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## The Western and Chinese Poetic Traditions: “The Prelude” and “Encountering Sorrow” as Examples

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents a cross-cultural analysis of major examples of the Western and Chinese poetic traditions. The origins of these differences among philosophers and critics are discussed. The paper then analyzes in detail Qu Yuan's "Encountering Sorrow" and Wordsworth's "The Prelude," two important poems in the two poetic traditions, to support the arguments. I conclude that Classical Chinese poetry is based on a monistic and humanistic worldview, while Romantic English poetry focuses on the split between the mundane world and the suprasensory realm, or mind and Nature.

## Introduction

Poetry marks the beginning of the creative literature of any nation. Classical Chinese poetry and Romantic English poetry are of two great poetic traditions. In China, the tradition of composing of poetry started more than two thousand years ago, the same time Ancient Greeks composing their epics and dramas. The Chinese word for poetry, *Shi* (诗), seems to appear for the first time in the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shi jing* 诗经). Another major source of Chinese poetry is the *Songs of Chu* (*Chu ci* 楚辞), an anthology of poems attributed to Qu Yuan, a statesman of Chu in late Zhou times, along with a number of works by his disciples or later imitators. The first poems in the *Songs of Chu*, attributed to Qu Yuan, is entitled *Li sao* (离骚) or “Encountering Sorrow.” It is a narrative in 374 lines and is written in a meter quite different from that of the *Classic of Poetry*. However, both anthologies were thoroughly studied by later Confucians, the major group of people who influenced Chinese culture, for the works’ shared focus on virtue, politics and monistic view of the world. With the influence of Confucianism, Chinese poetry shows an emphasis on nature, love and friendship. The formalism and traditionalism of the Confucian classics, the interpretation of Confucian philosophy by later writers, the doctrines of filial piety and ancestor worship, the *wu wei* of Tao—all these, blended with the teachings of Buddhism, shaped a mind that inclined to a traditional interpretation of the universe. This continuity is evident in Chinese poetry at every turn, in both form and content. The language of the *Classic of Poetry*, reputed to have been written more than two thousand five hundred years ago is still comprehensible to the modern Chinese.

Launched by William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge in 1798 with their poetic anthology the *Lyrical Ballads*, Romantic Movement in English poetry was one of the most influential incidents in the history of Western literature. The root of the poetic tradition can be traced to the Ancient Greek civilization, which is the shared origin of almost all modern European cultures. Major Ancient Greek influences on English poetry include Plato and Aristotle’s theories of mimesis. Condemning art for being

removed from the true reality, Plato indicated that poems employ techniques of narrative [diegesis] or representation [mimesis]. According to Yu, the conception of mimesis lies at the center of Greek poetic legacy, since it is based on an ontological dualism.<sup>1</sup> Greek legends and epics also influenced later English poets. In this study, Platonic and Aristotelian theories such as *mimesis*, *representationism* and *katharsis* will be discussed, since each were closely related to later development of European and especially Romantic English poetry.

This contrast in poetic theory leads to the differences between the two poetics traditions in terms of themes and imagery employed. However, they also share some common traits. Ancient Chinese considered poetry as a means of expressing their aspirations. Lu Ji 陆机, an ancient Chinese critic, viewed poetry as “born of pure emotion.”<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth declared similarly in his *Lyrical Ballads* that poetry should be the overflow of powerful emotions. This coexistence of similarity and difference make a detailed study of the two traditions warranted. This study aims to examine and compare the two poetic traditions in cultural, political, literary, and philosophical terms. “Encountering Sorrow” as a Classical Chinese poem has both the traits of mainstream Classical Chinese poems and is also shows the influence of shamanism in South China two thousand years ago, which opens possibilities for comparison of both similarities and differences between Classical Chinese Poetry and English Romantic poetry. *The Prelude* is chosen as an example of Romantic English poem for its Romantic elements, such as imagery, its depiction of Nature, and its use of Imagination. The first section of this study (“Setting the terms”) will discuss the Western and Chinese poetic theories. The final two parts will give detailed analysis of *The Prelude* and “Encountering Sorrow”, the two signature poems of the two poetic traditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Birch, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, vol.1, 208.

### Setting the Terms

The origin of Classical Chinese Poetry dates back to more than two thousand years ago. With a folk-song anthology allegedly edited by Confucius called *The Classic of Poetry* (*Shi jing* 诗经) and a series of the *Songs of Chu* (*Chu ci* 楚辞) composed by Qu Yuan and his followers, the Chinese poetic tradition “started twice”, as correctly indicated by Watson.<sup>3</sup> Zhong Hong 钟嵘, an ancient Chinese critic, had similar insights and singled the two anthologies out as the sources of two main traditions in Chinese poetry.<sup>4</sup> *The Classic of Poetry*, compiled sometime after 600 B.C. allegedly by Confucius (551–479 B.C.), is a collection of 305 poems that were composed in a two-hundred-year period between approximately 800 and 600 B.C. Living in a period when ancient Chinese culture blossomed, Qu Yuan was the first identifiable Chinese poet, whose work “Encountering Sorrow” (*Li sao* 离骚), and a series of *Chu ci* poems in the same style, became one of the two sources of Chinese poetry. Classical Chinese poems were written in concise classical Chinese, as opposed to modern Chinese poetry written in the vernacular form of the language. The continuity of the poetic tradition makes the ancient poems still approachable to modern readers, though certain notes and explanations are often needed.

Admired for its stylistic excellence, Classical Chinese poetry focuses on descriptions of ordinary lives, accounts of history and expressions of political ideals. Ancient Chinese poets did not view their poetic works as the image or mirror of some suprasensory reality, or incomplete or flawed, as in the Platonic theory of mimesis. Classical Chinese poets did not claim their works to represent a realm of being fundamentally other from that of concrete phenomena; it embodied principles transcendent to any one individual object in the sensory world, but the very essence of those principles lay in the fact that they were at the same time immanent in and inseparable from those objects. In Chinese theories of arts, there is no dichotomy between the real and the ideal.

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<sup>3</sup> Watson, *Early Chinese Literature*, 231.

<sup>4</sup> Yu, 84.

Some Classical Chinese poem depicts sorrows and joys of romance, or deal with the heroic and legendary exploits of rulers and kings. Some poems originated in folk-songs, which were the main source of the *Classic of Poetry*, and deal with everyday trials and tribulations of love, life, and family. The reason of this can be found in a Chinese creation myth. According to it, the universe was once an enormous egg. One day it split open. Its upper half became the heavens, its lower half earth, and the first human, Pangu, emerging from within it. This worldview is implicit in later Chinese literature and philosophy. One might conclude, for example, that the universe is an uncreated one, generating itself spontaneously from a cosmic egg whose own origins are unspecified; that the elements of the universe are, from their very beginnings, organically and inextricably linked with one another; and that within those relationships the human being does not occupy a particularly glorified position. The implications of the legends can be suggestively extended to the realm of literature. As Pauline Yu explains, the Chinese cultural tradition “lacks the figure of some anthropomorphic deity whose creation actions and products serve as the model for human literary activity.”<sup>5</sup> As she points out, in contrast to the modern Western tradition, Chinese theories of the arts did not emphasize the notion of creation ex nihilo; instead, it stressed the importance of continuity and convention. It is important to keep in mind that these were emphases rather than exclusions: the culture was by no means a static or unimaginative one, but the privileging of tradition and pattern shaped critical discourse in powerful ways.

The Chinese philosophical tradition is based on a fundamentally monistic view of the universe: the cosmic principle, or Tao, may transcend any individual phenomenon, but it is totally immanent in this world, and there is no suprasensory realm that lies beyond, is superior to, or is different in kind from the level of physical beings. For Chinese, the universe is a self-generating system in which "all phenomena exist in orderly, mutually implicating, correlative harmonies."<sup>6</sup> Based on this monistic worldview, Classical Chinese poetry accounts ordinary things in life and celebrates them. The poets strive to find the great universal truths in the mundane. The poetry is imbued with the anguish of old age, loneliness of sad

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<sup>5</sup> Dale, *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature: A Reader*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Yu, 33.

partings, the ravages of war, and other myriad tribulations in people's lives. For the Chinese, there is no life after this one, only, as the *Tao Te Ching* puts it, a short while as one of ten thousand things and then a return to the undifferentiated Tao. The sorrow in Chinese poetry is the sharp and painful sense of time and life passing, the sense of man's impermanence in the larger permanence. Since in Chinese philosophy and religion there is no concept of an afterlife, the mundane world becomes a place deserving celebration. The sense of time fleeing is the basis for Chinese poetry's awareness of the terrible impermanence of things and because of this impermanence, a sharply felt regret for the passing of the things of this world which is why Chinese poetry is always imbued with melancholy. And because of this melancholy sense of the temporality of our lives there is in all Chinese poetry a tender pity, a universal friendliness regarding what westerners would call "the human predicament."

