of our frailty. And it is this sentiment that Li Ch'ing-chao dramatizes in the following poem:

night found me so flushed with wine—i was slow to undo my hair
the plum blossoms still stuck onto a dying branch
the aroma of wine stirred me from spring sleep
my dream once broken: there was no going back.

now: it's quiet
the moon hovers above
the blue curtains are drawn
still: i touch the fallen petals
still: i feel their lingering scent
still: i hold onto a moment of time.[20]

The message could not be put more forcefully. We must savor the moment, we must not lose our senses, our ability to feel, or our capacity for response. Though it hurts, and however fragile our hold on life may be, we must hold onto our moments of time. The vestiges of nature in the last lines—the "lingering scent," "the fallen petals"—may be no longer seasonal deaths for us, who have lived through "silent springs" and "birdless summers." But while there is time, we must once again rediscover nature in all its dimensions, or we shall risk losing touch with reality.

20. *Li Ch'ing-chao chi*, p. 6.

PRAISE POETRY IN THE T'ANG

STEPHEN OWEN

In recent years Western studies of Chinese literature have been making increasing use of Western interpretive concepts and have given consideration to the possibility of some form of "comparative literature" between Chinese and Western works. In the present paper I hope to explore the dimensions of one such concept, that of "praise poetry," and attempt to construct a model which makes valid comparison possible. Although it appears that what we can gain from valid comparison is only of limited interest, the concepts which we are able to form through comparison can be very useful in the interpretation of individual poems.

I will be discussing "praise poetry" not in terms of a Chinese genre concept, but rather as a hypothetical "universal genre." Thus the argument will be deductive rather than inductive: a

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concept is first postulated and then specific examples are considered only insofar as they conform to it. This runs counter to the prevalent modern practice of empirical, inductive argument, but it is the way in which generic concepts such as "tragedy" were long treated in the West. It is not a practice I would generally recommend, but I think it can be seen that the assumption of universal norms is a necessary precondition to Sino-Western comparative literature. Due to limitations of space I have kept the comparative portion of the paper to a minimum, although the application should be immediately apparent.

In the first part of this paper I will consider the principles which inform a concept of "praise poetry" and then trace the literary devices which seem to follow from those general principles. In the second part of the paper I will discuss the limitations of such concepts in actual comparison and their usefulness in interpreting individual works.

I

An untitled poem by Rainer Maria Rilke begins: "O sage, Dichter, was du tust?—Ich rühme" (Tell us, poet, what you do—I praise).[1] In its broadest sense, praise poetry may indeed be a concept which is fundamental to all poetry, and in this light we might see poetry's function as an acceptance and glorification of man's physical and intellectual world. At the other extreme, however, since the Romantic movement in the late eighteenth century, public praise poetry, the panegyric, has fallen into a disrepute even greater than other forms of public and occasional poetry. It has become the kind of poetry one apologizes for in literary histories and omits in anthologies. Considering the

1. Patrick Bridgwater, ed., *Twentieth Century German Verse* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), p. 44.

importance which most cultures have given to public praise poetry, it is worth our while to reconsider it, its function, its normative characteristics, and its artistic components.

In traditional China, unlike in the Near East and Europe, the mainstream of praise poetry is not to be found in the court, but rather in the occasional poetry exchanged between members of the scholar official class. Of course, in the three millenia of Chinese literary history, praise poetry assumed numerous forms, and it was never a stranger to the court, but by far the majority of praise poems and the most interesting of their kind were such occasional poems, written not on the highest but on the middle levels of public life.

There is no single genre which encompasses the various forms of Chinese praise literature. The *sung* 頌 most closely approximates the idea of a praise poem, but after the Han it was not one of the more common forms of praise poetry. Chinese literature has several genres equivalent to the funerary eulogy, but we will not deal with this very large and specialized form of praise poetry here. Both the *sung* and the eulogistic genres usually consist of a long preface and a poem in the archaic four-syllable meter of the *Shih-ching* 詩經: these poems are usually compilations of untranslatable virtues, highly stylized and turgid. Considering the educational level of some of the figures thus praised, the primary function of many *sung* seems to have been to impress and mystify. Although praise literature appears in most prose and poetic genres, the five-syllable and six-syllable *shih* 詩 and a less formal version of the four-syllable *shih* were by far the most flexible vehicles for it. For our examples we will use *shih* of the eighth and ninth centuries, which exhibit the most common techniques of Chinese praise poetry.

Praise poetry has always served the legitimate function in society of articulating the highest public values of that society and, by applying those values to a specific person or event, implicitly measuring the reality against the ideal. The roots of

praise literature lie in one of the oldest forms of sympathetic magic, the transformation of the optative into the declarative: by saying something is so, one makes it actually become so. In the Chinese ceremonial praise poem, the poet will often set his own dynasty, however insignificant or tottering it may be in fact, in the context of the great dynasties of the past, thus hoping to lend it a legitimacy and vigor it may presently lack. For the great dynasty, the praise poet sets the ideal before it and ignores the compromises it must make with political reality. As Thackeray has Addison say in defense of his panegyric of the Duke of Marlborough, *The Campaign*: "We must paint our great Duke . . . not as a man, which no doubt he is, with weaknesses like the rest of us, but as a hero. T'is in a triumph, not a battle, that your humble servant is riding his sleek Pegasus."[2] The difference between praise poetry and other poetry is precisely the difference between the triumph and the battle.

We may feel, as Henry Esmond does just before the passage quoted above, that praise poetry creates a destructive illusion, that satire is the more effective instrument to measure actuality against the ideal and thereby change society. For example, when we read documents of the pathetically weak Ch'en dynasty and hear it speak with the moral and military grandeur of the Han, the falseness of the illusion is inescapable. But with more sympathy we can see how praise poetry stands as the equal of satire in the Confucian literary scheme, one pulling and the other pushing reality towards the political and moral ideal. The classical statement of these two functions of poetry is to be found in the "Great Preface" to the *Shih-ching*: poetry is to *cheng te-shih* 正得失, "make clear where government has succeeded and where it has failed."

2. William Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1970), p. 298.

This intimate relation between praise poetry and the values of a society applies not only to the public values but to the private values as well: the real Taoist hermit is treated in terms of the ideal Taoist hermit; the lutanist's performance is measured against what are felt to be the artistic goals of lute playing. However, if praise poetry articulates a public or private ideal, it does so in a very specific way which separates it from didactic poetry. It actualizes the ideal as though it were real and present in the person praised, thus mediating between reality and the ideal in a way not possible for most other forms of poetry.

