

YE XIE'S "ON THE ORIGIN OF POETRY" (YUAN SHI)
A POETIC OF THE EARLY QING

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In the history of Chinese literature, times of poetic bloom only rarely appear to coincide with a flowering of literary theory. In most cases, reflection on poetry begins after a period of blooming has subsided. We experience, for example, the first blooming of literary criticism during the late Six Dynasties as a reaction to the flourishing of poetry during the preceding Han, Wei, and Jin dynasties. It was in this era that Zhong Rong 鍾嶸 (fl. 483–513) wrote the *Shipin* 詩品 (Classification of Poets) and Liu Xie 劉勰 (c.465–c.520) his great theoretical treatise *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons) which, with its comprehensive, systematic, and profound probing into the essence of literature, stands unrivalled in the history of Chinese literary criticism. The minor theorists of the High Tang, the Golden Age of Chinese poetry, such as Wang Changling 王昌齡 (c.690–c.756) and the monk Jiaoran 皎然 (730–99), are more acknowledged for their poetry rather than their theoretical works; and Sikong Tu's 司空圖 (837–908) influential series of critical poems *Ershisi shipin* 二十四詩品 (Twenty-four Classes of Poetry) was written, long after the bloom, at the very end of this dynasty. Likewise, the theoretical and critical reception of the flowering of poetry during the Tang and Northern Song first began with Yan Yu's 嚴羽 important treatise *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話 (Canglang's Poetry Talk), written during the Southern Song period. This work, which interprets poetry in analogy to Chan-Buddhist ideas—i.e., poetry understood as a reflection of the intuitive, enlightened apprehension of reality—was to have a lasting influence on literary theory in the centuries to come, particularly on the archaist movements of the periods that concern us here, the Ming and early Qing dynasties.

The Qing period fits right into this pattern: insignificant regarding poetry, but flowering in theory. The critical literature of this time, the so-called "poetry talks" (*shihua* 詩話),¹ outmatches in

¹ Ding Fubao's 丁福保 standard collection *Qing shihua* 清詩話 has recently

scope and volume everything that was written on this topic in the preceding periods.

Out of this flood of theoretical and critical writing, however, only a few distinguished and important works emerge, and even among those, there appear to be only two or three which may be called systematic. The majority of them are simply collections of random thoughts on poetry in the *shihua* tradition. The more important theories circle around one or two key terms, such as Wang Shizhen's 王士禎 (1634–1711) *shenyun* 神韻 (spiritual reverberation). Wang's ideas follow the tradition began by Yan Yu with his interpretation of poetry in Chan-Buddhist terms. Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–97), to mention another critic, understands poetry as expression of the poet's "personal sensibility" (*xingling* 性靈)—likewise an elaboration of an already established view, that of Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610) and the Gong'an 公安 School of the Ming. We may call this view of literature, to borrow M.H. Abrams' terminology, "expressive", in contrast to the former which would fall into his "transcendental-mimetic" category.² Shen Deqian's 沈德潛 (1673–1769) theory, finally, is known as *gediao*-theory 格調 (*ge* meaning form and *diao* melody). His ideas are a continuation of Ming archaist views, i.e. those of the so-called "Later Seven Masters", particularly of Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514–70) and Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–90).³ Shen Deqian's view is both formalistic and

been revised and republished in two volumes, with an introduction by Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1978). Furthermore, there is the two volume continuation, edited by Guo Shaoyu, *Qing shihua xubian* 清詩話續編 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1983). For a general discussion of Qing poetics, see Aoki Masaru 青木正兒, *Shindai bungaku hyōron shi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1950), Chinese translation by Chen Shunü 陳淑女, *Qingdai wenxue pinglun shi* 清代文學評論史 (Taipei: Kaiming shudian, 1969); Zhang Jian 張健, *Ming-Qing wenxue piping* 明清文學批評 (Taipei: Guojia chubanshe, 1983); Liu, Wei-ping, "The Development of Chinese Poetics in the Ch'ing Dynasty", *Chinese Culture* vol. XXVI (4/1985), pp. 1–73, vol. XXVII (3/1986), pp. 41–96, vol. XXVII (4/1986), pp. 55–77, vol. XXVIII (2/1987), pp. 13–57, vol. XXVIII (3/1987), pp. 1–28.

² I use M.H. Abrams' critical terms, "mimetic", "pragmatic", and "expressive", as put forth in his book, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 6–26. James Liu used the term "intuitionist" for Abrams' "transcendental-mimetic criticism" in his early work, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 81–87. He substituted it with "metaphysical" in his later *Chinese Theories of Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 16–62, in which he borrowed and modified Abrams' system.

³ In order to avoid confusion between the two Wang Shizhen, whose names are written with different characters, the respective dates will be added in brackets when they are mentioned in the following.

pragmatic. According to his view, poetry should be composed along Tang models and ought to have a morally instructive influence.

Shen Deqian was a student of Ye Xie 葉燮 (1627–1703),⁴ whose poetic treatise "On the Origin of Poetry" (*Yuan shi* 原詩) is our topic here. It is included in the voluminous collection of *Qing shihua* 清詩話,⁵ but due to the systematic discussion of its theme—the essence of poetry and the nature of the poet—it differs considerably from the more impressionistic *shihua*. In fact, its systematic approach leads contemporary Chinese historians of literature to compare it to Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong*.⁶ Ye Xie's *Yuan shi* does not, however, reach the same level of structural sophistication as its