Personal experiences lead to the aspiration of a transcendental world in Wordsworth's poems; however, in "Encountering Sorrow", depiction of imagination and personal experiences are limited to the mundane world. This negligence of the transcendental world in Chinese culture is represented in various ancient works. In the *Book of Documents* (*Shang shu*, 尚书), a collection of early political documents and one of the most influential parts of Confucian canon, the ancestors of ancient Chinese poets are portrayed as sage kings and reliable politicians who seemingly pay no attention to the world beyond the sensory world. Therefore, a focus on earthly affairs seems natural for later Chinese poets. A peaceful and harmonious society is the ultimate ideal of Confucians, who argue that harmonious societies and families enable people to live virtuous lives. Therefore, they strive to find a path to find the knowledge leading to such lives. Rejecting Confucian political and social ideals, Taoism embodies an appreciation of nature. Taoist thinkers equated their core concept "Tao" with "nature" and advocate man's union with nature. Confucians focuses more on the development of human beings. One of the central topics of Confucian philosophy, self-cultivation is seen by many thinkers in the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BC) as the central concern of philosophy. Most held that the goal of self-cultivation was the achievement of *de* (德) which is translated mainly as potency, charisma, or virtue. Self-cultivation is closely associated with



the Confucian social theories according to which the *de* of the ruler is sufficient to bring political and moral order to his kingdom. *De* that has an ordering power is achievable mainly through self-cultivation. The main scriptural summary of this philosophy is the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大学). In *The Great Learning*, politics, self-cultivation, and investigation of things are linked through "chain syllogism."<sup>7</sup> One of the "Four Books" in Confucianism, the book teaches:

From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.

自天子以至于庶人，壹是皆以修身为本

It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered.<sup>8</sup>

其本乱而末治者，否矣

Confucians contemplate state and society, rather than nature and divinity; another Chinese philosophical school, Taoism, adopts a monistic view of nature and universe; these facts mark the distinctions between the Chinese and Western intellectual traditions. Rather than contemplating fervently on legitimate sources of knowledge, Chinese thinkers focused on how philosophical knowledge can be applied to society and self-salvation and believed that attaining understanding of philosophical questions is instrumental to a meaningful life or a harmonious society. Confucius himself explained the ideal form of society and state.

Adopting a monistic world view, ancient Chinese poets took an "expressive-affective" approach towards poetry composition. An elaboration of the approach can be found in the earliest writing on poetry, a passage from the Great Preface (*Da xu* 大序) to the *Classic of Poetry*. The relevant passage reads as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> Sukhu, *The Shaman and the Heresiarch: A New Interpretation of the Li sao*, 93.

<sup>8</sup> "The Internet Classics Archive | The Great Learning by Confucius." The Internet Classics Archive | The Great Learning by Confucius. Accessed March 11, 2015. <http://classics.mit.edu/Confucius/learning.html>.

Poetry is where the intent of the heart/mind (*xin* 心) goes. What in the heart is intent is poetry when emitted in words. An emotion moves within and takes form in words. If words do not suffice, then one sighs, if sighing does not suffice, then one prolongs it [the emotions] in song; if prolonging through song does not suffice, then one unconsciously dances it with hands and feet.

Emotions are emitted in sounds, and when sounds form a pattern, they are called tones. The tones of a well-governed world are peaceful and lead to joy, its government harmonious; the tones of a chaotic world are restful and anger, its government perverse; the tones of a defeated state are mournful to induce longing, its people in difficulty. Thus in regulating success and failure, moving heaven and earth, and cause spirits and gods to respond, nothing comes closer than poetry.<sup>9</sup>

The conception of poetry presented in the passage shows the realistic feature of classical Chinese poetry. Emotions existing in internal human mind will find correspondent forms outside the mind in the natural world. "Signing" and "prolonging through song" emphasize various devices Classical Chinese poets use when they compose their poems.<sup>10</sup> Poetic works dominated by "resentful and anger" or joyous tones represent various political environments.<sup>11</sup> "Intent" (*zhi* 志) is at the center of the passage. The word in Chinese is closely related to one's social and political aspirations and contemplations. Thus, classical Chinese poetry is viewed as a medium with political and social implications by poetic theorists in ancient China.

As Cai points out, at the center of ancient Chinese poetics is a humanistic concept, which shall be discussed in the light of the *li* (禮)-centered worldview. In the Spring and Autumn period, the focus of Chinese intellectuals switched from "the concern with ghosts and spirits" in the Shang times to a more humanistic view of the world, which is shown in the concept of *li*.

The people of the Yin revered spirits, and [its rulers] led the people in performing services to spirits. They put the services to ghosts before the observance of *li*, and punishment before reward. They stressed awesome authority and displayed little affection... The people of the Zhou revered *li*, and were fond of acts of benefaction. They served ghosts and honored spirits, but kept a distance before them. They demonstrated an understanding of human sentiments and were

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<sup>9</sup> Yu 31-32.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 32.

dedicated [to state affairs]. They measured rewards and punishments according to hierarchical ranks. Therefore, they were affectionate but lacked awesome authority.<sup>12</sup>

殷人尊神率民以事神。先鬼而后礼。先罚而后赏。尊而不亲……周人尊礼尚施。事鬼敬神而远之。近人而忠焉。其赏罚用爵列。亲而不尊。

The transition from the concern with ghosts to human affairs provides the foundation for the systematic humanistic Confucian view of the world and literature. Though the Shang people revered ghosts and spirits, they did not stop developing and observing sites for the governance of human affairs. Later, Confucians developed the concept of *li* to include an ethical component, which include a systematic instruction of the ruling of country and family.

That the ruler order and the subject obey, the father be kind and the son dutiful, the elder brother loving and the younger respectful, the husband be harmonious and the wife gentle, the mother-in-law be kind and the daughter-in-law obedient—these are *li*. That the ruler in ordering order nothing against the right, and at the same time reverent, and the son be dutiful and at the same time able to remonstrate; that the elder brother, while loving, be friendly, and the younger docile, while respectful; that the husband be righteous, while harmonious, and wife correct, while gentle; that the mother-in-law be condescending, while kind, and the daughter-in-law be pleasant, while obedient—these are fine things of *li*.<sup>13</sup>

君令臣共。父慈子孝。兄爱弟敬。夫和妻柔。姑慈妇听。礼也。君令不违。臣共而不贰。父慈而教。子孝而箴。兄爱而友。弟敬而顺。夫和而义。妻柔而正。姑慈而从。妇听而婉。礼之善物也。

*Li* is that which governs states and clans, establishes the country, institutes an order among the commoners, and produces benefits for posterity.<sup>14</sup>

礼经国家。定社稷。序民人。利后嗣者也。

Therefore, according to Cai, with the Confucian focus of *li*, ancient Chinese literature developed to incorporate a didactic concept.

The Chinese criticism of literature developed to a new stage in the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589 AD). Lu Ji 陆机(261-303), an ancient Chinese literary critic, further explored the

<sup>12</sup> Cai, *Configurations of Comparative Poetics*, 76. See Kong Yingda, annot., *Liji zhengyi*, juan 54, in *SSJZ*, vol.2, p.1642.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 79. See Kong Yingda, annot., *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi*, Zhaogong 26, in *SSJZ*, vol. 2, p. 115. Translation taken with modification from Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, vol. 5, p. 718.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 80. See Kong Yingda, annot., *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi*, Zhaogong 26, in *SSJZ*, vol. 2, p. 115. Translation taken with modification from Legge, *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, vol. 5, p. 33.

issue with his passage on the theory of poetry. In the Chinese literary history, his *Essay on Literature* (*Wen fu* 文赋) is an important theoretical work. Written in rhyme-prose, *Essay on Literature* is a work of “both literature and literary thought.”<sup>15</sup> Like Wordsworth, Lu Ji considers that poems are “born of pure emotion.”<sup>16</sup> It is in the Chinese literary history the first literary critique to systematically discuss the nature and function of literature (*wen*), the process of literary creation, literary genres and their basic traits. Lu Ji claimed that, since the objects of the external world have infinite shapes, literary texts describing them also have to take on different shapes suited to the objects of description. Lu Ji grasped the universal and timeless aspects of literature. Contrary to the Confucian view that *shi*-poetry should express moral concerns and poets’ own aspirations (*shi yan zhi* 诗言志), Lu Ji stressed the aesthetic qualities of poetry and the joy of writing. He claimed that “*shi* expresses emotions” (*shi yuan qing* 诗缘情). Lu Ji also discussed the relationship between language, meaning, and the external world/objects of description. Although Lu Ji, like traditional Confucian critics, saw the author as a kind of medium, he was aware that there is craftsmanship involved in the writing process. He claimed, “the ways of employing words and forming expressions are indeed infinitely varied,” and when discussing composing, he further complained: “Constantly present is the feeling of regret that the meaning apprehended does not represent the objects observed; and, furthermore, words fail to convey the meaning.”<sup>17</sup> This shows that Lu Ji did not view content and expression as inseparable, as did later proponents of a monistic view of style. He asserts that poets are “at the center of the universe”:

He moves with the four seasons, to sigh at transience, 遵四时以叹逝  
 And looks at the myriad objects, contemplating their complexity. 瞻万物而思纷  
 He laments the falling leaves during autumn's vigor, 悲落叶于劲秋  
 And delights in the tender branches of fragrant spring. 喜柔条于芳春

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<sup>15</sup> Owen, “The Poetic Exposition on Literature”, 73.