From this primary trait of praise poetry evolve those devices which characterize praise poetry the world over. First, there is stereotyping: the role model is more important than the specifics of personality. Along with stereotyping goes allegorization in which the role model and the processes of attaining it take on metaphorical form. Second, there is a device which appears with particular frequency in Chinese praise poetry—archaism. Archaic language and allusion to early texts serve the function of asserting a unity between past and present, and, by implication, asserting the eternal validity of the models used by the praise poet. Finally, there is the most popular device of praise poetry—hyperbole. Hyperbole is natural to praise poetry because it is a device which actualizes absolutes, gives physical form to an extreme.

Yet another familiar device of praise literature is the exemplary anecdote, more common in Chinese prose and Western praise poetry than in Chinese praise poetry. Because it is both specific and occasional, the biographical anecdote might seem at first to contradict the proposition that praise literature is concerned primarily with the normative values of a society. In fact, the exemplary anecdote is one of the most effective ways of uniting the universal and the particular by actualizing some ideal or value in a given action. Insofar as an anecdote merely illustrates character or fills in a biographical lacuna it is not necessarily a

form of praise; an action is praiseworthy or exemplary only when it embodies some value of the culture.

Let us begin with an example of stereotyping and private values in praise poetry, Li Po's 李白 famous praise of the hermit "Tseng Meng Hao-jan" 贈孟浩然 (To Meng Hao-jan):[3]

I love Master Meng,
His free spirit is known the world over.
In the flush of youth he cast off cap and carriage,
In white-haired age he rests with the clouds and pines.
Drunk in moonlight, often "smitten by the sage,"
Led astray by flowers, he does not serve his lord.
A high mountain—how could I look to climb it?—
So in vain I bow to your pure fragrance here.

The pellucid simplicity of this poem has made it a favorite in the Chinese tradition, but as we shall see, this simplicity is a natural result of the reduction of the complexities of a real human being to fit the eremitic model. The real Meng Hao-jan was a hermit only by fits and snatches and primarily so only in response to his frustrated, but eager, attempts to gain office. It is, however, the hermit Meng of Li Po's poem who survives in legend and historical biography. Meng the frustrated office-seeker is either underplayed or ignored.

3. *Fen-men pu-chu Li T'ai-po shih* 分門補註李太白詩, *Ssu-pu Ts'ung-k'an* ed. (hereafter *SPTK*) 9:1. "Cap and carriage" are conventional metonymy for official life. "Smitten by the sage" refers to a story about one Hsü Mo, an eccentric of the third century; Hsü, when drunk at his official duties, explained that he had been smitten by the sage. A friend had to explain that in this case "sage" did not refer to a wrathful emperor, but rather was a colloquialism for strained wine. "Led astray by flowers" here refers to Peach Blossom Spring, the agrarian utopia described by T'ao Ch'ien 陶潛. The fisherman who discovered this lost village did so by following a trail of peach blossoms in the water.

What strikes us immediately about this poem is that Meng Hao-jan is not a physical presence in the poem, but only a reputation, the sweet fragrance of the last line. He belongs to, and actually seems to become, the high mountain, so far above the poet that he loses corporeal reality. He ceases to be Meng Hao-jan and becomes instead Meng Fu-tzu 孟夫子, "Master Meng," identified by his status rather than by an individuating name. This is analogous to the practice in other Chinese praise poems of referring to a person by the title of his office or by the name of a historical model.

If we consider the ways in which character may be directly described, we realize that those terms which describe character—such as "trustworthy," "good," or "depraved"—are always reductive. They describe a common denominator from examples of behavior which may in themselves differ greatly. We admire the precision of characterization in novels because they do not simply say someone is "good," but rather build their characters through particular responses to numerous situations. Poetry also is capable of complex characterization, though it must necessarily use different means than that of the novel. For example, Tu Fu 杜甫 describes himself at the beginning of a poem:

There is a commoner of Tu-ling
Whose plans grow clumsier as he ages—
How foolish were his vows to become
Equal to the great men of antiquity. . . .[4]

Tu Fu is mocking himself and admiring himself at the same time; he is retaining his aspirations but also laughing both at them and his failure to attain them. In the context of such potentially complex characterization, Li Po's choice of the general "free spirit" (*feng-liu* 風流) becomes significant; not only is *feng-liu* a

4. *Fen-men chi-chu Tu Kung-pu shih* 分門集註杜工部詩, *SPTK*, 12:19.

general description, but it is likewise an especially vague one, encompassing military heroism, profligacy, and, in this case, eremitic eccentricity. As with Addison's Duke of Marlborough, it is not the real man with all his contradictions but the "hero" that is spoken of.

In the second couplet the course of Meng Hao-jan's life, represented in the stylized transition from ruddy-faced youth to white-haired old age, is reduced to the two components of the eremitic experience—rejection of public service and dwelling in seclusion. Again all the contradictions, complications, and particulars are reduced to the simplest form of an ideal pattern. In genuinely personal poetry, such as the passage of Tu Fu quoted above, one gropes for models, tries to make them fit, apologizes for them, justifies them, and elaborates them. In praise poetry the model itself is the subject of the poem, and there is a strong tendency to simply articulate the pattern of the model, to enumerate attributes and examples, rather than to argue for it.

The third couplet adds two more conventional attributes of the eremitic model—wine-drinking and the agrarian utopia of T'ao Ch'ien. Neither of these belongs comfortably with Meng Hao-jan. Meng was not especially well-known as a drinker; the theme plays nowhere near the role in his poetry that it does in the poetry of Li Po. Nor does the bucolic community of Peach Blossom Spring fit in with the solitary hermit figure of the T'ang. However, since it too involves "not serving one's lord," it collapses into a component of the model hermit. Such disparate elements are not meant so much to be understood as literally true as to serve simply as referents for the model hermit. Attributes of the model are enumerated, whether they apply in the particular case or not. Finally, in the last couplet Meng Hao-jan's apparent loss of identity and physical presence is explained as distance: Meng is so far above Li Po that he can be apprehended only as a "fragrance," a reputation, to be honored.

In contrast to the general praise of character in the preceding poem, praise poetry is often demanded by some public occasion. Han Yü's 韓愈 "Yün-chou hsi-t'ang shih" 運州谿堂詩 (Poem on Ma Ts'ung's Valley Hall at Yün-chou) is such a poem:[5]

An emperor settled the Nine Regions—
Since then generations, since then years;
Yet there was a wild place ungoverned,
Between the Yellow River and T'ai-shan.
When it came to our August Hsien-tsung,
He pastured it utterly, corrected it,
And gazed on the states to chose a lord,
Made you master of the place.
You came to be master of the place,
The people weren't yet trustworthy.
You took no time to eat or drink,
That you might teach them, make them obey.
Who was there hungry, lacking food?
Who groaned, who sighed?
Who was wronged that did not seek you,
Or fail to have their just desires?
Who was a root-worm in the state,
A termite in the joints and roots,
Ram-savage or wolf-greedy,
A wrecker of cities with fine words?
You breathed warmth on them, puffed on them,
Caressed them and soothed them,
Pierced them with your doctor's needles—
Dismembered some, ripped open some.
All within your fief's bounds
Were blessed and were strengthened

5. *Chu Wen-kung chiao Han Ch'ang-li hsien-sheng chi* 朱文公校韓昌黎先生集, *SPTK*, 14:2-3.