⁴ Ye Xie (style-name: Xingqi 星期, pen-names: Yiqi 已畦, Hengshan 橫山), a man from Jiaying 嘉興 in Zhejiang province, was the sixth son of Ye Shaoyuan 葉紹袁 (1589–1648) and the noted poetess Shen Yixiu 沈宜修 (1590–1635). His father served briefly as a secretary in the Ministry of Works and became a Buddhist monk after the downfall of the Ming. He as well as his mother, brothers, and sisters were all literati of high renown, leaving published editions of poetry and prose. Ye Xie became a *jinshi* 進士 in 1670 and served as magistrate of Baoying 寶應 in Jiangsu on the Grand Canal from 1675 till 1677. Having to deal with military officials during the rebellion of the "Three Feudatories" (*sanfan* 三藩, 1673–81) at this strategically important town as well as with floods and a year of bad harvest, he tried conscientiously to relieve the suffering of the populace. But in the course of the troubles he angered higher officials and was dismissed because of trivial charges. Thereafter he retired to Hengshan in Wu county (Jiangsu). His literary works are collected in thirty-three *juan* under the title *Yiqi wenji* 已畦文集 (Changsha: Zhongguo gushu kanyinshe, 1935; *Xi Yuan xiansheng quanshu* 郎園先生全書 series). As for the confusion about the correct writing of his pen-name, see Jiang Fan's 蔣凡 short article "Ye Xie zhi hao: 'Yiqi' hu? 'Jiqi' hu? 葉燮之號, 已畦乎已畦乎?" (Is Ye Xie's pen-name "Yiqi" or "Jiqi"?), *Gudai wenxue lilun yanjiu congkan* 古代文學理論研究叢刊 8 (1983), p. 147. Jiang argues with persuasion that it is Yiqi. For biographical material see *Qingshi liezhuan* 清史列傳 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), vol. 18, j. 70, p. 5732; *Qingshigao* 清史稿 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), vol. 44, j. 484, p. 13364; *Guochao xian zheng shilue* (SBBY ed.), 38.5a–b; *Beizhuan ji* 碑傳集 (Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan ed., vol. 925), 92.2a–3b, which contains the most extensive biography, written by his student Shen Deqian; Goodrich, L. Carrington, and Fang, Chaoying, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368–1644* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), vol. II, p. 1579.

⁵ *Qing shihua*, II, pp. 563–612. The page references to *Yuan shi* in this study refer to the edition annotated by Huo Songlin 霍松林 in the series *Zhongguo gudai wenxue lilun piping zhuanzhu xuanji* 中國古典文學理論批評專著選輯, edited by Guo Shaoyu. It includes the following works: Ye Xie, *Yuan shi*; Xue Xue 薛雪, *Yipiao shihua* 一瓢詩話; and Shen Deqian, *Shuoshi zuiyu* 說詩碎語 (Peking: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1979).

⁶ See, for example, Zhang Baoquan 張葆全, *Shihua he cihua* 詩話和詞話 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1983), p. 82; Min Ze 敏澤 *Zhongguo wenxue lilun piping shi* 中國文學理論批評史 (Peking: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), vol. II, pp. 862–63. Traditional critics were not as appreciative of Ye's work. The editors of

predecessor; rather, it is written as an exposition mixed with questions and answers, reminiscent of Neo-Confucian writing in the dialogue form.

In the following, first, an outline of Ye's system of thought will be presented by means of translations, mostly from the "Inner Chapter" (*neipian* 內篇) of his *Yuan shi*. Then his critical terms will be traced back to earlier theoretical works. After illustrating how Ye applies his ideas to the practice of criticism, I shall, finally, attempt an assessment of his position in the context of Ming and early Qing poetics.

I

The first part of Ye's treatise deals—more comprehensively, though, than the musing at the beginning of this essay—with the various periods of poetic bloom and decay, attempting a new evaluation of the history of Chinese poetry. He compares the historic progression of poetry to a stream and thereby distinguishes "source" and "flow". The "source" are the three hundred poems of the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經), the earliest works of Chinese poetry. In its "flow", there are different phases of bloom (*sheng* 盛) and decay (*shuai* 衰), orthodoxy or correctness (*zheng* 正) and heterodoxy or change (*bian* 變)⁷—a view which was applied to the poetry of the *Book of Songs* already in its "Great Preface" (*Shi da xu* 詩大序)⁸ and which is elaborated upon in the *Wenxin diaolong*.⁹ Ye Xie sharply attacks the views of the archaists of the Ming period,

the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, for example, did not consider his *Yuan shi* good enough to be copied into the imperial library. In their annotated catalogue, they write that, although the work shows extensive erudition, it did not discuss the style and substance of poetry; moreover, it contained quite a few "heroic phrases" which were apt to deceive people: *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1964), vol. 7, j. 197, p. 4139. Also his biographers, apart from Shen Deqian, were not in favour of Ye's theory, saying that his poetry criticism contains a half-baked understanding of Lu You's 陸游 (1125–1210) and Fan Chengda's 范成大 (1126–1191) thought; see above note 4. For an introduction to Ye's theory in Western literature, see Liu Wei-ping, XXVI (4/1985), pp. 55–63; Liu, James, *Chinese Theories*, pp. 83–85; *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, W.H. Nienhauser, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 920–21.

⁷ *Yuan shi*, p. 3.

⁸ Legge, James, transl., *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press repr., 1960–71), vol. IV, Prolegomena, pp. 34–36.

⁹ This occurs in chapter twenty-nine (*Tongbian* 通變, "Flexible Adaptability to Varying Situations"): Fan Wenlan 范文瀾, ed. and annot., *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍註, (Peking: Renmin wenxue, 1958), vol. II, pp. 519–21; Shih, Vincent Yuchung, transl., *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1983), pp. 318–25.

who focused on the past and only acknowledged a few distinct times of orthodox bloom (Li Mengyang 李夢陽 echoing Yan Yu's preference: "In prose only Qin and Han, in poetry only High Tang"¹⁰). More in accordance with Yuan Hongdao's, Li Zhi's 李贄 (1527–1602), Qian Qianyi's 錢謙益 (1582–1664), and Wang Shizhen's (1634–1711) views (the latter being Ye's contemporary), Ye Xie regards the history of poetry, rather, as a process of alternating phases of bloom and decay whereby, as he claims, poetry in its historic course keeps evolving to a better, richer, and more varied state. He, in particular, sees the so-called orthodox periods as being doomed to decay, maintaining that poetry will ossify and reach the utmost state of corruption if in form and content it is fixed to some orthodox system. In contrast, times of change (*bian*) are the truly creative periods which eventually will lead to a new bloom.¹¹

In the following passage, Ye Xie discusses literary evolution in view of both the conditions of the times and intrinsic literary developments, illustrating how "correctness" and "change" require one another.

Concerning correctness (*zheng*) and change (*bian*) of the *feng* 風 and *ya* 雅 odes [of the *Shijing*], their correctness and change was bound to the [conditions of the] times. This means that government and customs succeeded and failed, flourished and corrupted. This is talking of poetry in regards to the times. There were changes in the times, and poetry followed. Yet when the times changed and failed in terms of correctness, poetry also changed but did not fail in terms of correctness. Thus there still was bloom and no decay [in the poetry of the *Shijing*]. This is the source of poetry.