<sup>16</sup> Birch 208.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 204.

For Chinese poets, the objects of observation are "the four seasons" and "the myriad objects", which stands for earthly beings that stimulate their senses. Lu Ji later recognizes in the text that lyric poetry "originates in emotion" (*shi yuan qing* 诗缘情). Emotions presented in poems are engendered by the response of the poet to the external world. In autumn, poets lament "the falling leaves", while in spring, they delight in "tender branches". For ancient Chinese, poems are stimulated by various objects in the external world and the medium between the human mind and nature.

As Yu indicates, this expressive-affective conception does not mean that ancient Chinese poets see their works as merely mirroring the external world. In the text, Lu Ji justifies the necessity of transcendence of sensory perception and its spatial and temporal limits.

He gathers in sight and turns back hearing, 比收视反听  
 Deeply pondering, searching about, 耽思傍讯  
 His spirit surges to the world's eight reaches, 精骛八极  
 His mind wanders a myriad miles. . . . 心游万仞  
 Past and present observed in a moment, 观古今于须臾  
 He touches four seas in the blink of an eye.<sup>18</sup> 抚四海于一瞬

The limit of thinking in Lu Ji's essay is in the earthly world. As the text indicates, what is the base of poetic works are "past and present", a synonym for history, and "four seas", the synonym for the spatial concept. Thus, the poems by ancient Chinese poets are the product of a focus on the mundane world.

The origin of Romantic English literature is Ancient Greek poetics. In Romantic English poems, poets depict personal experiences and implicitly relate their own experiences to a world beyond this one. At the center of Platonic and Aristotelian poetics, mimesis is key to understanding Romantic poems. Plato saw composing artistic works as mimicry of perfect Ideas and is inspired by divinity. Though Aristotle did not recognize a world of Ideas, he saw poetry as being superior to history since poetry indicates what "ought to" happen in a transcendental world rather than what happened in the real world. Aristotle saw

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<sup>18</sup> Yu 35. See *Wen xuan*, 17/2b-3b/p.308.

human being have the "urge" to represent reality with text. Plato's theory of mimesis sees nature as the mimicry of the world of Ideas and artistic works are the mimicry of nature. Therefore, the world of Ideas is the ultimate source of artistic works and, in this study, poems. Plato and Aristotle, who both lay the dualistic foundation for Western philosophy, which, in turn, led to its corresponding literary theory. The dualistic theory views the world as composed of two ontological distinctive realms, one abstract and the other concrete. Classical Western poetics sees literature as "mimetic truth or untruth."<sup>19</sup> Plato was the one who stir up the discussion of the relationship between philosophy and poetry. Whitehead commented on Platonic philosophy that "all Western philosophies are footnotes to Plato." For Plato, poetry is "thrice removed from the truth, and could easily be made without any knowledge of the truth."<sup>20</sup> Plato further condemns that poetry not only reflect the truth inaccurately, its employment of emotion and irrational faculty impair the reason. Plato's disciple Aristotle rejected his ideas and developed his own. For Aristotle, poetry not only imitates truth, it is also a representation of a "higher order of truth."<sup>21</sup> It is also evident from what has been said that it is not the poet's function to relate actual events, but the kinds of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability of necessity. The difference between the historian and the poet is not that between using verse or prose; Herodotus' work could be versified and would be just as much a kind of history in verse as in prose. The difference is in fact that the one relates actual events, the other the kinds of things that might occur. Consequently, poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history, since poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars. "Universal" means the kinds of things which it suits a certain kind of person to say or do, in terms of probability or necessity: poetry aims for this, even though attaching names to the agents. A "particular" means, say, what Alcibiades did or experienced.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cai 11.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 13.

According to Cai, Wordsworth rejected Plato's mimetic theory and held that poetry's "object is truth."<sup>23</sup> This provides a base for Wordsworth's later revolution in poetics. Though Wordsworth misquotes Aristotle that "poetry is the most philosophical," Wordsworth developed the theory with the help of the Aristotelian theory. He shifted the classical poetic concern from universality to personal experiences. In contrast to Chinese poets, Romantic English poets believed that poems are composed beyond the realms of the material world, within the folds of the imaginary. The Sublime is primarily characterized by its ability to evoke powerful feelings. Wordsworth incorporated the idea of the power of the Sublime to cause enigmatic feelings within its beholder into *The Prelude*. Wordsworth defined the concept of the sublime as the "mind [tries] to grasp at something which it can make approaches but which it is incapable of attaining."<sup>24</sup>

The Power which these

Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus

Thrusts forth upon the senses. (XIII, 84-86)

The emotion that this power invokes within the poet is astonishment. "The passion caused by the great and the sublime in nature is Astonishment, and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror."<sup>25</sup> The emotion is captured in the moment when the poet first sets his eyes upon Mount Snowdon.

When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,

And with a step or two seemed brighter still;

Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,

For instantly a light upon the turf

Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up, (XIII, 36-40)

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Brennan, *Wordsworth, Turner and Romantic Landscape*. Camden House, 1987, 52.

<sup>25</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 72.

The Sublime is defined by Weiskel as man's ability to "in feeling and in speech, transcend the human."<sup>26</sup> Though whether the Wordsworthian transcendental entity lays in or beyond this physical world is matter for great disagreement, it is clear that the poet refers to this entity throughout *The Prelude*. In terms of Romantic Literature, the Sublime is usually linked to those terms such as "inspiration", "vision", "apocalypse", "imagination", and "transcendence", the sublimation of which enables one to grasp experiences sanctioned by the past. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant was the chief philosopher of the Sublime and first one who made clear that in acquiring knowledge of the external world the mind is not passive, as had been thought, but active and creative, and that the primary creative activity in perception belongs to the imagination. Tracing the "Growth of a Poet's Mind", Wordsworth believes that Imagination is, in his own words, "the faculty which is the primum mobile in Poetry."<sup>27</sup> *The Prelude* is largely devoted to experiences, in themselves often trivial, which have been made significant by Imagination. Wordsworth expounds this doctrine in the second book of *The Prelude*, where he traces the beginning of Imagination to the babe at the breast:

Even in the first trial of its powers,  
Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine  
In one appearance all the elements  
And parts of the same object, else detached  
And loth to coalesce. (II, 246-50)

That is, our perception of so simple an object as a single chair or table is not given to us by the senses. What they give is patches of color, smoothness of surface, a sense of resistance to pressure, of weight, temperature, and the like; yet when we glance at or touch the chair we perceive an object, a thing, a unity to which we relate the qualities derived from senses impressions. In other words when we think of everyday world of concrete objects, commonplace or wonderful, we are not thinking of mere sense impressions but of those impressions as they have been unified, arranged, and interpreted by Imagination.

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<sup>26</sup> Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> de Quincey, *Letters of the Wordsworthian Family*, 323.



### “Encountering Sorrow” as a Classical Chinese Poem

*Chu ci* (*The Songs of Chu*) is commonly recognized as one of the two sources of Chinese poetry, the other being the *Classic of Poetry*. “Encountering Sorrow” is the first and the most prominent poem in *Chu ci*, the anthology of Southern poems by various poets living in the Warring States period of China (475-221BC). The name “Li Sao” has been interpreted by some as meaning “encountering sorrow,” by others as “sorrow after departure.” Some recent scholars have construed it as “sorrow in estrangement,” while yet others think it was the name of a certain type of music. According to Yu, there is no poem in the earlier anthology that roots itself so specifically in the subjective feelings and experiences of one known individual.<sup>28</sup>

The poet Qu Yuan, descended from a noble family as described at the beginning of “Encountering Sorrow,” was a high-ranking minister in the state of Chu who enjoyed the King Huai’s trust. The State of Chu was one of the many feudal states of the Zhou dynasty. Chu’s location in the Yangtze valley, however, put it on the southern frontiers of the Zhou world. Thus Chu poetry and culture share both in the mainstream culture of the North China plain — the Zhou heartland — and the culture of the ethnic groups of the south. As a result, the moral concerns and language of Confucianism, which is rooted in the culture and combined with a strong shamanist tradition, and the poetry of Chu is replete with images drawn from the plants and landscape of the south. His opposition to unwise national policies, however, enabled his rivals to turn the Chu king against him. Thus Qu Yuan was banished from the capital. Unable to guide the Chu King, he watched from afar the ruination of his beloved state and penned “Encountering Sorrow,” his best-known poem, to give vent to his tragic sentiments. Shortly afterward, he committed suicide by drowning in the Miluo River. In China, Qu Yuan is often depicted as a man of his times who advocated the consolidation of the states, an important idea throughout the history of China, and supported the values of government by virtue and talent. “Encountering Sorrow” has also

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<sup>28</sup> Yu 85.

conventionally been considered an elaborate suicide note in which the banished official states his case and resolved to sacrifice his life in order to awaken his age to the truth and his ideal. Qu Yuan's poetry is considered as an expression of the ancient South China culture for "its concern with self and sentiment, its fantastic imagery and language, its idealism, passion, and imagination."<sup>29</sup> The message conveyed in "Encountering Sorrow" are reflections of the myth of loyalty and dissent and Qu Yuan is used by later poets as a persona through whom they expressed their resentful feelings about contemporary political problems. Though neither Confucius nor any of the major Confucian exemplars appear in his poetry, early commentators on Qu Yuan's poetry tried to co-opt Qu Yuan into the Han Confucian tradition.<sup>30</sup> The characterization of Qu Yuan as properly Confucian was largely based on his deference to the values of the Golden Age and the ancient sage-kings. Rivers, flora, fauna and local cultures in the South play significant roles in "Encountering Sorrow." In addition to the many uses of historical allusion to point out overt similarities and contrasts to the present, Qu Yuan employs imagery and narratives which also establish, implicitly, a second level of reference—the flowers, the travels, the use of a persona, the pursuit of a loved one. Qu Yuan's challenge, far from being nihilistic, was an affirmation of universal value; his self-righteousness was motivated not by self-interest but by altruism for the good of the people of his kingdom. Suffering the ordeal of banishment and facing death, he still remained loyal to his state and ruler.