And called Your Excellency "Father"—
Who transgressed your orders?
You could muster and campaign
And from unrest protect your state.
Your Excellency made his Valley Hall,
Where the flowing waters swelled,
In the shallows, fronds and lotus,
In the depths were reeds and rushes.
There Your Excellency gave his banquet,
The drums crash, the drums boom,
A banquet in the Valley Hall,
Where guests may eat and drink their fill.
In the streams were leaping fish,
On the banks were perching birds.
There they sang, there they danced,
The drums rumbled, the drums beat.
Your Excellency is in Valley Hall,
Attended there by lute and zither,
There with your guests and your advisors,
Consult the classics, check the laws.
Thus your actions do not err,
Thus your people are not crooked.
In the valley, ferns and duckweed,
There are tortoises, there are fish,
Your Excellency is in mid-stream,
To the right, the *Shih*; to the left, the *Shu*.
Do not weary of us or desert us—
Be a shade for this land of ours.

Lord Ma Ts'ung is giving a banquet. A fine banquet it may have been, but how good can a banquet be? A crowd of officials and hangers-on eat dinner and drink wine, stroll about Lord Ma's estate, chat a while, and go home. It is a transitory experience without significance, without a past or a future. Han Yü is the

praise poet; he must somehow make this transitory occasion significant and important, not only for the sake of Lord Ma's friendship and a good supper, though these motives are not to be despised, but also for a basic human need to see in experience some value beyond the pleasure of the moment. To this end Han Yü remembers the banquets celebrated in the *Shih-ching*, such as the one given by "Staunch Duke Liu" towards the end of *Shih* 250. Duke Liu's banquet is a time of celebration and repose after the long labor of settling his people in the land of Pin and building his capital.

With this and other thematic associations from the *Shih-ching*, what started out to be a banquet poem begins strangely:

An emperor settled the Nine Regions—
Since then generations, since then years;
Yet there was a wild place ungoverned,
Between the Yellow River and T'ai-shan.

Not only does Han Yü use the thematic pattern of labor and repose from the *Ta-ya* 大雅 of the *Shih-ching* to give the banquet meaning in context; he also uses the *Shih*'s metrical form, its diction, and its general tone to enforce the analogy between past and present. Moreover, in the opening four lines he uses this archaism and the inherent ambiguity of the language to maintain a confusion between past and present: we do not know at the beginning whether he is referring to the T'ang (as later proves to be the case), to the mythical sage-king Yü, or to the founding of the Chou dynasty, as an analogy to the enfeoffment odes of the *Ta-ya* would suggest. By identifying past and present, this archaism and ambiguity suggest the universality and eternal validity of the processes of civilization and Confucian government. Lord Ma's satrapy becomes one of the great Chou fiefs; his suppression of local dissidents becomes the civilizing of a hitherto wild region; his government becomes a model of kindness to the needy and

sternness to wrongdoers; and his banquet, the real subject of the poem, becomes the traditional celebration given after the long labors of civilization. A transitory occasion is given a context, and the context is given meaning in the larger world of Confucian political values.

The praise poet focuses on the order of the world rather than its disorder, and that order is frequently reflected in a rational and balanced poetic structure, which contrasts markedly with the intense emotion and brilliant imagery of much T'ang lyric poetry. The theme of the transition from want to plenty occurs throughout the poem as it centers itself in time and space to the present banquet. Yün-chou moves from being "ungoverned" and wild to being "corrected"; its people move from untrustworthiness to a filial appreciation of Lord Ma, their "father." Lord Ma himself moves from a state of great endeavor when he "has no time to eat or drink," in order that his people no longer "lack food," to the banquet where one may "eat and drink his fill." The use of the eating theme earlier in the poem also serves to make the banquet meaningful. Even the progression from rhetorical questions to direct statements mirrors this process of enriching: from "who lacks," implying that the people in fact once did lack, we move to the direct and positive actions of Lord Ma's soothing care.

From the founding of the dynasty or empire in an ambiguously indeterminate past to the pacification and enrichment of the region to the construction of the Valley Hall, the poem gradually centers itself on the here and now, the present banquet in the hall and Lord Ma himself. All nature seems to focus attention on this point: the fish leap up out of the water and the birds come down to roost, bringing the eye to the human world in between them. Moreover, the frequent use of "indirect metaphor" (*hsing* 興), a device characteristic of the *Shih-ching*, sets up a parallel between the lush verdure of the valley and the enriching bounty of Lord Ma's banquet and government. Finally

we find Lord Ma in "midstream," in the center of the valley and of his fief, surrounded by the *Shih-ching* and *Shu-ching* 書經, the two classics from which most of the language of the poem is taken, the classics which contain the models of the ideal social order achieved in Yün-chou. The banquet is still only a moment, but a moment which culminates a long and difficult process; it is a moment one would seek to preserve, to extend into the future: "Do not weary of us or desert us, / Be a shade for this land of ours."

Whole panegyric traditions in the West and Near East have been built on the ingenuity of hyperbolic praise. Chinese literati, being philosophically inclined to moderation, were moderate in their use of this most immoderate device, and they remained suspicious of it. There are exceptions: stern Confucian literary theorists may have used the term hyperbole as a general term of opprobrium for any literature which they felt was unhealthy to society, but they found it difficult to resist when they themselves were writing poems to high officials.

Meng Chiao 孟郊, as stern a Confucian as any, found himself looking for a patron and, closing his eyes to moderation, addressed the following poem to Lu Ch'ang-yüan, who held posts both in the Censorate and as Manager of Grain Transport. As is usually the case in praise poetry, it is the office rather than the individual which commands attention, and should the official in question hold two offices rather than one, few poets could resist the temptation to play on the combination.

TO LU CH'ANG-YÜAN, VICE-PRESIDENT IN THE CENSORATE AND MANAGER OF GRAIN TRANSPORT[6]

Since your office in managing transport is great,
Your fame in crushing evil grows still mightier.