¹⁰ This saying is attributed to Li Mengyang in his biography in the *Ming shi* 明史 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), vol. 24, j. 286, p. 7348.

¹¹ *Yuan shi*, pp. 3–8. For an introduction to Qian's thought, which bears many similarities to Ye's, see Che, K.L., "Not words but Feelings—Ch'ien Ch'ien-i (1582–1664) on Poetry", *Tamkang Review* Vol. VI, No. 1 (April 1975), pp. 55–75, and Liu Wei-ping, XXVII, pp. 49–55. As to Wang Shizhen's view on the past, R.J. Lynn characterizes it in a way which also invites comparisons to Ye Xie's ideas. After quoting from Wang's *Daijingtang shihua* 帶經堂詩話, he says: "This is a view of a traditionalist, no doubt, but a progressive traditionalist who respects the innovations of each succeeding age as well as the great monuments of the past . . . Wang Shih-chen certainly accords the Han, Wei and T'ang exceptional status, but he does not insist that the student of poetry imitate them and do nothing else. For him the tradition is like a great river whose flow is sustained by the living interaction of successive generations of individuals. He attempts to refute both the practice of imitating the fixed monuments of Han, Wei, and High T'ang and the current tendency to discard the old monuments and set up the Sung in their place. He implies, I believe, that there should not be any fixed monuments, new or old, but that all the great moments in the broad sweep of the poetic heritage deserve study and assimilation." Lynn, R.J., "Tradition and the Individual: Ming and Ch'ing Views of Yüan Poetry", *Chinese Poetry and Poetics*, vol. I, Ronald C. Miao, ed. (San Francisco: Chinese Material Center, 1978), p. 356.

When I now say that there were such things as correctness and change in later periods, the correctness and change were bound to [the conditions of] poetry. This means that [poetry] differed regarding form, melody, themes, vocabulary, new and old, and rise and fall. This is talking of the times by means of poetry. Poetry successively changed, and the times followed. Therefore, there was the alternation of bloom and decay in the times of Han, Wei, Six Dynasties, Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming. Only through change, correctness could be saved from decay, therefore decay was followed by bloom and vice versa. This is the flow of poetry.¹²

When Ye Xie says that the times changed and failed in terms of correctness but poetry in its changes did not, the term *zheng* (correctness/orthodoxy) appears to be applied, on the one hand, just as in the "Great Preface", as a description of the correct government and customs of the times; on the other hand, it refers to the never changing ideological basis of all poetry regardless in which time of "change" it was written. This basis is the correct teaching of the sages. In contrast to this, change in form and content is what characterizes the course of poetry ever since it departed from the *Book of Songs*, and this change is necessary to safeguard its ideological correctness from decaying. Thus, change (*bian*) does not stand in opposition to correctness (*zheng*). When there is no change, correctness will turn into a rigid orthodoxy which eventually will not lead to a period of bloom but decay.

Ye's lengthy discussion of this topic often takes on a polemic character. For example, he vehemently turns against the archaists' use of clichés and imitations of ancient masters as in the following passage:

Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) said that one must abolish clichés. One can imagine that the evil of clichés in his time was so great that the eye could no longer bear to see and the ear was no longer willing to hear them. When the thought, feelings, and wisdom of the people rot more from day to day and are buried under clichés, then he who tries to do away with this evil is like one who saves people from drowning or burning. Must his power not be great? And now the pedantic poets worship just those clichés which Han Yu condemned, claim that they are mysterious rarities, and exchange them with one another. Isn't this a pity?¹³

And he adds:

Towards the end of the Ming, everyone, whom one could call a poet, was busy copying their predecessors. They were incapable of equaling the inspiration (*xinghui* 興會) and spiritual essence of the old masters. Instead, they plagiarized their sentences, stole their words, and produced imitations of earlier models. Like little children learning to speak, they only babbled in imitation. The sound may be similar, but it is far from real speech. In the face of this, one can only turn away and throw up.¹⁴

¹² *Yuan shi*, p. 7.

¹³ *Yuan shi*, p. 9.

¹⁴ *Yuan shi*, p. 10.

Hence, in his evaluation of the history of Chinese poetry, Ye assumes a position similar to Yuan Hongdao, Qian Qianyi, and Wang Shizhen (1634–1711), acknowledging each period for its merits and not just exclusively the Tang or the Song, as advocated by the various contending Schools of poetry in the late Ming and early Qing.

To his interlocutor's question, whether one can learn to write poetry by just reading the works of the poets of old—a view which was held by the poets of the Jiangxi School around Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045–1105) as well as by Ming archaists—Ye Xie answers that one cannot and illustrates his ideas by drawing up an elaborate analogy. He compares the process of composing poetry to the building of a house and distinguishes five different steps in the course of construction: 1. Laying down the "foundation" (*ji* 基); 2. gathering "material" (*cai* 材); 3. using one's "ingenuity" (*jiangxin* 匠心); 4. applying "color" (*se* 色); and 5. using "variation" (*bianhua* 變化). The first step—the laying of the foundation—is the most important one. Regarding the writing of poetry, Ye Xie calls its foundation "encompassing mind" (*xiongjin* 胸襟, literally, breast and collar), an expression which derives from Du Fu 杜甫 (712–70).¹⁵ Only on this basis, poetic capability develops, and only then can the poet respond to the world with sympathy and moral strength:

If there is an encompassing mind, then the personality and wisdom of the poet are made manifest and his ability to discriminate emerges. When one responds to things which one encounters, then life develops; and when one responds to life, one approaches sublimity. For generations, everyone has admired Du Fu, who addressed in his poetry the people, places, events, and things he encountered. There is no place [in his works] which does not express his thoughts for his sovereign, his grief over calamity and disorder, his sorrow about the times, his remembrance of friends, and his thinking of the ancients. All his [emotions] of joy, sadness, the pain of parting, and his being moved by past and present arose in this way. Through his encounters he acquired subjects [for his poetry], through his subjects he expressed his feelings (*qing* 情), and through his feelings sentences were formed. All this was possible only because Du Fu had an encompassing mind as a foundation . . .

