陶，……此爲文而造情也。"³⁶ Or as Fan Ch'eng-ta 范成大 of the Sung period says, getting at a lachrymose poem by Lu Yu 陸游:

*Officious the poet courts idle sentiments,
He makes vast sorrows for himself behind closed doors.*³⁷
詩人多事惹閒情，
閉門自造愁如許。

What Fan Ch'eng-ta says here sounds very much like what a master of the classical school in France has said elsewhere of certain writers of elegies, that, "full of affectation, they make themselves broken-hearted" (*qui s'affligent par art*).³⁸

Earlier on I quoted what the two Lius of the Northern and Southern Dynasties had to say about the sick oyster breeding the pearl. When the poet "groans without being ill", he is like the child who should be going to school but has a headache in

³⁴When Wang Fu-tao 王輔道 wrote in his *tz'u lung* poem to the tune of *Huan hsi sha* 浣溪沙, "With much charm and little to do one languishes", he was echoing Liu Yü-hsi. See *chūan* 16 of Wu T'eng 吳曾, *Neng kai chai man lu* 能改齋漫錄.

³⁵See *Chung-i Shui-hu chuan hsü* 忠義水滸傳序 *chūan* 3 of *Fen shu* 焚書.

³⁶The *Ch'ing ts'ai* 情采 chapter in *Wen hsün tiao*.

³⁷*Shih hu shih chi* 石湖詩集, *chūan* 17.

Fan Ch'eng-ta's expression "officious", and Wang Fu-tao's "with little to do" appear antonymous but refer to the same thing. Cf. pp. 169-172 of my *Kuan chui pien*.

³⁸See Boileau, *L'Art poétique*, 2.47.

the morning, or the tycoon who is "indisposed" for the day—they are all shamming illness. The poet who shams illness hopes that, with a bit of luck, his sham illness will be delivered of a genuine pearl. Whether a sham illness can seem real, whether a fake pearl can look genuine, will depend on the impostor's art and ability. It should now be clear why poetry should have been, together with politics and metaphysics, regarded as a fraud or a delusion (*die drei Täuschungen*).³⁹ And, needless to say, the poet deludes himself as well.

I would like to demonstrate this line of thinking with three examples.

The first example is a famous Sung poet's criticism of another famous Sung poet. Chang Lei 張耒, poking fun at Ch'in Kuan 秦觀, says, "Poetry was once very much a pastime of the poor, and that is why modern poets have come to affect the language of the poor. That, I suspect, is the reason why you affect the language of the anxious when you, sir, have no anxiety to speak of 世之文章多出於窮人, 故後之爲文者喜爲窮人之辭。秦子無憂而爲憂者之辭, 殆出於此耶?"⁴⁰

The second example is yet another famous Sung poet's personal confession. In the *tz'u* poem to the tune of *Ch'ou nu-er* 醜奴兒, Hsin Ch'i-chi 辛棄疾 says,

<p><i>In youth I knew not the taste of sorrow; I loved going up the pavilion, I loved going up the pavilion, To make a new poem I made up sorrow.</i></p> <p><i>Now that the taste of sorrow I have known, I would rather become taciturn, I would rather become taciturn, Or say, autumn, rather cool it has grown.</i></p>	<p>少年不識愁滋味, 愛上層樓, 愛上層樓, 爲賦新詞強說愁。 而今識盡愁滋味, 欲說還休, 欲說還休, 卻道天涼好個秋。</p>
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In the first stanza, the poet confesses to having "groaned without being ill", or having "written without being agitated." In the second stanza, the poet describes an entirely different experience, of life as well as of writing: silence—whether it is because one cannot speak or because one will not speak—is often an indication of an extremely serious illness or distress.

The third example is a story about a little-known writer. A certain Li T'ing-yen 李廷彥 wrote a long poem in the "extended regulated verse 百韻排律" form and showed it to his superior for advice. The superior soon got to the point in the poem where a couplet said: "South of the river my younger brother perished, / North of the border my elder brother went the way of all mortal flesh 舍弟江南歿, 家兄塞北亡." Deeply moved, the superior said in sympathy, "Really I hadn't known that such awful disasters had struck your family . . ." Thereupon Li T'ing-yen replied with utter civility: "But no, sir, I wasn't being factual; I thought this might seem a neat little couplet, that's all." This story went the rounds among Li's friends and

³⁹ A view entertained by Thomas Thorild, as cited by Jean Paul in "Verschule der Aesthetik" #52; see p. 193, vol. 5, *The Complete Works of Jean Paul* (Munich, 1965).