6. "Tseng chuan-yün Lu chung-ch'eng" 贈轉運陸中丞, *Meng Tung-yeh shih-chi* 孟東野詩集, *SPTK*, 6:10. The "roc" is Chuang-tzu's *p'eng* 鵬, a bird of

The roc flies, winnowing warped clouds,
A sea-eagle rages, giving rise to a straight wind;
You send out your orders like frost and snow,
That cut away clumps of thorns and briars.
Then Ch'u's granaries pour out westward,
And Wu's rice comes forth from the east.
Reflections of sails strangle River-Mouth,
The sound of wagons deafens the heartland.
His Majesty knows the value of your brilliant plans,
And everyone rejoices that the road gets through.
All were startled by your power as law-holder,
Now joined by deeds equal to the Lord of Tsuan.
I, Lao-lai-tzu in piety, but truly young,
A Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju who did not avoid poverty,
Robed in flowers, the lotus of the wilds,
Writing on leaves of the mountain pawlonia—
Except for the Master Craftsman's heart,
Who would pity the ever restless tumbleweed?

Transport involves moving things around the country, so as a successful transport manager it is only natural that L'u's fame be transported along with the grain shipments and thus grow "mightier." This idea of movement to distant places brings to the poet's mind the roc, Chuang-tzu's *p'eng*. In his grandeur Lu Ch'ang-yüan becomes the *p'eng*, but Meng Chiao outdoes himself to combine Lu's offices in a single visual image. The *p'eng's* wings shake through the clouds in flight, seeming to "winnow" them.

such immense proportions that its movements are beyond the comprehension of creatures which live on an ordinary scale. The Lord of Tsuan, Hsiao Ho, was a famous transport manager in Han times. Lao-lai-tzu was one of the exemplars of filial piety, famous for dressing up like a child in his dotage and playing games in order to please his even more aged parents. Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju 司馬相如 was the most famous of the Han *fu* 賦 writers, who for a period of his life was supposed to have lived in poverty in Szechwan.

In Chinese poetic diction "winnow" (*po* 簸) was a dead metaphor meaning simply to "shake," but Meng Chiao brings it back to life in order to allude to Lu's function as censor: we have the bird winnowing "warped" clouds, exerting the censor's duty to distinguish good from evil, as one separates the chaff from the grain. At the same time, the resuscitated grain metaphor brings to mind Lu's other connection with grain as a transport manager.

Under this stern moral force the lower Yangtse region turns into a veritable cornucopia, inundating the capital with grain. This is followed by the clearest example of hyperbole in an already lavishly hyperbolic poem: Lu Ch'ang-yüan is such an immensely successful manager of grain transport that the river is literally "choked" with the reflections of the sails of his grain-boats—another dead metaphor brought back to life—and the capital region, Kuan-ch'ung 關中, is "deafened" by the rumbling of his grain carts. In the first of these images we should note that Meng Chiao is careful to moderate his extravagance to simply the reflections of the sails rather than the sails themselves. Were the river literally clogged with boats, one would imagine that the emperor would be less than pleased with his new manager of grain transport.

There is an inherent, almost playful delight for both the poet and the person praised in the cleverness of such hyperbole. While it neither reduces Lu Ch'ang-yüan to a disembodied model, as the Li Po poem did to Meng Hao-jan, nor sets him in a larger cultural context, as the Han Yü poem did for Lord Ma, this kind of outrageous exaggeration mitigates what might be called the "embarrassment of praise." Measuring individuals against absolutes can be tricky business, particularly in cultures which value public modesty. Although a worthy individual might like to believe that he is the embodiment of some public value, unless he is a megalomaniac, he knows quite well that he is not. The secret of this kind of hyperbole's success lies in its very playfulness and in the extremity of exaggeration: it permits the person praised both to

enjoy the compliment and, on one level at least, cheerfully accept the untruth of it, for it is not meant to be understood as literally true.

This brings us to the problem of metaphorical praise. Many cultures, the Chinese included, have some inhibitions against the direct praise of character. Literatures in which the hyperbolic panegyric was a major form, such as Gaelic, Welsh, and the Islamic literatures, felt no such inhibitions, but elsewhere the literature of praise often seems least false when most indirect. Indirect praise often takes the form of praise of some object or possession which stands for the person praised. Thus in English literature we have the estate poems of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which the estate becomes an extension of the character of the person praised and embodies his relation to the community and his past. Likewise, for Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju the praise of the Han imperial park becomes a praise of imperial power and the unified empire. As we shall discuss later, perhaps the most common form of praise poem in the T'ang is the praise of some official's home and garden or of the landscape which surrounds a recluse.

To praise Governor General Kao of An-hsi, a region in Central Asia, Tu Fu directs his attention to Kao's dappled warhorse:

BALLAD: GOVERNOR-GENERAL KAO'S DAPPLED HORSE[7]

An-hsi's governor-general—his dappled Kokonor steed—
The renown of it came to the east in a flash.
This horse in the battle line, long without rival,
At one heart with its master, they accomplished great deeds.
Those deeds accomplished, gracious care goes with it where it goes,

7. "Kao tu-hu ts'ung-ma hsing" 高都護總馬行, *Fen-men chi-chu Tu Kung-pu shih*, 23:18-19.

Now, as though windblown, it arrived from distant Drifting Sands.
A mighty frame that never felt the kindness of stabling,
A fierce spirit that still longs for victory on the battlefield.
Ankles short, hooves long—hard as iron,
That often trampled cracks in the thick ice of the River Chiao.
A five-tassled mane shakes into clouds all over its body,
And after the thousand mile run you see that its sweat runs with blood.
None of the strong lads of Ch'ang-an dare to ride it,
For all the city knows that it gallops faster than cast lightning.
Blue silk now binds its head, it grows old for its master—
How shall it ever go out again through the gate to the Northwest?

Horses had certain traditional associations which made them particularly apt for comparison with the governor-general. First, they were associated with military prowess, and the finest warhorses supposedly came from Central Asia. Furthermore, the loyal service of a horse to its master was often used as a metaphor for a loyal official's service to the throne and his right to be provided for in old age. This association between the governor-general and his horse is, however, more than just a metaphor in the narrow sense: they are parallel identities. They have a natural affinity because they correspond on different levels of the cosmic order: in the animal world the warhorse is the counterpart of the old warrior in human society.

As the renown of both horse and general precedes them to capital, Tu Fu plays a sophisticated literary trick to identify the general and his horse. In lines one and three Tu Fu refers specifically to the horse, because without such a direct reference

the reader would naturally assume that both couplets referred to Kao: his fame has also come east, and he is also without rival in battle. By calling attention to the horse in this way, the poet is saying "in this case the horse rather than the master," and by this device he lets us know that the same things might be said about the master. Having made this mock differentiation between the governor-general and his horse, Tu Fu puts them back together again: they are "of one heart." Tu Fu, incidentally, puns on the phrase *wu-ti* 無敵, meaning both "without rival" and "without enemy [who dared stand up to it/him]."