When one does not possess an encompassing mind, then one may be able to reel off ten thousand words or a thousand poems daily, but it is all merely insipid jangling and superficial talk which does not come from within. They are like paper-cut flowers, without roots or calyx. From the outset they have no vitality.¹⁶

¹⁵ It is used, for example, in the first poem (line 23) of Du Fu's well-known series "Eight Lamentations" (*Ba ai* 八哀): Harvard-Yenching Institute, Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 14, *A Concordance to the Poems of Tu Fu*, vol. II, p. 201.

¹⁶ *Yuan shi*, p. 17.

In further elaborating this comparison, he says that, once having layed down the foundation, one has to gather material, yet not just any material but such of the highest quality. It is not enough to get wood from low hills near-by, one should rather labor and travel a long way in order to get the finest wood from areas where excellent cedar trees grow which, when used for pillars and ridge poles, will not break. He further writes:

Now, if someone wants to write poetry and possesses an encompassing mind, he must take his material from the ancients. He has to go to the origin [of poetry], to the three hundred poems [of the *Shijing*] and the *Chuci* 楚辭, then absorb [the works of] all the great masters of the Han, Wei, Six Dynasties, Tang and Song, understand their intentions and grasp their spiritual principle. When he then composes poetry, his correctness (*zheng*) will not be mediocre, his strangeness will not be weird, his beauty not superficial, and his erudition not excentric; thus his works will not suffer from the ills of plagiarism.¹⁷

Just as good quality wood needs a craftsman of the highest skill, who turns the wood into a sturdy and beautiful house, so, too, does poetic raw material need an ingenious mind to turn it into good poetry:

The reason [for the mediocrity of most poets] is not that they do not have enough material, rather they have material but lack ingenuity; they do not know how to use it and bungle it up, that is the reason why. Someone who wants to write poetry should regard how the ancients directed themselves, how they viewed things, how they set their intentions, how they had a command on language, and how they put their hands to work; none of these is to be neglected, and thereby he must completely disregard his own peculiarities. Just like a physician treating a wound, he first has to remove the dirt in order to prepare a clean emptiness which he can then fill with the [healing] knowledge (*xueshi* 學識) and spiritual principles (*shenli* 神理) of the ancients. Only much later can he disregard the peculiarities of the ancients, and then his own ingenuity may appear.¹⁸

Furthermore, just like a bland house is unattractive, a poem will be so without the application of color:

Regarding poetry, it will be tasteless if it is just pale; and it will approach the vulgar if it is just simple. Here the situation is not comparable to painting, as [literati] painters do not apply color [but paint with ink]. In the days of old it was said that there can be no achievement without literary embellishment (*wenci* 文辭); and literary embellishment means brilliant color of a composition. One has to [look for the] original [color] of our predecessors and has to choose their standard beauty and canonical, ancient [nature]. If one thus proceeds, flowers and fruits (appearance and reality) will both be excellent; and if one neither exaggerates nor strives for brilliant effects, [the results] will be valuable.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Yuan shi*, p. 18.

¹⁸ *Yuan shi*, p. 18.

¹⁹ *Yuan shi*, p. 18.

Lastly, one should build houses not in a uniform way but use variation:

If someone were to build such and such a house here today and build one that looks the same tomorrow at a different location, and still a hundred more which all look alike, then one would feel extremely bored with them. The right way lies in good variation. And how could variation only mean changing words around? . . . In showing variation and not losing correctness (*zheng*), of all the poets of old only Du Fu was successful . . . Du Fu is a God (*shen* 神) of poetry, and just because he is a God he was able to show variation.²⁰

Du Fu, thus, is exalted by Ye not only because of moral values, his "encompassing mind" (*xiongjin*), i.e. his Confucian compassion and care for country and people of which his poetry abounds, but also for his miraculous skill and ingenuity in writing. In terms of intrinsic poetic values, Ye also admires Han Yu and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), claiming that Du Fu and these two writers brought about the greatest changes and exerted the strongest influence in later periods of Chinese poetic history.²¹

The theoretical core of Ye's treatise begins with the question of whether or not there are fixed rules (*fa* 法) for the art of poetry, as some of the Ming archaists, who were mainly concerned with techniques of versification, claimed. More precisely, can one learn to write poetry through adhering to laws derived from the poetry of Tang and Song? Denying that one can, Ye Xie first distinguishes between dead and living rules. In poetry, dead rules refer to the arbitrarily imposed, constant rules, for example, the tone rules or rules regarding the construction of a regulated poem (*lüshi* 律詩 or *jueju* 絕句: introduction, elaboration, continuation, and conclusion of the individual couplets or lines). He deems dead rules completely useless, because, due to historical and literary changes, what was valid in earlier times is no longer valid today. The old masters may have had their rules, but contemporary poets must follow others. Should one adhere to the old rules, then poems will never constitute an adequate expression of the poet's personality or the conditions of the time. By contrast, living or "natural rules" (*ziran zhi fa* 自然之法) are underlying the unfathomable inherent law of the universe and are observable in the great changes of nature. In poetry, they are revealed in the poet's "ingenious [use of] variation" (*jiangxin bianhua* 匠心變化), but cannot be expressed in words.²²

²⁰ *Yuan shi*, p. 19.

²¹ *Yuan shi*, pp. 8–9.

²² *Yuan shi*, pp. 19–21.

Applying this concept to poetry, he differentiates between objective or material aspects of poetry (*zai wu zhe* 在物者), which reflect the outside world, and subjective or personal qualities of the poet (*zai wo zhe* 在我者).²³ The objective, material aspects are 1. "principle" (*li* 理), 2. "fact" (*shi* 事), and 3. "manner" (*qing* 情).²⁴ In poetry, the first two emphasize the rational and factual exactness of the poem, and the third (*qing*) refers to its particular manner and features. Because of the ambiguity of these single terms, however, different shades of meaning have to be considered while rendering them into English. In particular, *li*, as "principle", has the Neo-Confucian meaning of "potentiality", "essential structure", or "idea" of a thing. *Li*, however, also has to be understood as "moral principles" as well as in its pre-Neo-Confucian meaning as "reason", "order", and "truth", the way it is applied, for example, in the *Wenxin diaolong*.²⁵ *Shi*, basically, means "fact" or "event" but can also denote, more philosophically, the "actualization" or "realization" of the *li* in the world. As will emerge later, *qing* is explicitly not understood here in its common meaning as "emotion" but in the way it is used in *Mencius* as the real condition of the thing after its actualization.²⁶ In Ye Xie's view, one can order the diversity of the material world according to these three aspects. As he himself explains:

"Principle", "fact", and "manner", these three categories are sufficient to treat exhaustively the ten thousand metamorphoses of the world. There are no sounds or apparitions whatsoever which are not encompassed by them. These three belong to the material realm (*zai wu zhe*), and nothing eludes them."²⁷

The three material aspects can be universally observed, because everything on earth is determined by "principle", "fact", and individual "manner". And, in accordance with Neo-Confucian

²³ *Yuan shi*, p. 23. The distinction between *zai wu* and *zai wo* has been previously applied in Neo-Confucian writing, for example by Chen Chun 陳淳: "Principle is the principle in things (*zai wu zhi li* 在物之理), while nature (*xing* 性) is the principle in the self (*zai wo zhi li* 在我之理)." Chen Chun, *Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 42; transl. by Wing-tsit Chan, *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained (The "Pei-hsi tzu-i")* by Ch'en Ch'un, 1159-1223 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 113. Prior to this, Xun Zi 荀子 had also used the phrases *zai wo zhe* and *zai wu zhe*, but not in direct contrast. See Harvard-Yenching Institute, Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 22, *A Concordance to Hsün Tzu*, pp. 35, 63-64.

²⁴ *Yuan shi*, pp. 20-23.

²⁵ See the glossary in Shih, pp. 531-33.

²⁶ *Mencius* 3A IV:18; Legge, *Classics* II, p. 256.

²⁷ *Yuan shi*, p. 23.

philosophy, the force which makes them operate is the vital (or material) force, *qi* 氣:

"Principle", "fact", and "manner", these three words are great. Heaven (*qian* 乾) and Earth (*kun* 坤) assume their fixed positions (*ding wei* 定位) according to them;²⁸ sun and moon rotate according to them. And even concerning grass, trees, birds, and beasts, if one of the three is lacking, then they will not be complete.

Now, literature (*wenzhang* 文章) is that through which the manners (*qingzhuang* 情狀) of Heaven and Earth and the ten thousand things are expressed. Yet, even when these three [essentials] are there, there must be something which controls and holds, orders and connects them. This is the vital force (*qi*). Actually, the functioning of "fact", "principle", and "manner" are due to the functioning of the vital force. To give an example, that the trees and blades of grass can develop themselves lies in their "principle". That they did develop is their "fact". That they experience high and lush growth and that, after developing themselves, they flourish in a thousand ways, that is their "manner". How could this take place if there were no *qi* to carry it through?²⁹

The "vital force", as the motivating power in the creative endeavour of Heaven and Earth, does not work according to set rules, but operates spontaneously:

These three (principle, fact, and manner) come to effect through the workings of *qi*. If the three are manifest and *qi* pulsates in their midst, if it permeates everything with its creative force while it follows its natural course, wherever it reaches, it is nothing but rule. This is the most perfect pattern (*wen* 文) of Heaven and Earth and the ten thousand phenomena. Then how could one say that there first are rules which steer the vital force? If it were thus, then the creative power of Heaven and Earth would give up its spontaneously moving vital force; everything would be limited by rules. Flora and fauna in all their multitude of apparitions would not dare to exceed [the limitations] of the rules, neither would they dare not to comply to [the norms of] the rules. In this way unbearably laboured, "the creative working of the universe would also cease."³⁰

Applied to the realm of literature, through *li*, *shi*, and *qing*, poetry mirrors the diversity, naturalness, and lawfulness of the world, and from there, living and natural rules emerge on their own:

Since the beginning of creation, the magnificence of the world, the changes between past and present, the inscrutability of created things . . . became prosaic literature when they were expressed in words; and when they took on an [artistic] form, it was that of poetry, the ways of which are innumerable . . . If so, how could this one way of poetry and literature have fixed rules? At first, one judges [something] from the standpoint of "principle"; if it does not violate "principle", then its *li* is correct. Thereupon one checks it regarding its "factuality"; if this is

²⁸ This is an allusion to the *Book of Changes*: Harvard-Yenching Institute, Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 10, *A Concordance to Yi Ching*, p. 50.

²⁹ *Yuan shi*, p. 21.

³⁰ *Yuan shi*, pp. 21-22. The last sentence of this paragraph contains an allusion to the *Book of Changes*: *A Concordance to Yi Ching*, p. 44.

compatible [with the thing described], then it possesses *shi*. Finally, one assesses its "manner"; if it is clear, then it has *qing*. If [something] is immutably possessed of these three criteria, then quite natural rules have been established. These rules effect an adaption to "principle", exactness of "facts", and consideration of its "manner"; they thus assume a balancing function for these three categories. However, none of these three is a rule for itself.³¹

And he sums it up in this way:

"Principle", "fact", and "manner" are universal categories. If all three are there [in a piece of writing] then they will pass unobstructedly through one's heart and emerge as ordered words. That is what the master [Confucius] meant when he said that "words communicate."³² To "communicate" (*da* 達) means [to write] coherently (*tong* 通); that is, coherent regarding "principle", "fact", and "manner". But if one holds on tight to rules then there is no coherence, and if words are not coherent, what is then the use of rules?³³

Thus, in Ye Xie's view, the "universal" and natural categories *li*, *shi*, and *qing* suffice to encompass the organic lawfulness of the world and, as a reflection thereof, of poetry. To apply "dead" rules to this "life" pattern, pulsated by the vital force, will not further but rather obstruct communication. In poetry, such rules will lead to copying and stereotyping, and result in a lifeless structure.

Matching the three objective or material aspects of a poem, are the four subjective or personal qualities (*zai wo zhe*) required of a poet, which, if merged with the three material aspects, create poetic compositions.³⁴ These personal qualities are: 1. "talent" (*cai* 才), 2. "courage" (*dan* 膽), 3. "judgment" (*shi* 識), and 4. "vigor" (*li* 力). He says about them:

If one has no talent, then ideas cannot be expressed; if one has no courage, then brush and ink cannot move freely; if one has no judgment, then one cannot make choices; and if one has no vigor, then one cannot become an independent master (*zi cheng yi jia* 自成一家).³⁵

Among these four, judgment is the most important quality:

If one has no judgment, then there will be nothing which the other qualities can build upon. If one has courage but no judgment, then [writing] will be presumptuous, crude, and limited, and the words, unfortunately, will go against all reason. If one has talent but no judgment, one can discuss this and that and strain one's thoughts but, in the end, one will only confound right and wrong and black and white; the talent then becomes a burden. If one has vigor but no judgment, one

³¹ *Yuan shi*, p. 20.