The profligate use of the first person pronoun indicates that the true subject matter of the poem is the poet's autobiography. This autobiography is in fact his own spiritual journey, with murky allegory pervading many passages. The poem describes the search and disillusionment of a soul in agony with the Qu Yuan riding on dragons and serpents from heaven to earth. Also, influenced by Shamanism, it touches upon various historical themes intermingled with legends and myths, and depicts, both directly and indirectly, the social conditions of that time and the complex destinies of the city states of ancient China. The conflict between Qu Yuan and his enemies is repeatedly described, while at the same time the poet

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<sup>29</sup> Schneider, *A Mad Man of Ch'u*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

affirms his determination to struggle for his ideal. This passionate desire to save his country, and this love for the people, account for the poem's splendor and immortality. Powerful rhythm, eloquent and exotic imagery, and indubitable sincerity of purpose qualify it as a masterpiece of early Chinese poetry. In the poem, he gives an account of his ancestry and character, his political endeavors and defeats, his concern for the people and his loyalty to the king.

Like other ancient Chinese thinkers, Qu Yuan set an ideal world that is based on the deeds performed by ancient sage kings and intellectuals. Throughout the poem, what the poet pursues is the ideal of emulating ancient sage kings and politician. His journey a pursuit of the ideal world—ruled by most “pure and perfect kings.”<sup>31</sup> As Yu indicates, Qu Yuan is placed by many commentators “within the Confucian tradition by citing his unswerving righteousness, loyal yet not uncritical devotion to his ruler and state, and decision to write during a period of adversity to express his grievances” and linked to the authors the Three Hundred Poems for “the same imagistic principles supposedly deduced from the *Classic of Poetry*.”<sup>32</sup> As the Qing commentator Jiang Ji 蒋骥 (fl.1713) noted: “The *Li sao*'s use of the women as a comparison to a virtuous ruler and of fragrant plants as a comparison to virtuous officials is a thread that runs throughout from beginning to end.”<sup>33</sup>

The way Qu Yuan expresses these emotions is employing various literary devices and accounts that makes the journey a personal one; mentioning ancient sage kings and the expression of his loyalty to the Chu king makes the poem a political expression. The comparison between “the three kings of old” and “this generation” which consists of “cunning artificers” adds a Confucian dimension to the poem.<sup>34</sup> Mencius, the Chinese philosopher who is considered only second to Confucius in Confucian traditions, argued that the ancient sage kings should be the models of later rulers. Qu Yuan invokes legendary historical figures to justify his position, undertakes a fantastic journey to all corners of the cosmos, only to

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<sup>31</sup> Birch 51.

<sup>32</sup> Yu 108.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 98. See Jiang Ji, *Chu ci yu lun shang* 语论上, in Shandaige zhu Chu ci, p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> Birch 51.

find the door of heaven closed for him, and engages in a number of unsuccessful suits of other women. Disgusted by the inconstancy and corruption of those around him and inspired by the auspicious predictions, he sets off on a second dragon-borne journey to the highest heavens, only to find that his groom and steeds, homesick, balk and refuse to carry him further.

What follows, is the description of a trip within the supernatural realm. The journey then takes on mythical proportions, encompassing legendary locations in far reaches of the cosmos and carrying the poet higher and higher into the heavens. Once again he is betrayed, however, but this time not by churlish gatekeepers or fickle lovers—rather, his own groom and horses, longing for home, refuse to take him farther, and the poem ends with the envoi cited earlier declaring the poet’s resolve in joining Peng Xian. The distant journey to the ends of the earth, the fairy realms, and the corners of the cosmos provides the self-esteeming poet an opportunity to act out his feelings of superiority and to transcend the filth and corruption of the secular world. If we look at the journey itself, as distinct from the quest, we see another dramatic way the poet has successfully conveyed his central message of political frustration and inhibition of rightful power.

As Chen Shih-hsiang observed, the poet’s sense of time provides a kind of “leitmotif” to “Encountering Sorrow” as a whole.<sup>35</sup> In “Encountering Sorrow,” the poet’s overwhelming sense of aging, encroaching death, and the limits which mortality places on human ambition is similar to the notion expresses in Wordsworth’s “spots of time.” The flower, in addition to symbolizing the purity of the poet, also signifies this sense of evanescence, temporality, and human vulnerability. Thus it can be proved that there is a pervasive sense of panic at the swiftness of time’s passage and corresponding changes in moral standards and behavior; the poet, on the contrary, steadfastly upholds the honorable ways of the past. Statements attesting to the agonizing contrast between two time frames recur throughout the poem:

38. I take my fashion from the good men of old: 審吾法夫前修兮

A garb unlike that which the rude world cares for: 非世俗之所服

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<sup>35</sup> Yu 106.

48. But I am sick and sad at heart and stand irresolute: 饨鬱邑余侘傺兮

I alone am at loss in this generation. 吾獨窮困乎此時也

90. Many a heavy sigh I heaved in my despair, 曾歔歔余鬱邑兮

Grieving that I was born in such an unlucky time. 哀朕時之不當

154. The age is disordered in a tumult of changing: 時繽紛其變易兮

How can I tarry much longer among them? 又何可以淹留

162. Since, then, the world's way is to drift the way the tide runs, 固時俗之流從兮

Who can stay the same and not change with all the rest? 又孰能無變化

The contrast between two time frames and corresponding social situations not only helps to explain the emotional situation of the poet, it makes looking for the difference between what is said and what is meant warranted. At the beginning of the poem, Qu Yuan provides the justification for reading much of the imagery in the poem as external correlates for internal states:

5. Having from birth this inward beauty, 紛吾既有此內美兮

I added to it fair outward adornment: 又從之以修能

And follows it with the first of many examples:

6. I dresses in

155. Orchid and iris have lost all their fragrance; 蘭芷變而不芳兮

Flag and melilotus have changes into straw. 荃蕙化而為茅

Qu Yuan started a tradition called “fragrant flower and beauty” (*xiangcao meiren* 香草美人) in Chinese literature with the composing of “Encountering Sorrow,” which presents Qu Yuan and his dilemma through a lavish use of flower symbols. The flower imagery is central to an interpretation of the poem. In the poem, he is associated with orchids and irises, or sometimes simply with fragrant grasses; his enemies are weeds or foul smelling flora. Later literature often refers to him with the orchid symbol. The employment of flower imagery suggests his purity of spirit and the beauty of his inner talent and virtue. The lush countryside of Chu is no doubt an inspiration for this imagery, but it may equally indicate the poet's reliance on archaic Chu shaman tradition. According to Schneider, flower symbols in “Encountering Sorrow” corresponds to “the use of flower-bedecked boats and flowered costumes in

shaman rituals.<sup>36</sup> However, You Guoen further notes that the reason for Qu Yuan to choose certain flower images in “Encountering Sorrow” is that they are appropriate for the feminine persona he has chosen, not only as images of virtue and purity.<sup>37</sup> However, as Yu argues, You Guoen’s idea is not convincing for the sex of the speaker is hard to determine.<sup>38</sup>

Qu Yuan, in “Encountering Sorrow”, likens aromatic herbs and autumnal eupatorium to his own and others’ personalities, and uses plants to symbolize the slanderers and virtuous people like him. On the other hand, the cardinal properties of *Chu ci* were also unyielding, forceful and vigorous. These cardinal properties were grounded on the poet's concern for his country and people, and supported by his upright character and perseverance in the pursuit of truth. In the opening lines of “Encountering Sorrow”, the poet appears before our eyes as a man of passion, wearing aromatic herbs on the shoulders and autumnal eupatorium as pendant:

6. I dressed in selinea and shady angelica, 扈江离与辟芷兮

And twined autumn orchids to make a garland. 纫秋兰以为佩

“Encountering Sorrow” itself abounds with flower symbols. The poet continuously compares himself to the orchid, for example, in order to convey both his purity, moral integrity, and his concern for his mortality. Independence, aloofness, and aloneness are in Chinese tradition qualities signified by the chrysanthemum, which is associated with Qu Yuan because in “Encountering Sorrow” the poet is depicted as feeding on them while wandering in banishment. According to Schneider, added to the stock political implications, the use of flower symbols and painting came to convey a strong sense of bucolic isolation from metropolitan political involvement.<sup>39</sup> The poet depicts himself with orchids and mentions several names of exotic flowers in the poem to represent his virtues. Those images shall be read as mirroring the poet’s internal emotions. The weeds refer to the people who have slandered the poet. The

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<sup>36</sup> Schneider 32.