Conflict and tension do not play a major role in most praise poems, but this poem uses praise poetry's potential to affirm values in order to resolve a conflict. Tu Fu perceives the fundamental tension between the military and civil aspects of the state, between the energy and constant movement which characterize both Kao and his horse and the state's legitimate desire to control, or in Tu Fu's terms, to "care for" that free, potentially destructive power. Everything about the horse is speed and violence: its reputation moves "in a flash," and it arrives in the capital in what seems to be a cloud of dust, "as though windblown." Yet everywhere in its rapid and constant movement it is met with "gracious care." It has never been raised in a stable; this suggests a natural freedom which contrasts positively with the confinement of a stable, but Tu Fu is careful to qualify the stabling as a "kindness." The praise poet still works with society's values, but in this case it is a pair of values, and those values are in conflict. Tu Fu is praising the governor-general and his horse in terms of one of those values while at the same time trying to reconcile them to the other. In the capital, unlike at the frontier, the freedom and power of the horse are an alien element, too swift and uncontrollable for even the wildest of the capital's youths. On the other hand, the capital constrains the horse, which longs to return to the field of battle. The poem resolves itself with the horse haltered and growing old, violating its untamed nature for the sake of its master, referring on the metaphorical level to the general's loyalty and duty to the emperor.

This is praise poetry, but praise poetry which, like much of the best of its kind, attempts to reconcile conflicting values. Because of praise poetry's intimate relation to society's values, it finds itself in an excellent position to reconcile them and heal a discord which threatens the individual or the state. In English there is Marvell's "An Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," which tries, in praising Cromwell, to reconcile Cromwell and the execution of Charles. In a conflict of values praise poetry does not dispute but rather praises both: Tu Fu is careful not to belittle either the military or civil values of the state—each has its own beauty. However, the military can be reconciled to the civil by an appeal to the higher, unifying value of service to one's master. The governor-general must reconcile himself to a confined, civil existence now for precisely the same reason that he would expect his horse to be reconciled to the halter—for the sake of his master.

Whether he speaks for public or private values, directly or indirectly, the praise poet celebrates a concord between man and what he believes or desires himself to be. The cost to individuality, the fundamental untruth, and the self-satisfaction of praise poetry may frequently alienate it from us, but in the relatively stable values of a traditional society, it is the voice which speaks of the best in human beings, which assures lasting importance in what they do, and which promises that success will be remembered, not the inconsistencies and not the flaws.

II

The possibility of comparative literature usually depends on influence or interchange between two literary traditions, or at least some common source that makes the works compared commensurate. If we seek to compare traditions that developed in

complete or relative isolation from one another, we must postulate absolute, non-historical categories to give widely divergent works a common ground; we must establish fundamental unities by which the things compared can be commensurate. Otherwise, we will find ourselves comparing random phenomena. For example, if we compared apples and ink, we might say that one is red and one is black, one is hard and one is wet, both are found on the teacher's desk, and so on. We could multiply true comparisons to infinity while illuminating nothing.

One possible common ground for comparison is the hypothetical construct of a universal genre, a "kind" of writing that evolves from some motive shared by widely divergent cultures. This common motive will in itself generate certain unifying characteristics that we may isolate as the generic common denominators. In the first part of this essay we have attempted to isolate fundamental characteristics of a hypothetical genre, "praise poetry," as well as some of the literary devices that would seem to proceed from those characteristics.

In practical comparison whatever unities we may find that reflect our hypothetical universal genre, those unities will be far outweighed by the differences between the works compared. In the cross-cultural study of praise poetry one difference should be obvious: insofar as praise poetry articulates the values of a culture, the praise poetry of one tradition will differ from that of another in terms of the values expressed. The great T'ang minister will not be praised for the same qualities that a medieval Welsh prince will be praised for. On the purely literary level, it is equally obvious that the praise poetry of two traditions will differ as a function of the general differences between their literary techniques, modes of representation, and metaphor. For example, the rhetorical amplification of a fourth century Latin panegyric is based on different structural principles than the symmetrical narrative order of Han Yü's poem on Lord Ma's Valley Hall. These are simply general principles of differentiation, ways in which one

large corpus of works will differ from another large corpus of works; we are not even considering the ways in which the works of one poet or individual works themselves will be distinguished in comparison to works from another tradition.

There is a large body of T'ang praise poetry that differs greatly from most Western praise poetry; however, what differentiates these poems from Western praise poems is a mode of metaphor that characterizes T'ang poetry in general, not simply T'ang praise poetry. If we discuss this particular mode of metaphor in the comparison of a Chinese and a Western praise poem, then we are using an aspect of the work which bears no relation to the universal genre "praise poetry," our carefully constituted grounds for comparison. This is not to say that we cannot compare modes of metaphor, but rather that to do so, we must start over again with a universal, nonhistorical concept of metaphor to allow commensurability.

To summarize, in comparing works of independent literary traditions we must postulate some mediating construct that gives the works compared commensurability. A universal genre is one such mediating construct. However, when we postulate such a mediating construct, we strictly delimit the legitimate field of comparison and may not make meaningful comparisons between all aspects of the works in question. Such criteria of commensurability may sound excessively theoretical, but their application is necessary. In cross-cultural comparison by far the greatest danger is attractive but accidental similarity. Random parallels between Chinese and Western works possess only the most meager and purely ornamental interest.

Although the value of universal genres for comparative study is strictly limited, these non-historical, mediating concepts can be extremely useful in the study of a single literary tradition. The Chinese lacked a single generic concept to cover the full range of praise poetry, and our universal genre can help us make sense of poems whose purport might otherwise be hidden from us. As we

look over the varieties of Chinese praise poems, we may legitimately resort to the particularities of the tradition, such as Chinese modes of metaphor. Indeed, we must be aware of Chinese modes of metaphor to recognize an important body of Chinese praise poems as such.

T'ang poetry often uses what might be best described as a "metaphor of displacement"—that is, human qualities, ideas, and arguments are in varying degrees "displaced" away from their human and intellectual context into the world of nature that surrounds them. This differs from most Western metaphor in that the metaphor of displacement is not fictional as is the case with Western metaphor: the metaphor of displacement is strictly true rather than metaphorically true. In most cases the mountain does not "stand for" the hermit but is rather his milieu, actually present and retaining its own identity, while at the same time incarnating the human condition. This stands in contrast to the mountain metaphor in Li Po's "To Meng Hao-jan," which represents the usual Western sense of metaphor: the mountain "stands for" the hermit. Landscape description is the most common form of the metaphor of displacement, and anyone who has read T'ang poetry knows that landscapes mirror humans in strange ways. The metaphor of displacement is not the exclusive property of the praise poet, but he too looks into nature for features that embody the human qualities he wishes to praise.