⁴⁰ *Sung Ch'in Kuan ts'ung Su Hang chou wei hsüeh hsü* 送秦觀從蘇杭州爲學序 in *chüan* 51 of *Chang Yu-shih wen chi* 張右史文集.

became a popular joke, and someone took the trouble of making up two lines to round off Li's tear-jerking couplet: "Rhyme away and be neat, / Let death come twice for effect 只求詩對好, 不怕兩重喪."⁴¹ Obviously this Mr. Li was going by the theory that the poetry of pain readily pleases, and he understood that poetry had to be concrete, that the emotions should be conveyed in things and facts as a sort of "objective correlative". If the superior in the story had not been interested in the welfare of his staff, if he had not enquired immediately, then we, modern scholars who are strongly under the influence of Positivism, might never have suspected that this Mr. Li was "affecting the language of the anxious when he had no anxiety to speak of." But the ordinary layman, accustomed to this sort of convention, would definitely see through what this Mr. Li was up to.

In the Southern Sung period a "geisha girl" addressed a *tz'u* poem (to the tune of Ch'üeh ch'iao hsien 鵲橋仙) to her lover:

*Promises and oaths,
Love to eternity,
Spring sorrow clutters your missive.
Better chant the T'o-k'ung sutra.
Who taught you to lie?*⁴²

說盟說誓,
說情說意,
動便春愁滿紙。
多應念得《脫空經》,
是那個先生教底

(*"T'o-k'ung"* means deceit, lying.)⁴³ This *tz'u* poem could be compared to the following lines from a love poem by Heine: "Men do not believe in what you call the flame of love; / They see it as the language of poetry." (*Diese Welt glaubt nicht an Flammen, / und sie nimmt's für Poesie*).⁴⁴ Expressions like "spring sorrow" or "the flame of love" are often used unconcernedly by writers, and there is no need for the reader to take them seriously: certainly when the reader is confronted with a "*T'o-k'ung sutra*", there is no point in treating it as a veritable record. And, let it be remembered, the "*T'o-k'ung sutra*" comes in many forms, and is not confined to lyrical poetry or prose: it can come under the guise of personal confessions, memoirs, travellers' accounts, and national histories.

I began by arguing that "poetry as a vehicle of grief" was a literary tenet in pre-modern China. In my rambling I touched on the modern West. This is perfectly natural. Had I started talking about the West, about recent times, I would have inevitably wended my way back to China, to ancient times. The different areas of the humanities are mutually related, and mutually enlightening; they link up

⁴¹ See T'ao Tsung-i *Shuo fu* 說郛, *chüan* 32, Fan Cheng-min 范正敏 *Tun chai hsien lan* 遜齋閑覽 and K'ung Ch'i 孔齊 *Chih cheng chih chi* 至正直記, *chüan* 5.

⁴² Chou Mi 周密 *Ch'i tung yeh yü* 齊東野語, *chüan* 11.

⁴³ "*T'o-k'ung*" 脫空 is synonymous with "shao-k'ung" 梢空. As a *sutra* records what the Buddha said,

the Buddha is present where there is a *sutra*. *Hsüan ho i shih* 宣和遺事 informs us that Emperor Hui-tsung of the Sung dynasty once said to Li Shih-shih 李師師: "How can there be a jesting emperor or a lying Buddha?"

⁴⁴ See p. 230, vol. 1, *Complete Works and Letters of Heinrich Heine* for the thirty-fifth poem in *Neue Gedichte*.