<sup>37</sup> Yu 112.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Schneider 55.

second metaphor is the relationship between the lover and his mistress which represents Qu Yuan and the king. The king doubts Qu Yuan just as a mistress might doubt her lover's fidelity.

26. I had tended many an acre of orchids, 余既滋兰之九畹兮

And planted a hundreds rods of melitotus. 又树蕙之百亩

Orchids and melitotus refers to loyalty and virtue the persona implanted in the Chu court. However, to his disappointment, “all his blossoms should waste in rank weeds.”

To activate the estranged lover's theme, the poet uses imagery of the shaman's magic journey to the outer realms. First it is used in the sense of a quest to find his beloved and reunite with her (to regain the favor of the king and renewed political power). Second, when the poet-minister fails to find his woman, the quest journey becomes an escape—an attempt to forget about his woman and seek another altogether. The poem can be seen as the pursuit of “the fairest,” a figure or an ideal. The poet has no fear along this journey and showed his persistent quest. Along this journey, the poet seeks understanding from others. The term “good government” at the end of the poem points out the center of this poem and signifies the Confucian influence on Qu Yuan. Qu Yuan's ideal can be compared to Wordsworth's. What Qu Yuan pursues is “good government”, while Wordsworth achieves the unity of mind and Nature at the end of *The Prelude*.<sup>40</sup> Peng Xian is a mysterious person who is still unidentifiable. Similar to what Confucians does, Qu Yuan in the poem takes his fashion from “the good men of old.”<sup>41</sup> In “Encountering Sorrow,” the flow of the poet's thoughts is not continuous; thus, it is improbable to make a detailed analysis of the poet's emotional situation and what he encounters like one can do when dealing with Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. In the poem, the “beauty” of the various flowers is the highness of the persona's ideals. Repetitive comparison between “this generation” and ancient kings constitutes a comparison, if we analyze it in Western literary and philosophical terms.

34. In the morning I drank the dew that fell from magnolia: 朝饮木兰之坠露兮

At evening ate the petals that dropped from chrysanthemums. 夕餐秋菊之落英

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<sup>40</sup> Birch 62.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 53.

In Chinese tradition, dew is a symbol for pure and sacred life. Drinking dew and eating chrysanthemums petals, the poet lived a virtuous life and his life is “truly beautiful.” Facing all these difficulties, the poet’s ideal was depressed and he tried to “turn back again” and prepare for his future endeavor. Wang Yi reveals the influence of cosmological theories of correspondence flourishing during the Han, explaining that by naming the two times of day Qu Yuan is indicating his absorption of the essence of both *yang* and *yin*, the complementary forces of light and dark, male and female, etc.<sup>42</sup>

The influence of ancient Chinese philosophy is seen in this poem:

13. The three kings of old were most pure and perfect: 昔三后之纯粹兮

Then indeed fragrant flowers had their proper place. 固众芳之所在

They brought together pepper and cinnamon; 杂申椒与菌桂兮

All the most prized blossoms were woven in their garlands. 岂惟纫夫蕙茝

“Pure and perfect”, “The three kings of old” allegedly refers to the first three kings of the Chu state.<sup>43</sup> The persona constantly “look to the sages of old for inward guidance.”<sup>44</sup> The three Virtuous Ones is referred to by a Western scholar as “the three sages of perfect goodness.”<sup>45</sup> Pepper and cinnamon refers to those sages who gather around the kings to rule the state. The passage about the Three kings is followed by one about the paragons of royal virtue, Yao and Shun, as well as their opposites, Jie and Zhou.

15. Glorious and great were those two, Yao and Shun, 彼尧舜之耿介兮

Because they had kept their feet on the right path. 既遵道而得路

And how great was the folly of Jie and Zhou, 何桀纣之猖披兮

Who hastened by crooked paths, and so came to grief. 夫惟捷径以窘步

A notable ideal of Confucian politicians is the emulation of ancient sage kings. Seen as most prominent sage kings by Confucians, Yao and Shun were two legendary ancient rulers, whose policies exemplified Confucian ideals, while Jie and Zhou were two negative exemplars of Confucian moral and political

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<sup>42</sup> Yu 91. See Wang Yi (1/10a/p.27).

<sup>43</sup> Birch 51.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>45</sup> Schneider 37.



principles. The comparison between the kings here reveals the poet's Confucian ideal. The main virtue of Yao and Shun was their kindness and impartiality; they chose ministers on the basis of merit rather than heredity. Both bypassed unworthy sons to choose a virtuous minister to succeed them. In contrast, Jie and Zhou treated their ministers brutally.

The flower imagery in “Encountering Sorrow” reveals the poet’s political ideals and the influence of Confucian theories. Images in “Encountering Sorrow” are not, as in *The Prelude*, related to transcendental connotations; rather they have moral implications. The hidden message of the line “All the prized blossoms were woven in their garlands” is to praise of the early kings of the State of Chu.<sup>46</sup> In the original line, basil (*hui* 蕙) and angelica (*chai* 茝) are sweet-smelling (and sweet-tasting) plants. The Three Lords, “Encountering Sorrow” is telling us, did not make their ornamental chains just of sweet-smelling plants but also of harsh-tasting plants such as pepper (*jiao* 椒) and cassia (*jungui* 菌桂). The sweet tasting plants most likely symbolize these ministers who criticized in indirect terms and the harsh tasting plants, those who criticized in forcible, direct terms.

Selinea and angelica are two of the flower images in “Encountering Sorrow”. Images of beauties also appear frequently in Qu Yuan's poems and most of them are used metaphorically. The Han commentator takes this account literally and commented that this “garland” or girdle (*pei* 佩) is “an image [*xiang*] for virtue.” Wang Yi further explains that “Angelica sheds its skin and does not die, and sedges do not wither in winter: these are used as comparisons for the fact that, though slanderers may wish to make things difficult for him, he has received his nature from heaven and it can never be altered”.<sup>47</sup> However, interpretations of these images have been different throughout the ages. Some held that Qu Yuan likened the beauty to himself and the monarch to the image of husband, with the relationship between the monarch and the minister similar to that of husband and wife; others held that sometimes the beauty referred to Qu Yuan himself and sometimes to the King of Chu:

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<sup>46</sup> Birch 52.

<sup>47</sup> Yu 89. See Wang Yi 1/5b/p.18.

9. As days and months away do haste without a pause, 日月忽其不淹兮

So spring and autumn alternate by turns always; 春与秋其代序

Reflecting on the trees and herbage falling sear, 惟草木之零落兮

I fear the Beauteous One would grow old too someday. 恐美人之迟暮

Comparing himself to the "Beauteous One" whose charms would soon fade, Qu Yuan was seized with anxiety that the King of Chu would no longer have any use for him. If viewed from the perspective of likening the "Beauteous One" to the king of Chu, Qu Yuan was worried that the king of Chu would accomplish nothing before he got old.

Throughout "Encountering Sorrow", the poet's political ideals, which were the theme of many later Chinese poems, are emphasized. Seeing the world he lives in as "the muddy, impure world, so indiscriminating", Qu Yuan's poem started a trend of the "exile literature" in the Chinese poetic tradition.<sup>48</sup> For his political ideals, Qu Yuan started his expedition. He respects and emulates those "good men of old", who are seen by Confucian thinkers as sages.<sup>49</sup> "Griev[ing] for man's life", the poet perfectly exemplifies a figure of Confucian politician.<sup>50</sup> "Twining my girdle of orchids" in fact symbolizes the poet's pursuit of his political ideals.<sup>51</sup> Qu Yuan is proud of his own "inward-beauty", which is cultivated by Confucian teachings, though it has to be complemented by "outward adornment".

5. Having from birth this inward beauty, 纷吾既有此内美兮

I added to it fair outward adornment: 又从之以修能

I dressed in selinea and shady angelica 扈江离与辟芷兮

As Wang Yi notes, Qu Yuan used the Chinese rhetorical tropes of *fu*, *bi*, and *xing*, which are prominent in the *Classic of Poetry*, the other primary source of Chinese poetry. The writing of "Encountering Sorrow" takes the method of *xing* from the *Poetry* and draws out categorical

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.57.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

correspondences as comparisons. Therefore, beneficial birds and fragrant plants are used to correspond to loyalty and integrity; noxious birds and foul-smelling objects are used as comparisons to slander and deceit. The Divine Beauty and Fairest One equal the lord; intimate consorts and beautiful maidens are used as analogues to virtuous officials. In dragons and phoenixes is invested the ruler; whirlwinds, clouds, and rainbows are used for petty men. His language is mild and refined, his meaning is pure and lucid. Among the hundred lords there is none who does not respect his cleat loftiness, delight in the beauty of his writing, mourn his lack of fulfillment, or grieve over his intentions. As Yu notes, Wang Yi's text is the first attempt to extend the Six Principles beyond the *Classic of Poetry*.<sup>52</sup> Liu Xie, in *Wenxin diaolong*, places Qu Yuan's poems in the Confucian tradition and relate it in various ways to the *Classic of Poetry*.<sup>53</sup> Zhu Xi, one of the most important Confucians in Chinese history, further linked "Encountering Sorrow" to the *Classic of Poetry*.<sup>54</sup> Clearly, this shows a mutual influence between "Encountering Sorrow" and Confucian theories.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 106.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

### *The Prelude* as a Romantic English Poem

Nature and Imagination are the two artistic pillars of *The Prelude*, an English Romantic poem. Intertwining with his recollections, Nature, Wordsworth reasoned, teaches the only knowledge important to humanity. In the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth describes poetry as the spontaneous overflow of emotions. For him, poetry is not only dependent upon rhetorical and literary devices, but should further be the free expression of the poet's thoughts and feelings. Therefore, Wordsworth emphasizes the examination of immediate experience in order to evoke emotion and the awareness of transcendental realities. According to Wordsworth, a poet must strive to reveal truth, not through scientific analysis and abstraction, but through an imaginative awareness of persons and things. He may broaden and enrich our human sympathies and our enjoyment of nature in this way. He must communicate his ideas and emotions through a powerful re-creation of the original experience. For this, he must have a sensibility far beyond that of the ordinary individual. His ideas laid the foundation for the Romantic literature in English.