Taking into account both our concept of praise poetry and the metaphor of displacement, the function of the following work as a praise poem becomes much clearer.

WRITTEN ON YI-KUNG'S MEDITATION CELL
IN THE TEMPLE OF GREAT YÜ[8]

Yi-kung, for the silence to practice zazen,
Built his hut in the empty forest.

8. "T'i Ta-Yü ssu Yi-kung ch'an-fang" 題大禹寺義公禪房, *Meng Hao-jan chi* 孟浩然集, *SPTK*, 3:2b.

Outside his gate a single peak stands high,
In front of his stairs a host of chasms deep.
Setting sunlight stretches to the raindrops,
Dense trees cast shade into his yard.
Observe first the purity of the lotus,
Then understand the heart never sullied.

The first couplet of this poem by Meng Hao-jan establishes the essential correlation between the internal and external world. The inner silence necessary for zazen seeks correlative isolation in the "empty forest." Even more strongly the second couplet describes a configuration of the real landscape that reflects Yi-kung's nature as the ideal Buddhist hermit. As is proper in a praise poem, the man is described in terms of the ideal. In the landscape description of this couplet, a solitary height in full light is juxtaposed with innumerable low and dark places. Three ideas are contained here: first, that Yi-kung is unique, one in contrast to the many, to the common run of men. Then the height of the peak reflects a spiritual nobility set against the lowness of the chasms, the many. Finally, by association, the peak is in full light, illumination, as opposed to the implicit darkness, ignorance, of the chasms. Being physically and spiritually "above it all," the monk sees all and understands all. This is, of course, nothing new in Chinese poetry; rather, it echoes a long tradition in which the ascent of the mountain enacts the process of enlightenment. This landscape is a metaphor of displacement: it does not stand for Yi-kung, but rather selectively describes the actually setting of his meditation hut. The lotus metaphor of the last couplet is a true metaphor in the Western sense. Its traditional associations echo both the nature of Yi-kung and the landscape in which he resides: it too rises solitary out of the mire of its surroundings to height, light, and purity, symbolizing the soul's transcendence of the body.

The inner silence of the monk is reflected in the absence of sounds throughout the poem, but there is another aspect of

Yi-kung's reclusion that presents him with a paradox in traditional symbolism. While enlightenment is conventionally represented in terms of light—the bright mountain summit versus the dark of the valleys—the condition of the recluse is usually described in terms of shade and darkness. This paradox is resolved in the third couplet through another metaphor of displacement: Yi-kung's yard is shaded, and yet the horizontal light from the setting sun is captured in the raindrops and reflected. As is often the case in metaphors of displacement, elements which would normally conflict in human or intellectual terms can be resolved—or at least live comfortably side by side—in a single descriptive image.

The motives for the use of metaphors of displacement are complex, but they do reflect a general tendency of Chinese poetry away from ideas and generalities towards the particulars of a situation. The particulars are non-fictional and yet must somehow carry much of the cognitive burden of the poem, hence the need for displacement. The absolute values that are the central concern of praise poetry find their most common expression in Chinese poetry in the description of a particular thing or landscape.

Once we understand the fundamental nature of praise poetry and the oblique form its universal characteristics may assume in the context of T'ang poetry, then, looking back over the corpus of T'ang poetry, we may be surprised to find what a large proportion of occasional poetry was either entirely or largely praise poetry. Examples like the following poem by Chia Tao 賈島 abound.

TO CH'IEN-KUNG OF WHITE TOWER MOUNTAIN[9]

I know that you have returned to White Tower—
To that far mountain I gaze this clear evening.
In a stone hut the man's heart is still,

9. "Chi Pai-ko Ch'ien-kung" 寄白閣默公, *T'ang Chia Lang-hsien Ch'ang-chiang chi* 唐賈浪仙長江集, *SPTK*, 3:3.

On an icy pool the moon's rays linger.
Faint clouds break up, split into fragments,
Ancient trees, dry, dropping kindling.
Who hears the chimes in the last of the night?
On the western peak, the highest summit is cold.

Poems like this, and there are a great many of them, are of unquestionable merit, but one soon realizes that their merit lies not in the values described nor in any structural genius, but rather in the particularity of their treatment. We appreciate the exact way in which the poet represents the physical world he describes and the relation it bears to the object of praise.

The stone hut is not only the proper, eremitic setting for the still heart; it is also a metaphor of displacement for it. The chill solidity and inanimate muteness of the stone are the attributes of quiescence for which the monk, the "man," strives. The stone hut is an enclosure, something solid without and empty within, also echoing the inner "emptiness" that the monk seeks.

Pools and bodies of ice were traditional metaphors for the pure heart: their reflecting stillness is of a different quality than the stillness of stone, but, as in the preceding poem, logically exclusive attributes can coexist in the correlative elements of the landscape. Here the icy pool captures and keeps the moonlight, a beautiful visual image enriched by associations of the moon with immortality. If one were to allegorize—and images of displacement do not allegorize—one would say that the pool is the cold, pure heart, reflecting dispassionately the world around it and thereby holding the transcendent light of immortality. The metaphor of displacement is potentially richer in that the pool, *t'an* 潭, is actually a deep pool, whose depths are also traditionally associated with the depth of the heart. All these qualities that one would praise in the recluse are displaced into the physical landscape which surrounds his dwelling.

The dissolution of the clouds would increase the clarity of the scene, allowing the moonlight to shine even more brightly on

the pool. At the same time the clouds also suggest the fragility of the phenomenal world, conventionally described as a "floating cloud." Some parts of the world endure and are solid—the stone hut, the pool, and the moon. Other things are transient and break up—the clouds and the tree.

The withered, leafless tree is an image with a long tradition, associated with the scholar who lives in physical hardship yet retains a pathetic dignity, his virtue increased by his suffering. The dissolution of the tree is another complex correlative of the monk: the branches he loses are many things—hope of regeneration, the world of constant rebirth to which the monk in his Buddhist nihilism is opposed, and "kindling," the potential for fire that burns with the "fire" of the passions. Losing its branches, the tree will become only a *hsin* 心, a "trunk" or a "heart," hard and dry without yet empty within, echoing the stone hut of the preceding couplet.

Hearing the chimes in the last of the night implies that someone has stayed awake, the monk whose darkness will soon be illuminated by the rising sun. But here, as throughout the poem, we do not see the monk himself; instead we are left only with the image of the landscape—the highest point of the western peak, suggesting spiritual loftiness as in the preceding poem, in the coldest part of the night, just before the illumination of dawn.