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意的事，而在客觀上是不得已的事。“詩可以怨”也牽涉到更大的問題。古代評論詩歌，重視“窮苦之言”，古代欣賞音樂，也“以悲哀為主”⁽¹⁾；這兩個類似的傳統有沒有共同的心理基礎？悲劇已遭現代“新批評家”鄙棄為要不得的東西了⁽²⁾，但是歷史上佔優勢的理論認為這個劇種比喜劇偉大⁽³⁾；那種傳統^者和歷代“歡愉之詞”是否也有共同的心理基礎？一個謹嚴忠分的文學研究者儘可以不理會這些問題，然而也無妨認識到它們的存在。

(1) 參看《管錐編》946-9頁。

(2) 例如羅勃-格理葉(Alain Robe-Grillet)《新派小說倡議》(Pour un nouveau Roman)(1963) 55頁引巴爾脫(Roland Barthes)的話，參看66-7頁。

(3) 黑格爾也許是重要的例外，他把喜劇估價得比悲劇高，參看普羅阿(S. S. Praver)《馬克思與世界文學》(Karl Marx and World Literature)(1976) 270頁自註99提示的那兩節。

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different countries, different historical periods, and are linked up with other academic disciplines. As man's life-span and his intellect are both severely limited, we tend to narrow down our fields of research, making our areas of study increasingly restricted and specialised, all for the sake of convenience. Perhaps we have no alternative. But it does mean that, when you are an expert in a branch of learning, while you may subjectively be pleased with yourself, you cannot be very happy on objective grounds. "Poetry as a vehicle of grief" is a problem tied up with other, larger problems. The "poetry of pain" interested the ancient Chinese, so did the "music of melancholy".⁴⁵ Was there a psychological basis shared by these two areas of human experience? Tragedy has been rejected by the "new critics" of our century,⁴⁶ but it was considered superior to comedy in the best of traditional criticism.⁴⁷ Could there also be a psychological basis shared by that traditional estimation of tragedy and the Chinese rejection of the "poetry of pleasure"? A literary scholar, strong in his sense of discipline, content with his methods, might well choose to ignore such problems, although he would have nothing to lose by recognizing their existence. But then if he chose to deny that the problems were there, I can't honestly say that he hadn't found the best solution for all problems.

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⁴⁵ See pp. 946-9 of my *Kuan chui pien*.

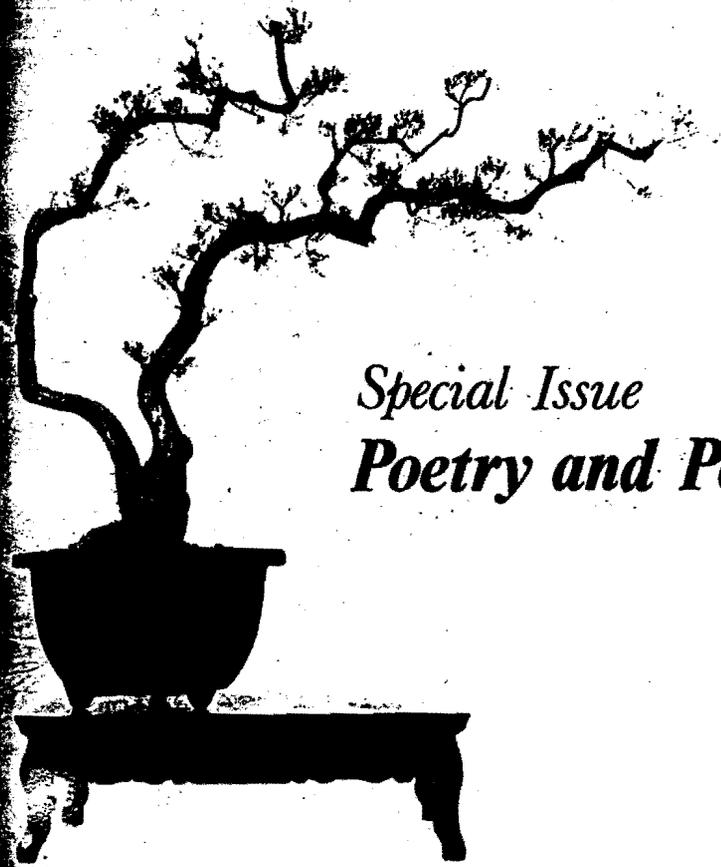
⁴⁶ For example, according to Roland Barthes as quoted by Alain Robbe-Grillet on p. 55, *Pour un nouveau roman* (1963).

⁴⁷ Hegel was perhaps an important exception,

rating comedy more highly than tragedy as he did. Cf. Note 99 on p. 270, *Karl Marx and World Literature* by S.S. Praver (1976). Fischer, too, preferred comedy to tragedy, and considered it the noblest form of literature. Cf. p. 220, vol. 3, *A History of Modern Criticism*, by R. Wellek (1965).

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