³² *Lunyu* 論語 15.40; Legge *Classics* I, p. 305.

³³ *Yuan shi*, p. 21.

³⁴ *Yuan shi*, p. 24.

³⁵ *Yuan shi*, p. 16.

will stubbornly utter words that are high strung, and bad enough to perturb other people and confuse the world.³⁶

Judgment allows the poet to recognize the inner order (*li*), factuality (*shi*), and individual manners (*qing*) in the world and in poetry. Applying the Neo-Confucian "substance-function" (*ti-yong* 體用) formula to the relationship between judgment and talent, he shifts the emphasis from talent, prevalent at his time, to judgment and regards talent as the manifestation (function) of judgment:

Judgment comes prior to talent; judgment is the substance (*ti*) and talent is its manifestation (*yong*). If there is not sufficient talent, one should first investigate into the essence [of things] and probe into acquiring [the capacity of] judgment. If one has no judgment within oneself, then *li*, *shi*, and *qing* are not clear before one's eyes; right and wrong, possible and impossible, all this will be in confusion. How could you then expect those people [without judgment] to show their talent in writing?³⁷

Lastly, Ye compares the capacity of judgment to the Neo-Confucian method of "investigation of things" (*gewu* 格物), one of the central notions in the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學),³⁸ claiming that one needs judgment to investigate the "principles", "facts", and "manners" of poetry and things in this world:

Only if there is judgment, one will know what to follow, what to fight for, and what to decide. And if one has later [also acquired] talent, courage, and vigor, then one will surely be confident with oneself. "The world may then condemn or praise him"³⁹ and it will not move him . . . The Way (*dao* 道) [to acquire it] is just like that of the *Great Learning*, which begins with the "investigation of things". When chanting and reading the poems and writings of the masters of old, one should investigate each one of them according to "principle", "fact", and "manner", then one will understand and acquire all forms and the multitude of configurations.⁴⁰

Courage is important for the development of talent:

A wise man of old once said, "The success of a thing lies in courage."⁴¹ How can "literature, which is supposed to last for a thousand years",⁴² last when there is no

³⁶ *Yuan shi*, p. 29.

³⁷ *Yuan shi*, p. 24.

³⁸ Legge, *Classics*, I, p. 358. For the importance of this concept in Neo-Confucian thought and its different meanings prior to Zhu Xi's interpretation as "investigation of things", see Chan, Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 561-62.

³⁹ Allusion to the first chapter of *Zhuangzi* 莊子: Harvard-Yenching Institute, Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 20, *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Yuan shi*, p. 29.

⁴¹ According to Huo Songlin's annotations, this is a saying by Han Qi 韓琦 (1008-1075) as recorded in a work by Qiang Zhi 強至, *Han Zhongxian Gong yishi* 韓忠獻公遺事; *Yuan shi*, p. 39 (note 21).

⁴² Quoting the first line of Du Fu's poem "Ou ti" 偶題 (Written on Occasion): *A Concordance to the Poems of Tu Fu*, vol. II, p. 476.

courage? Therefore, I claim, if there is no courage, then brush and ink will shrink back; and if courage has hidden itself, then how is talent supposed to make headway? Only courage can bring forth talent.⁴³

On talent he says:

Talent means that only I possess the talent to know something which no one else knows, that only I am capable of expressing something which no one else can express. If I can give free reign to the creative power of my thoughts. . . , if I can put together words, in which there is ultimate "principle", in which the ten thousand "facts" are precisely treated, and in which the "manner" is profoundly expressed, then that can be called talent.⁴⁴

Vigor, lastly, is important for the preservation of talent. Without it, one cannot become a creative and independent master who will withstand the test of time:

Talent must be carried by vigor. If the vigor is great, then talent can consolidate itself. Works can last for a thousand generations only when the talent is of ultimate and indestructible firmness. . . . Therefore I say, he who wants to "establish his speech" must possess vigor, otherwise he cannot become an independent master (*zi cheng yi jia*).⁴⁵

Summarizing, Ye Xie states about the four subjective qualities of a poet:

Within oneself, one must have judgment which expresses itself as talent. Only with courage can talent be sustained, and only with vigor can [the tasks] be accomplished.⁴⁶

Here it is worth noting that in Ye's discussion of the personal, inner qualities of a poet, the rational faculty "judgment" assumes highest ranking and there is no mention of the all-too-common requirement, "emotion" (*qing*). He occasionally uses the character *qing* in the meaning of emotion in his treatise, but within its important, systematic part, regarding the outer and inner realms, he places *qing* into the external material realm, giving to it, as "manner", an objective rather than a subjective significance.⁴⁷ However, there

⁴³ *Yuan shi*, p. 26.

⁴⁴ *Yuan shi*, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *Yuan shi*, p. 27. "Establishing one's speech" (*li yan* 立言) is the third of the so-called three "imperishables" (*bu xiu* 不朽), the other ones being "establishing one's virtue" (*li de* 立德) and "establishing one's service" (*li gong* 立政). *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Duke Xiang 24th year); Legge, *Classics* V, pp. 505, 507.

⁴⁶ *Yuan shi*, p. 28.

⁴⁷ One is reminded here of T.S. Eliot's well known "objective correlatives" from his essay "Hamlet and his Problems": "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular

remains the ambiguity which, I suspect, is not incidental but consciously employed.

A weakness of Ye's clean-cut categorization of material and personal realms is that he does not give much thought to the relationship between the two. In fact, apart from simply stating, as mentioned above, that the two have to merge in order to bring out poetic compositions and that a poet needs judgment in order to investigate into the three material aspects, the reader will search in vain for more substantial clues regarding their interdependence.