Served as the prologue to a longer philosophical poem *The Recluse*, Wordsworth's magnum opus *The Prelude* is an autobiographical conversation poem. The poem experienced three major revisions. Published in 1805, the second edition of *The Prelude* has been recognized as the one with the highest artistic value and is used in this study. Romantic English poets saw personal experiences as the source of their poetic works and emphasized imagination and fantasy in their works.

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth vividly describes his life experience and, at various places, links it to a supernatural realm. In Book I of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth proclaims his intention to create a poem on "Nature, Man, and Society" so that he

. . .might fetch

Invigorating thoughts from former years,

Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,

And haply meet reproaches, too, whose power f

May spur me on, in manhood now mature,  
 To honorable toil (I, 648-653)

The quest for this past, which leads to his contemplation of Imagination, is a substantial part of *The Prelude*.

In contrast to the Western rationalist tradition, Wordsworth saw the human faculty of imagination as "the main essential power," which is long regarded as inferior to reason (XIII 290). One of the major sources of Western philosophy, Platonic philosophy views the creation of poets with their imagination as only the likeness of things and is placed as the most inferior on his "divided line." One of the pioneers of the Romantic Movement in English literature, Wordsworth advocates the originality of poems: Poetry should be "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."<sup>55</sup> For Wordsworth himself, he is the prophetic poet who proclaims the revelation he receives and portrays the "perfect image of a mighty mind". Throughout *The Prelude*, the Mighty Mind reveals its depth through the power Wordsworth calls Imagination. Employing Imagination, Wordsworth transfers his personal experience into something that connects to higher powers and strives to make those revelations from another world visible to us.

The emotion itself actually exists in the mind and stirs up the Sublime experience. Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* states that the Sublime belongs properly to the mind, as it is the mental representation of the natural object that brings out the sublimity of the transformed subject. The Sublime is a reflection of the inward greatness of the soul. Kant further states that it involves the recognition that we have a power within us that transcends the limits of the world as given to us by our senses. In other words, the Sublime is followed by the conquering of a sense of difficulty overcome.

In Book 1 of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth expresses the interconnectedness of his love of Nature with his aim of writing *The Prelude*, particularly in his plan of creating

some philosophic song  
 of truth that cherishes our daily life,

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<sup>55</sup> Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems*, xxxiii.

with meditations passionate from deep  
recesses in man's heart" (I, 229-232).

As the aim of the book is to convey verities of 'daily life,' the poet repeatedly rejects society for the quiet life lived in solitude with Nature as his primary companion. Perhaps the most indicative excerpt of this notion is expressed in Wordsworth's invocation of Nature as an all-powerful entity (I, 464 - 475). Wind, as an important image, also serves to prepare the reader for the great moments of vision and to structure their significances. They are, one might say, a mode of transition both between parts of the poet's universe and between the reader and the visionary experience which the poet is preparing him for (XIII, 10-13).

Wordsworth coins a famous term of "spots of time" to describe two childhood incidents narrated in Book XI. The "spots of time" is defined as follows:

There are in our existence spots of time,  
Which with distinct pre-eminence retain  
A vivifying Virtue, whence... our minds  
Are nourished and invisibly repair'd... "(XI, 258-265)

Throughout *The Prelude*, those "spots of time", the nourishing moments of his life, shall be discussed in the light of the concept the Sublime. As a notion of the Romantic Movement, the Sublime is at the core of *The Prelude*. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth records the struggle between the physical eye and the eye of the poet's imagination. Those "spots of time" scattered throughout *The Prelude* are at the center of his experience. They work to reawaken and set free long-since-forgotten feelings which, in turn, give new life and energy to the present. The ability of the retrospective process to help give power to the present through recollection of the past may be at its most conspicuous in that spot of time in Book XI in which the poet describes his childhood visit to the scene where a murderer has once been executed. In the passage, Wordsworth does not explore merely a single past event, but also walks through several separate points of time. In Line 279-294, Book XI, the passage starts out in the same casual way as other points of time. His journey into the hills and into past time is as much a spiritual as a physical one. The execution is weighted with some symbolic meanings: the "unknown hand", the "moulder'd" gibbet-mast, and the

phrase "in former times" suggesting a vast world of the past and points forward to the "times long past" a few lines later. The underlying significance of the incident becomes more evident in Line 296-317. Here, we are aware of three separate points of time: the present, from which Wordsworth looks back to his childhood and from which a new perspective is introduced upon far earlier times. The "monumental writing", the cleared grass and the freshness of the letters set an intense tone for the following lines. Reflecting upon this scene opens up a more distant and impersonal past: the murderer's execution. Then the poet begins a new journey to a point where he can see three objects---the pool, the beacon, and the girl. The poet fuses the three objects into a momentous scene through the medium of the wind, suggesting the precariousness when people confront with unfamiliar situations. The girl balancing the pitcher on her head is a figure of endurance.

Wordsworth at other places presents simultaneously the scenes of the Sublime and beautiful. Mont Blanc disappoints Wordsworth, according to Owen, for it fails to fulfill his expectations, presumably of sublimity.<sup>56</sup> In Line 456-468, one sees that Chamouny is sublime and the rest of the passage is a blending of the imagery of sublime sternness with that of pastoral beauty: the small birds are side by side with the soaring eagle, and sublime Winter merges with beauty by being imaged as "a tamed Lion" which "sports" by beds of flowers."

Wordsworth uses repeatedly various symbols of Nature to present his internal conflicts, though not always painful, between his own pursuit of Imagination and the tyranny of the landscapes he is incapable to command. As in Book XI, when the poet and his company run across the Alps, they encounter a series of landscapes which symbolize his consciousness of the Sublime. Mount Blanc is the first scene they encounter. As he does later in Book XIII, the poet discusses the relationship between abyss, the Sublime and Imagination.

Reach after reach, procession without end,  
Of deep and stately vales. ... (VI, 390-391)

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<sup>56</sup> Owen, *The Perfect Image of a Mighty Mind*: 122-30 .

Like the majestic scene he sees on Mount Snowdon, deep vales compound an atmosphere of grandeur. Facing the splendid vale, the poet once again realizes his connection with the suprasensory world. Imagination frees his mind to explore beyond this physical world and interact directly with a heavenly spiritual place.

That day we first  
Beheld the summit of Mont Blanc, and griev'd  
To have a soulless image on the eye  
Which had usurp'd upon a living thought  
That never more could be. (VI, 452-456)

“Griev’d”, the poet feels disappointed when he and his company see Mont Blanc, the image of which contrasts with their previous notion of it. However, the ensuing description of pleasant scenes brings vitality back to the passage. The recurrent images of young female figures constitute contrasts with the powerful images of wind or mountain. In this passage, even the lion, one of the fiercest animals, is tame. The “bewildered” winds hovering over the Alps are the major symbol of the Sublime. Taking up “dejection” for pleasure’s sake, Wordsworth internalizes the anxiety bestowed by the Alps and transforms it into a gratifying feeling, which is an emotional tendency grained in the characters of those who are melancholy and is in fact a portrayal of the Sublime.