We have been considering here a problem of representation: how does the poet represent an individual in terms of absolute values, as praise poetry demands? Displacement of praise seems to have been the most frequent solution to the problem. The motives behind such displacement are, first, the general tendency to concrete particularity and, second, the general motive behind sustained metaphorical praise, that praise seems most sincere when least direct. However, the greater the displacement into concrete particularity, the more open a poem becomes to other interpretations, thus merging with other genres.

Tu Fu's "*T'i Chang-shih yin-chü*" 題張氏隱居 (Written on Mr. Chang's hermitage) may be treated as a praise poem, but on first reading it seems to be altogether different. Ostensibly the poem is a personal narrative about Tu Fu's experiences on his visit to the hermit; however, when we consider the social motivation of the poem, we can see that it is indeed a praise of the hermit, not directly in terms of the landscape, but rather in terms of Tu Fu's entrance into a transcendent world.

Companionless in spring mountains, I came alone seeking you,
Sounds of wood-chopping, the mountains grew more secluded.
In the lingering cold on a path by the torrent, I passed through ice and snow,
Sun slanting on a stone gate, I came to a hill in the forest.
Free from desire, by night perceive the aura of silver and gold,
Far from all danger, at dawn see the deer strolling.
Follow your whim; forget the problems of service and quietude.
I face you. You seem an empty boat afloat.[10]

The structure of this poem is a complex process of spiritual development as Tu Fu moves into the world of the hermit Chang. The traditional theme of "seeking the hermit" is here refined into a process of increasing awareness. Tu Fu begins his quest "companionless" and "alone," actively seeking a friend in the loneliness of the mountains. The "sounds of wood-chopping" are an allusion to *Shih* 165, and, through the traditional interpretation of that poem, the sounds are associated with friendship. Thus,

10. *Fen-men chi-chu Tu Kung-pu shih*, 8:8a-b. Line three, reading *tao* 道 for *niao* 鳥.

hearing the sounds, Tu Fu is more intensely aware of his own solitude: the mountains seem subjectively "even more secluded," and his desire to find Chang increases.

As Tu Fu moves into the wild uninhabited landscape, he does not yet recognize the relation between it and the recluse Chang, that what to him is loneliness and isolation is to Chang peaceful solitude. As he moves up into the mountains, he passes torrents rushing downhill with the spring thawing: the traveller is "going against the flow." By evening the first stage of the quest is completed: he reaches the stone gate where the hermit lives. Though we may assume that at this point Tu Fu meets the physical hermit, we should notice that Tu Fu suppresses direct reference to the hermit until he meets him spiritually. Instead, Tu Fu finds only a gate, indicating human presence and suggesting an entrance and a transition.

The second stage of the poet's quest for the true hermit occurs during the night when Tu Fu perceives the "aura of silver and gold," emanations that indicate alchemy and the elixir of immortality. Tu Fu has moved from the public world into the landscape and thence to a world of immortals. The next dawn, with its traditional associations of a new revelation, there is a further stage in his growing spiritual awareness as he sees the deer strolling about without fear of human beings. This can occur only when there is a perfect Taoist state of spontaneity and absence of ulterior motive.

In this ultimate stage one "follows one's whim," a phrase linked inextricably to a famous story in the *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*:

> Wang Hui-chih was living at Shan-yin. One night there was a heavy snow, and when he awoke, he opened his door, called for wine, and gazed all around at the glistening white. Then as he chanted Tso Ssu's "Summoning the Hermit," there arose in him a desire to roam. Suddenly he remembered Tai K'uei, who at the time was living in Shan. That night he got in his small boat to go visit him, and after travelling all night he finally arrived. But once he reached Tai's door he went no further but instead returned home again. Someone asked him why, and he said, "I originally went following my whim; when my whim was over I went home. Why should I have to see Tai?"[11]

Wang Hui-chih's "visit" to Tai is a foil for Tu Fu's search for Chang: it was precisely Wang Hui-chih's freedom and spontaneity that Tu Fu lacked in his search: his was not a whim, but rather a quest with a goal defined by need. Now at the end of the poem Tu Fu sees the real Chang, "beyond the problems of service and quietude," defined neither by acceptance of public and social life nor by rejection of it. Chang's nature transcends the question altogether; he is completely free and spontaneous. The sense of shocked confrontation with Chang's true nature can be felt in the strong phrase "I face you." The final metaphor used to describe Chang is the famous "empty boat" of the "Mountain Tree" chapter in the *Chuang-tzu* 莊子. It of course echoes the boat trip of the *Shih-shuo* story as well as the imagery of spring melting earlier in the poem. Tu Fu's error was in actively "seeking," in feeling lonely, in moving against the flow. Chang is beyond all that: he is the empty boat that follows the flow, the one who goes visiting only on a whim. It is the absence of will and motive that is the essential attribute of Chang's nature, not the superficial fact of seclusion.

This poem was written on Chang's dwelling, and he had every reason to feel flattered by it, as flattered as Lord Ma might have been with Han Yü's poem on his Valley Hall. Reducing what seems to be personal narrative to a rudimentary form of hyperbolic praise, the poem becomes: "You, sir, are no common hermit; you have transcended not only the need of others, but also superficial reculsion and the desire for immortality—you have achieved

11. *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* 世說新語, *SPTK*, hsia, 1:47.

the ultimate spontaneity of the true sage." This is hyperbole achieved by surpassing a series of lesser but impressive examples, as in, for example, "faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive. . . ." The version this form of hyperbole takes here is peculiarly Chinese: instead of a series of comparative examples, we have a *process* of attaining the highest state by passing through a graded series. This process is then represented as a specific personal experience, using the traditional associations of the physical world to identify stages in spiritual growth. And the framework is the traditional theme of the ascent of the mountain.

Praise poetry is, however, only one of the many directions this poem may take. It can be read as primarily a personal narrative, or one may interpret it abstractly, as the necessary stages to attain the Way. However, I believe one may not legitimately understand the poem as purely descriptive. As praise poetry the poem is a gesture, a gesture directed to Mr. Chang as the title indicates, and in this full social context we must subordinate the cognitive value of the experience to the final compliment that Tu Fu pays Chang.