Having allowed himself to be touched (*chu* 觸) and inspired (*xing* 興) by the world, having absorbed the tradition and seen the diversity and natural regularity of the world reflected in the great literary works of the past, the poet can thus apply himself to his craft—guided not by dead but rather by living, natural rules. Ye Xie illustrates the workings of these natural rules, as the basis of all the wonderful designs (*wen*) in nature, in an impressive and often cited image, that of the clouds over Mount Tai (in Stephen Owen's translation):

Within Heaven and Earth the greatest forms of *wen* [pattern/literature] are the wind and clouds, rains and the thunder. Their mutations and transformations cannot be fathomed and have neither limit nor boundary: they are the highest manifestation of spirit (*shen*) in the universe and the perfection of *wen*. But let me speak of them from one particular point of view. The clouds of Mount Tai rise from the merest wisp, but before the morning is done, they cover the world. I once lived half a year at the foot of Mount Tai and grew familiar with the shapes and attitudes of these clouds. Sometimes, as I said, they rise out of the merest wisp and stream off flooding all the ends of the earth; sometimes all the peaks of the range seem to try to rise above them, but even the very summits disappear. Sometimes several months will pass in continuous shadow, but then the clouds will scatter in the short hour of a meal. Sometimes they are as black as lacquer; sometimes as white as snow. They may be as huge as the wings of the Peng 鵬 bird, hanging over both horizons, or as wild as tangled tresses. Sometimes they sit suspended like lumps in the sky with no others following them; sometimes they are continuous and fine, coming one after another without interruption.

All at once black clouds will mount upward, and the natives of the region will read the signs by established rule: "It will rain," they say. And it does not rain.

emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." *The Sacred Wood—Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co., 1960), p. 100. One could regard *li*, *shi*, and *qing* as aspects of Eliot's "objective correlative", manifested in particular situations and "external facts." The similarity of Ye Xie's ideas to Eliot's regarding the relationship between tradition and individual talent has already been noted by James Liu in a comment to a passage translated here at note 18. Liu, James J.Y., *Language—Paradox—Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 129.

Then again some clouds, lit by the sun, will come out, and their established rule tells them, "It's going to be sunny." And it rains. The attitudes assumed by the clouds can be counted in the tens of thousands; no two are the same. Neither are any two manners of clouds the same by whose colors we might forecast their future movements. Sometimes all the clouds will come back; sometimes they will go off for good, and never come back. Sometimes all come back; sometimes half will come back—no two situations are the same. This is the natural pattern of Heaven and Earth, its perfect work.

But let us suppose that the pattern of Heaven and Earth could be set according to a rule. When Mount Tai was going to dispatch its clouds, it would first gather the troops of clouds and hold a conference with them: "I'm about to send you clouds out to make the Great Pattern of Heaven and Earth. Now you over there—I want you to go first—and you follow him. I would like you to rise up; you next to him—you sink down. You should try shining in the light, and *you* might try making a rippling motion. You back there!—you should turn around as you go out and come back in; and I think it would be especially nice to have *you* sort of roll over in the sky. This one is to begin; this one is to close; and this one here is to follow up the rear wagging its tail.

If the clouds were dispatched like this and brought back home like this, there would be no vitality in any of them. And if the pattern of the universe were made in *this* manner, then the universe would feel burdened by having a Mount Tai, and Mount Tai would feel burdened by having clouds, and no clouds would ever be sent out.⁴⁸

This image, better than anything else, illustrates Ye Xie's ideal of poetry as a living, organic pattern, not dependent on rules derived from "orthodox" models or periods. Rather, such poetry comes alive, creating its own rules, in each new period with each new poet who is stirred by the world and its affairs, the way it is described at the beginning of his treatise:

A poet first has to get in touch (*chu*) with something that stimulates (*xing*) his ideas (*yi* 意). Thereafter he orders his words, connects them to sentences, arranges them, and thus completes a composition. When he gets in touch with something that stimulates him, his ideas, his words, and his sentences arise out of splitting the void, out of nothing they come into existence (*zi wu er you* 自無而有), and one chooses them according to one's mind. Having come out [into existence, all this] becomes emotion (*qing*), scene (*jing* 景), and fact (*shi*). What others have never said before, the self (*ziwo* 自我) now says for the first time.⁴⁹

Here, the process of poetic creation is depicted as something unfathomable in a manner reminiscent of Lu Ji's 陸機 (261–303) *Wenfu* 文賦 (Prose-Poetry on Literature) or Sikong Tu's ideas with their Daoist-inspired images of natural creativity. Hence, as rational as Ye Xie's system of thought may appear at first sight, there is

⁴⁸ *Yuan shi*, pp. 22–23. Owen, Stephen, *Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics—Omen of the World* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 114–116.

⁴⁹ *Yuan shi*, p. 5.

also, and this will become even clearer further below, a strong tendency to inexpressible "spiritualization", not to say mystification, well known in the history of Chinese literary criticism.

II

Before probing further into how Ye Xie applies his system to the practice of literary criticism, we should excuse into the works of Ye's predecessors, viewing their terminology in comparison to Ye Xie's. Let us first examine Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong* with regards to Ye Xie's thought. Ye Xie's notion of poetry as determined by two aspects—an objective material and a subjective personal one—is already outlined, differently though, in the *Wenxin diaolong*. In Liu Xie's system of binary linkage or opposition of key terms, there is the pairing of "reason" or "logical order" (*li*—Ye's principle) with "emotion" (*qing*—Ye's manner). At the beginning of the important twenty-seventh chapter on "Style and Nature", Liu refers them to an outer and inner realm:

When the emotions move, they express themselves in words; when reason issues forth, it emerges in a pattern. For we start with the imperceptible and follow through to the revealed, and on the basis of inner realities seek external correspondence with them.⁵⁰

In literature we have thus, according to Liu Xie, not a merging of, but a correspondence between external and internal worlds, represented by reason (or logical order) and emotion respectively.

In chapter thirty-one ("Emotion and Literary Expression") he links the two realms like this:

Emotion is the warp of literary pattern (*wen*), linguistic form (*ci* 辭) the woof of reason (Shih: "ideas"—*li*). Only when the warp is straight can the woof be rightly formed, and only when reason is established can linguistic form be meaningful. This is the basic source of writing.⁵¹

Here, emotion and rational order are said to be two elementary aspects of writing. The colourful pattern of literature is due to its rich emotional content, the lucidity and intelligibility of its language is based on order and reason.

Liu Xie uses *li* in a variety of connotations. The meanings of "reason" and "logical order", however, as in the cited key passages, seem to be prevalent. In contrast to Ye Xie, *qing* is used by Liu Xie mostly in the sense of "emotion", although, as also James Liu has pointed out, it does denote "manner", "prevailing condi-

⁵⁰ Shih, pp. 306–7; Fan, II, p. 505.