Breeze, in *The Prelude*, is an important image for Imagination. In the opening lines of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth starts with the simple fact of the breeze that blows upon him as he leaves London. Breeze is an important symbol here and throughout the poem. From the beginning the breeze seems both rooted in the sensory, observable world and at the same time connected to transcendental realities. The breeze symbolizes the inspirations bestowed to him from green fields and clouds. Green fields and clouds are the places where his imaginations are from. "Half conscious" indicates that imaginative powers bestowed to him are half generated from outside sources and half triggered by his own mind's processing. Nature brings the poet the opportunity to interact with the world which gives joyful experience to him. Here at the beginning, the poet celebrates his release from the burden of city and his joyful return to



Nature. The main object from Line 31 - 38 is ostensibly the freedom and liberty of the poet in Nature. At this point of the poem, the theme of the poetic Imagination is introduced. "The sweet breath of heaven, " before called "half-conscious" (I, 3), here unites with a "correspondent breeze" within the poet, which inner breeze, simulated into life, quickly becomes a tempest of creative energy. The "natural" breeze not only activates the poet's imaginative energy, but also constitutes an integral part of it. The poet then goes on in Line 38-42 to introduce the poetic Imagination and its relation to the "promises" and "hope" of the poet. Here, the poet defines an objective-subjective relationship between Nature and poet as being necessary to the initiation of the creation:

For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven  
 Was blowing on my body, felt within  
 A corresponding mild creative breeze,  
 A vital breeze which travelled gently on  
 O'er things which it had made, and is become  
 A tempest, a redundant energy,  
 Vexing its own creation. (I, 41-47)

Like the one at the beginning of the poem, the breeze here is also gentle and nourishing. Imagination from Heaven caresses the objects in the world and empowers them with creative energy and original power of life. The breeze is "vital", for it gives energy to the world. This "creative" breeze from Heaven not only confers imagination on the poet, but, in a sense, creates the world in his eyes based on his Kantian philosophical ideas. It seems Wordsworth finds freedom in the wind. The very nature of flowing and transforming quality of wind allows the poet to explore freely between the physical world and the supermundane world. Their main function is to act as intermediaries between the two worlds. Yet they also serve as another function---as manifestations of power and vitality in the universe:

A girl who bore a pitcher on her head  
 And seemed with difficult steps to force her away  
 Against the blowing wind. (XIII, 305 -307)

In Line 347, Book I, one finds similar description of Nature. Loud dry wind serves as the symbol of perilous situation. Young Wordsworth here is experiencing the vitality of Nature. Attracted of the beautiful scene of "the raven's nest" and "knots of grass", he is also intimidated by the strong dry wind. Wordsworth sees nature as a source of his imagination, the importance of which is shown by his proclamation of the main theme of the poem. Wordsworth's description here implies that imagination mechanisms brought by Nature is not only achieved by joyful experiences, perilous situations also fascinate him with their own beauties.

Since, as I have demonstrated, wind serves as the link between the two worlds, the use of strong wind as a symbol allows the poet to deliver to his readers a feeling of dreariness, echoed by the similar scene in Book XIII where a girl bearing a pitch on her head. Dreariness, as defined, is a feeling of sadness and sorrow. Sadness as an emotion in retrospection is connected to the belief of the human mortality and the effort to connect to the transcendental world. As one grows up, the imminence of death forces the person to reflect upon the happiness, or those events helped to shape one's personality in the past and often reminds one of the gap between his or her own dream of life and reality. The mind thus being ravished and elevated in its apprehension of the divine grandeur loses its ability to express the experience of the Sublime in words. The poet has to maneuver his words through metaphors and symbols. Accosted by that absolute that is beyond Imagination, and being thus unable to express it in sensory terms, the language that Wordsworth suggests must closely resemble real life echoes the poet's inability to express. The feeling of inadequacy, the painful feeling is essential to the attainment of the Sublime, the powerful description of deeper passions. To be eligible to experience this incredulity is to acknowledge the defeat of the mind before the object of its contemplation. This disruption of balance causes a power influx into the viewer and elevates his mind to achieve a sense of intense unity with the transcendental world.

On Mount Snowdon, Wordsworth sees:  
 The perfect image of a mighty Mind,  
 Of one that feeds upon infinity,

That is exalted by an under-presence,  
 The sense of God, or whatso'er is dim  
 Or vast in its own being. . . . (XIII, 69-73)

Wordsworth refers the scene he sees on Mount Snowdon to a “mighty Mind” and regards it as of considerable importance. As on other unusual occasions, the usual natural scene is transformed by Imagination into some sorts of descriptive poetry. Here, God, Nature and the imaginative mind metaphorically interweave.

The final scene in Book XIII, with its grandeur and vastness, constitutes a contrast to the pleasant description at the beginning of the poem in Book I. In Book XIII, the poet’s mind, having travelled with his physical body, achieves its “consummation” and fuses into Nature. The consummation is achieved when the poet perceives the moon, or the “mighty Mind”, and realizes the unity between his mind and the mighty Mind, which empowers him with imagination throughout his life.

Imagination playing a key role, Wordsworth throughout the poem recounts the growth of his poetic mind, which can be seen as a Hegelian dialectics, or, in other words, a spiral returns to the same point on a higher level. Hegel was the first philosopher who described the path of a mind’s growth as a dynamic one. In his *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel describes the process of a mind developing from consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, spirit, religion and absolute knowledge. The Hegelian consummation of a mind is described, according to Abrams, as a “climactic recognition” scene in which spirit, after “repossessing” its alienated self, recognizes itself in a perfect way.<sup>57</sup> As the history of the poet’s mind, *The Prelude* shall be seen as a work parallel to *The Phenomenology of Mind*. The end of the poem presents Wordsworth’s final realization that the poet’s mind has achieved its “consummation” and the overcoming of the inner and outer division.

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<sup>57</sup> Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 234.

According to Owen, the moonlit scene in Book XIII serves primarily as two functions: the image of a mind and a sample of the “quasi-imaginative product of nature.”<sup>58</sup> He is right when he considers the product an analogue of the imaginative product of the human mind; however, he makes a mistake when sees the human mind and the mind presented in the Snowdon scene as two separate entities. The scene Wordsworth perceives on the Mount Snowdon is one of a series of examples illustrating the analogy between some unusual natural processes and some processes of the human mind. From the direct perception of the attraction of Nature in a pleasant atmosphere, the poet’s mind develops and finally recognizes itself at the end of this poetic journey on Mount Snowdon. This recognition is achieved with the aid of the poet’s all previous psychological experiences and the mind’s interactions with its surroundings.

In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth starts from the perception of breeze, one of the simplest feeling in Nature, and then, along the development of the poem, reflects on all these “spots of time,” which constitute a large circle starting from the mind’s internalization of external sources to the fusion of the two accomplished by Imagination. Throughout the poem, one sees that Wordsworth absorbs the “details of landscape into emotional concern.”<sup>59</sup> In Book XIII Wordsworth presents “the image of wholeness and completion in the ideal Poet”. In Book XIII, echoing the account of Wordsworth’s Alpine trip, the ascent into the moonlight on Mount Snowdon is depicted. These “spots of time” constitute what M. H. Abrams calls the “educational journey” in *The Prelude*. As Abrams writes: “As in Hegel’s Phenomenology the spirit, at the close of its educational journey, recognizes itself in its other, so Wordsworth’s mind, confronting nature, discovers itself in its own perfect powers.”<sup>60</sup> Rudy argues that most of Wordsworth’s poems shall be seen as linear progression towards their ends and a Hegelian interpretation of the end of *The Prelude* would lead to subjectivism.<sup>61</sup> Yet, as I have argued, Wordsworth refers the “mighty Mind” to

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<sup>58</sup> Owen, *The Perfect Image of a Mighty Mind*, 123.

<sup>59</sup> Gross, “Arts and Letters: Hegel, Beethoven, Wordsworth:1770-1970”, 149.

<sup>60</sup> Abrams, 286.

<sup>61</sup> Rudy, *Wordsworth and the Zen Mind: The Poetry of Self-Employing*, 57.

the Snowdon landscape, a picturesque scene symbolizing the power exerted by Imagination on Nature. In fact, the process of how a mind transforms the external world is described in the poem as:

They from their native selves can send abroad

Like transformation, for themselves create a like existence. . . . (XIII, 93-95)

At the end of the poem, Wordsworth introduces an essential, if not the most important, topic to *The*

*Prelude*:

To fear and love

(To love as first and chief, for there fear ends)

Be this ascribed, to early intercourse

In presence of sublime and lovely forms

With the adverse principles of pain and joy—

Evil as one is rashly named by those

Who know not what they say. From love, for here

Do we begin and end, all grandeur comes,

All truth and beauty—from pervading love—

That gone, we are as dust. (XIII, 144-152)

"Fear", "sublime. . .forms", "pain", and "grandeur" are closely connected, as are "love", "beautiful forms", and "joy". Sir Walter Raleigh believes that to Wordsworth, "All lasting grandeur in things perceived is a quality with which they are invested by the powers of the soul, by love, and by imagination."<sup>62</sup> One sees here that these transcendental concepts are mysteriously linked together. Wordsworth claims here that the greatness of the human spirit lies in love, rather than in reason or moral conduct.

This passage is a brilliant one, in which Wordsworth describes how his encounters of wild beauty and sublime emotions begotten in his mind are transmuted into the secondary theme of the poem---love. Love and the Sublime are interconnected and "cannot stand dividually". Here, "fear" is the synonym for the Sublime. With the dialectics of the Sublime and beauty, corresponding to the emotions of pain and joy

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<sup>62</sup> Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, vol. 2, 621.

respectively, the poet is endowed with the divine power of Love. In this passage, the poet criticizes explicitly those who fail to see the necessities of pain and fear and considers them as merely "evil". For the poet, these emotions and experiences are essential to the mature and imaginative mind. As other Romantics did, Wordsworth saw the heavenly Love as the base of his creation and the source of "grandeur". Without love, the poet himself and the Romantic values he advocated would not be sustained and justified.

The poet then relates this divine love to Imagination.