The metaphor of displacement is not the only kind of oblique praise in Chinese poetry: one of the oldest modes of praise in both Chinese and Western literature is through epideictic or affective rhetoric, accumulated description that stirs the heart rather than the head. Affective, epideictic rhetoric often takes a direct form in the praise of lovely ladies and great cities; in these the sensuous description is to stir desire and admiration. As it happens, however, in epideictic description, praise is usually subordinate to some other ritual, moral, or political motive. A classic example is the praise of the court life of a Ch'u prince in the "chao-hun" 招魂: the praise is not for its own sake but rather to persuade the soul of the dying prince to return to the body in order to enjoy the life that is so lavishly praised. Sensual praise is often counterbalanced by equally sensual execration that serves

to persuade the listener what not to do: famous examples of this can be found in the first part of the "Chao-hun" as it describes the terrors of the other world, and in the description of the horrors of the road to Szechwan in Li Po's "Shu-tao-nan" 蜀道難.

The idea of sensual execration, the exact negative correlative of praise, may help us discover a praise poem at the root of a seemingly innocent descriptive poem by Ts'an Shen 岑參.

BALLAD OF RUNNING HORSE RIVER: RESPECTFULLY SENDING OFF LORD FENG ON A CAMPAIGN TO THE WEST[12]

Do you not see
How Running Horse River moves beside the snowy sea,
How level sands stretch far and wide, yellow into the sky?
Wheel Terrace, the ninth month, winds roar by night,
And a whole stream of shattered stones, big as baskets,
Run wildly with the wind, filling the land around.
Just when the grasses are brown, the Hsiung-nu horses are fattest,
Then look west from Chin Mountain, see dust and smoke flying—
The great general of the House of Han shall take the army westward,
Nor shall the general's golden armor be ever off at night.
The army moves at midnight, halberds ram together.
The wind's edge is like a knife, the face as though cut.
Snow covers the horses' coats, sweat steams upward
From all the dapples and all the piebalds, and their curls turn ice.
In the camp he drafts a declaration; water freezes on inkstone.

12. "Tsou-ma-ch'uan hsing: feng-sung Feng tai fu ch'u-shih hsi-cheng" 走馬川行奉送封大夫出師西征 *Ts'en Chia-chou chi* 岑嘉州集, *SPTK*, 2:3a-b.

When nomad horsemen hear it, hearts will be struck
with dread—
I'm quite sure they'll never dare strike us with their
swords,
And at West Gate of Chü-shih we'll await the announce-
ment of victory.

The military values praised here are not those of the West. Feng is no Achilles; he would rather awe his enemies into submission or flight. This is true military genius. Outwitting one's enemy would perhaps be the second highest form of prowess, while overpowering him in headlong battle is far from ideal. Ts'en Shen promises Feng that he will be victorious by virtue of an elegantly written and scathing declaration to the enemy of their crimes and impending punishment, after which battle will not even be necessary. This is the cultural ideal in terms of which Feng is praised, an ideal that lies beneath the surface of the poem.

The center of interest in the poem is in the vigorous description of the horrors of the frontier, the unnatural violence of the landscape, and the miseries that Chinese troops will have to endure on campaign. After the first few lines there is a semblance of narrative order: the nomad horses, fat from grazing, are able to raid deep into Chinese territory, forcing the Chinese troops to go on campaign against them. However, this narrative order is subordinated to the affective power of the description: we are to feel both fascinated and repelled by the northern landscape; we are to feel concern for the nomad menace and the sufferings of the troops. The "river of stones" blown along by the wind is the kind of hyperbolic execration used to persuade someone not to go somewhere. As we read on to the knife-like wind and the snow-covered horses, Ts'en Shen indeed seems to be prophesying the expected sufferings of the Chinese troops on the steppes.

The poet is following the fixed thematic conventions of frontier poetry, and the reader expects the poem to close with

the troops leaving their bones in the sand or returning as white-haired old men. Instead we have an abrupt reversal of expectations: Feng drafts his declaration so powerfully that the traditional pattern will be broken—the nomads will withdraw awe-struck, and there will be no battle. The poem ends abruptly and triumphantly with the headquarters staff waiting at the West Gate of a Central Asian city, referred to poetically by the ancient regional designation Chü-shih, for the official announcement of victory.

Rather than praise Feng's military genius directly, Ts'en Shen builds up a threat that in its resolution demonstrates a genius on Feng's part proportionate to the danger. Ts'en draws on a traditional poetic pattern of military campaigns, and by disrupting the pattern illustrates the uniqueness of Feng's talents. The characteristic devices of praise poetry lie concealed throughout the poem. The hyperbolic descriptions of the dangers of the Central Asian landscape indicate a corresponding hyperbole in Feng's ability to overcome them. Feng does not exist as a full person, but only as the incarnation of the military genius for which he is praised. And while it would be an exaggeration to say that reference to Feng as the "great general of the House of Han" is an archaism—it is too conventional for that—nevertheless some unity is indicated between present and past experience: Feng's genius can be measured against that of the past as well as the present.

Poems like this are often read as spirited descriptions for their own sake with social pleasantries appended to them. But we should remember that this poem was written before the campaign: its descriptions are made up of conventions and perhaps personal memories; they are not describing a scene present before the poet. This is not what Feng has done but rather what his genius is capable of overcoming. Our concept of praise poetry and the tradition of affective rhetoric provide us the means to see the poem in its full social context and thus to see its integral unity, a unity that is usually overlooked.

There are a great number of poems of direct praise in the T'ang, but this number is exceeded many times over by poems of indirect praise. Not only are the indirect praise poems more numerous, they are generally better and richer. But the nature of such poems and the function of their parts become clear only when we know what to look for, only when we have a clear idea of the nature and devices of praise poetry.

LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE FOR THE DATE OF HAN-SHAN

E.G. PULLEYBLANK

The poet Han-shan 寒山, "Cold Mountain," is a familiar figure in Zen painting, but little, if anything, beyond obviously legendary anecdotes, is known about the actual author or authors of the collection of poems that goes by this name. Traditional dates range from the end of the sixth to the middle of the ninth century, the most common view being that he lived during the early T'ang period.[1] More recent scholarship has tended to put him in the late eighth or early ninth century, but the arguments have been far from conclusive.[2]

1. For example, in *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu tsung-mu* 四庫全書總目 149 he is called a monk of T'ien-t'ai 天台 in the Chen-kuan 貞觀 period (624-49). For datings in Buddhist sources see Wu Ch'i-yü 吳其昱, "A study of Han-shan," *T'oung Pao* 45 (1957):392-450.
2. Hu Shih 胡適, *Pai-hua wen-hsüeh shih* 白話文學史 (Shanghai, 1928). Arthur Waley, "Twenty-seven Poems by Han-shan," *Encounter* 3.3 (1954): 3-8; Iriya Yoshitaka 入矢義高, *Kanzan* 寒山, vol. 5 of *Chūgoku shijin senshū* 中國詩人選集 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1958); and Burton Watson, *Cold Mountain: One Hundred Poems by Han-shan* (New York, 1962), all place him around the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century, but the arguments are far from conclusive.

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