This love more intellectual cannot be

Without imagination (XIII, 166-167)

For Wordsworth, Imagination, the Sublime and love were inseparable; belief in one implied belief in the other two. It is through Imagination that feeds upon infinity, or the Sublime, and he may have felt that this faculty had an important part in the apprehension by God's love.

Imagination having been our theme,

So also hath that intellectual love (XIII, 185-186)

Here, Imagination, an essential topic in the poem, is associated inseparably with the intellectual love which is shared by all mankind. Havens claims that this intellectual love is the theme of *The Prelude*.<sup>63</sup> Love was the force that sustained the power and pulse of romanticism and can shed some light on the true value of the literary movement. As the poet explains in a later passage, there are three basic forms of love--the love between men and women, parental love, and the love sanctified by Jesus Christ in the name of God. Wordsworth acknowledges in *The Prelude* that these three forms are all true loves, yet the highest love, is sustained by Imagination and in the form of the identification of the divinized human mind with Nature:

. . .see that pair, the lamb

And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways

Shall touch thee to the heart; in some green bower

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<sup>63</sup> Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, Vol.1, 237.

Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there  
 The one who is thy choice of all the world---  
 There linger, lulled, and lost, and rapt away---  
 Be happy to thy fill; thou call'st this love,  
 And so it is, but there is higher love  
 Than this, a love that comes into the heart  
 With awe and a diffusive sentiment. (XIII, 154-163)

. . .From Love, for here

Do we begin and end, all grandeur comes,  
 All truth and beauty-from pervading love (XIII, 149-151)

An essential function of Imagination is that it bring to life many things beautiful and sublime and great lying beyond in invisible realms. It endows meaning to lifeless objects in Nature from the unseen world.

Wordsworth implies that this love will not exist without Imagination twice in Line 188-189 and 206-209. Why this is he does not say. Indeed the lines that follow throw little light on the subject although they affirm that from one point of view it is the theme of the poem. Through Imagination, people come to understand the objects around them, emotions, and the philosophical realities of the world. Such an understanding makes love possible and empowers the phenomenal world with vitality. As Shelley wrote:

The great secret of moral is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination. . . . There is no want of knowledge respecting what is wisest and best in morals, government. . . . But we. . . want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine.<sup>64</sup>

Concerned with the necessity of love in their Romantic philosophies, a group of German philosophers and poets developed an ontology of Love, which can shed some light on Wordsworth's idea of love and its importance to *The Prelude*. According to Schlegel, the knowledge of love can be grasped only through

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<sup>64</sup> Havens, *The Mind of a Poet*, vol.2, 622,

Imagination and for Kant, Imagination provides the base for the pursuit of knowledge in the transcendental world. Novalis puts it more straightforward, "God is love. Love is the highest reality-the primary cause."<sup>65</sup> For those German Romantics, Love is the first and ultimate cause of the universe and is the ontological entity in Romantic literature. According to Schlegel, Love enables man to attain oneness with Nature.<sup>66</sup> Though transcending the world, God sustains Nature by infusing with it his own being as love. Comparably, man achieves identification with Nature and overcome their alienation with Love. As Schelling puts it, Nature is "drenched" with God's love. A Fichtean view of love recognizes that love grows and develops from one's self by overcoming outside obstacles, which, in the poem, are sublime landscapes bringing the poet fear. A Schellingian standpoint, which sees love as an indiscriminate and sympathetic enjoyment of all phases of Nature, applies to the poem as well. For some Romanticists, the concept of God is equal to mankind. Wordsworth being one of them, those artists tended to accept a humanistic interpretation of the concept of Love instead of relying on religious and transcendental philosophies.

. . .there is higher love  
 Than this, a love that comes into the heart  
 With awe and a diffusive sentiment  
 Thy love is human merely: this proceeds  
 More from the brooding soul, and is divine. (XIII, 161-165)

This passage shows a prominent, yet often subtly presented, characteristic of Romantic literature. Echoing Hegelian philosophy which divinizes the human mind, Wordsworth claims that Love is both human and divine, and therefore dialectically juxtaposes human and God. It is sufficient to argue that the "mighty Mind" the poet sees on Mount Snowdon, therefore, is the symbol of the divinized human mind. As Abrams indicates, many of the Romantics shared a concern of the secularization of theological ideas dominated in previous centuries.<sup>67</sup> In this period, poets and philosophers recognized the importance of the

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<sup>65</sup> Stoljar, *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, 123.

<sup>66</sup> Singer, *The Nature of Love*, 387.

<sup>67</sup> Abrams, 12.



Sublime, mind, and love, and sought a transcendental, yet secular to some extent, solution to the problem of soul and eternity in order to resist a mechanical and philistine worldview and bring beauty and Love back to man. Most significantly, though not manifested in Wordsworth's poems, poetizing life became a goal for many Romantic philosophers and poets. Spiritual love, for Wordsworth, links an individual man to other men and Nature. As Rosen recognizes, the Romantics carry out their arts and literature programs only end with a 'static and resolved' form at the point of "infinity". As he then proclaims, this "point of infinity" is "God" and "God" refers to "the resolution of the dynamic process of life, the realm of the unconscious and the unknowable, humanity realizing itself as absolute Mind, and so forth."<sup>68</sup> This sense of infinity interconnects with the divine power of Imagination and leads to the theme of love, as manifested at the end of the poem.

Rosen's analysis reveals the secret relationship between the Sublime, love and Imagination in *The Prelude*, as in other Romantic literary works. Wordsworth's vivid account of wild sceneries, those dashing, thundering cascades, those mighty, snow-clad mountains, those yawning abysses, gloomy forests, inaccessible paths, lonely, unfrequented spots lead to a sense of infinity, which most of the Romantics call "God". The copious religious imagery and concepts provides sources of, by Wordsworth's phrase, "innumerable analogies and types of infinity." Wordsworth in other places calls his images the "types and symbols of eternity." In some lines, Wordsworth implies that God is the unconscious of humanity:

Such consciousnesses seemed but accidents  
 Relapses from the one interior life  
 In which all beings live with god, themselves  
 Are god, existing in the mighty whole  
 As indistinguishable as the cloudless east  
 Is from the cloudless west, when all

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<sup>68</sup> Rosen, *Romantic Poets, Critics, and Other Madmen*, 41.

The hemisphere is one cerulean rule (MS RV p. 525)<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 49.

## Conclusion

With the analysis of the two poems, the fundamental differences between the Chinese and Western poetic tradition has been revealed.

“Encountering Sorrow”, as an expression of the poet’s political aspirations, reveals the traits of Classical Chinese poetry. Though whether Qu Yuan was influenced by Confucianism is still debatable, his emotions and aspirations expressed in this poem clearly falls into the continuous Chinese tradition of virtue and politics.

In the Romantic era, Europeans, free from the chain of Classical poetics began to emphasize the role played by emotion in poetic works. Wordsworth’s claim that poems are natural overflow of powerful feelings stems from the revolt made by European artists against classical and neoclassical literary criticism.<sup>70</sup> In this study, Wordsworth’s focus on personal emotions is revealed in the concept of the Sublime. While Qu Yuan’s poem is full of high emotions, the poem is not constituted by a series of journey of pursuing spiritual ideals. The ideals are not portrayed in a transcendental world. Rather, the heaven in Qu Yuan’s poem was portrayed as a real place. The abstract spiritual world presented by Qu Yuan was with realist implications. “[I]nward beauty” was used to make a contrast with “outward adornment.” The theory of *yin* and *yang* is revealed here. Imagery in *The Prelude* is related to real life experiences; however, in “Encountering Sorrow”, the images are set in a context without any specific connection to his life experiences. The symbolism ancient Chinese poets attach to various tree, animals, natural phenomena are different from that of the western. Flower imagery is attached to the virtue of “gentlemen”, a Confucian ideal.<sup>71</sup>

Though there are many differences between the two poetic traditions, similarities can still be drawn between *The Prelude* and “Encountering Sorrow.” Though they are both autobiographical poems,

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<sup>70</sup> Cai 142.

<sup>71</sup> Birch 51.

they are not completely unique factual account of an experience in historical time. Imagination is implicit in *The Prelude*. For Wordsworth and Liu Xie alike, literary creation involves two fundamental types of experiences: the sensory engagement with *natura naturata* and the suprasensory union with *natura naturans*. The former experience denotes mental activities that arise from man's contact with the outer nature through senses. It includes not only all forms of sensory impressions but also feelings and thoughts derived from those impressions. The latter experience refers to mental activities that transcend the boundaries of time and space and reach the innermost nature. In examining the creative process, both Wordsworth and Liu Xie pay close attention to the interaction of these two interactions.

The conclusion given by Cai at the end of his book would suit this study as well:

While I have no illusion that our comparative studies can be absolutely free of prejudices and misunderstandings, I believe that, by setting our sight on a transcultural ideal, we will get inspiration, sustainment, and guidance along our way of overcoming all cultural bias and stereotypes and better understand our common humanity. It is in the spirit of this transcultural ideal that this study has been conceived and written. I hope that it will be read in the same spirit and will be taken as an invitation to search for better ways to compare Western and Chinese poetics and the two cultural traditions at large.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Cai 255.

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