⁵¹ Slightly modified from Shih's translation, pp. 338–39; Fan, II, p. 538.

tion or basic nature of a thing" as well.⁵² In any case, both *li* and *qing* are central concepts in Liu Xie's thought and assume equal weight.

As to "reason" (*li*) and "fact" (*shi*), we find these two terms quite frequently matched in the *Wenxin diaolong*. To give only one example, which refers not to poetry but to memorials, Liu writes that they were accepted on the basis of being "logical in reasoning and clear in presenting facts".⁵³

Liu Xie, like Ye Xie, also discusses the personal qualities of a writer, and here again we find similarities and differences. Immediately after the passage cited before on reason and emotion from chapter twenty-seven, Liu Xie distinguishes between two innate and two acquired qualities, the former being "talent" (*cai*) and "physical vitality" (*qi*), determined by "temperament and nature" (*qingxing* 情性), the latter "learning" (*xue* 學) and "practice" (*xi* 習, Shih: "manner"), resulting from effort and cultivation (*taoran* 陶染).⁵⁴ Thus, Liu's terminology is different from Ye Xie's. He talks only in passing about judgment (*shi*) and vigor (*li*) and hardly mentions *dan* in the sense of courage at all. Only *cai* (talent) figures prominently both in Liu's and Ye's treatises.

Although Liu's distinction between innate and learned qualities is not applied by Ye, it is possible to see a certain correspondence between Liu's and Ye's categories: Liu's "learning" and Ye's "judgment" are related, as are Liu's "physical vitality" and Ye's "courage" and "vigor". For Liu Xie, the innate quality "talent" seems to be more important, whereas Ye Xie gives more weight to the acquired capacity of judgment.

Hence, in Liu Xie's rational and systematic probing into the essence of literature, with its sometimes tedious matching of complementary concepts, there are some basic structures which are very much related to Ye Xie's elaborate discussion of poetry, in particular the theory of correspondence between internal and external worlds and his emphasis on *li* (reason/principle) and *qing* (emotion/manner).⁵⁵

⁵² See note 26 above; see also Liu, James, *Chinese Theories*, p. 74. As an example, see chapter 24 where *qing* is matched with *shi*—facts, "... pertinence of facts he cited to make clear the nature of the situation (*qing*)." Shih, pp. 272–74.

⁵³ Shih, pp. 440–41; Fan, II, p. 652. For further examples, see also ch. 14, Shih, pp. 148–49; ch. 20, Shih, pp. 230–31; ch. 21, Shih, pp. 240–41; ch. 35, Shih, pp. 374–75; ch. 36, Shih, pp. 376–77.

⁵⁴ Shih, pp. 306–7; Fan, II, p. 305; see also Liu, James, *Chinese Theories*, p. 75f.

⁵⁵ The idea of matching outer material and inner personal realms (or fusion of subject with object) was to play a leading role in the history of Chinese literary

The affinity of Ye Xie's ideas to Neo-Confucian thought is self-evident from the terminology he uses (*li*, *qi*, *gewu*, *ti-yong*, etc.), only *shi* in the meaning of fact/event does not play a prominent role in Neo-Confucianism. In this context it is interesting to note, however, that the pairing of *li* and *shi* is a central notion in Huayan 華嚴 Buddhism, which decidedly influenced Neo-Confucianism, and so we actually do find the two terms paired occasionally also in Neo-Confucian writing. In the Huayan School *li-shi* has a similar significance as *ti-yong*, meaning "principle and appearance", "substance and form", "noumena and phenomena", "fundamental essence and external activity", whereby the two are compared to water and waves as forming an inseparable entity.⁵⁶ As shown above, Ye Xie uses the term *shi*, which in "poetry talk" commonly denotes "factual allusion" in a poem, in a more philosophical sense; and here the similarity to its usage in Huayan-Buddhism, particularly in connection with *li*, is remarkable.

Let us now turn to Yan Yu's discussion of *li* in his *Canglang shihua*—after the *Wenxin diaolong* the next major text in Chinese literary theory. Yan Yu—in line with Sikong Tu of the Tang—advocates, in Abrams' terms, a "transcendental-mimetic" approach to literature and stresses the ephemeral, spiritual qualities of poetry. In fact, he is often cited as the chief defender of the notion that "rational principles" or "reason" (*li*) as well as book

criticism (as well as in the aesthetics of Song literati painting). In the Tang period, Sikong Tu and Wang Changling talked of merging "intention" (*yi* 意), respectively "thought" (*si* 思), with "setting" (*jing* 境). See Robertson, Maureen A., "... To Convey what is Precious": Ssu-k'ung T'u's Poetics and the *Erh-shih-szu Shih-p'in*, *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture. A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Hsiao Kung-ch'uan*, D. Buxbaum and F.M. Mote, eds. (Hong Kong: Cathay Press, 1972), pp. 327 and 353, note 23; Sikong Tu, "Yu Wang Jia ping shi shu 與王駕評詩書" (Letter to Wang Jia Discussing Poetry), *Zhongguo wenxue piping ziliao huibian* 中國文學批評資料彙編 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1978), vol. II, p. 252. In Ming and Qing poetics, the formula "merging emotion (*qing*) with scene (*jing* 景)" was used by Xie Zhen 謝榛 (1495–1575) and Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–92), which has become by now the stock in trade of most interpreters of classical Chinese poetry. See Liu, James, *Chinese Theories*, pp. 40–43; Xie Zhen, *Siming shihua* 四溟詩話, in *Lidai shihua xubian* 歷代詩話續編, Ding Fubao, ed. (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), vol. III, p. 1180; Wang Fuzhi, *Jiangzhai shihua* 薑齋詩話, in *Qing shihua*, I, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, transl. D. Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), vol. II, p. 341f, and Chan, pp. 407–24. In Ye Xie's writings there is, to my knowledge, only marginal reference to Buddhist philosophy, so the actual influence of Huayan ideas is impossible to assess. As to Neo-Confucianism, *li* and *shi* occur together in Cheng Yi's 程頤 (and Zhu Xi's 朱熹) writing: *Er Cheng quan shu* 二程全書 (SBBY ed.), 15.1a, 15.11a; Chan, pp. 552, 556–57, and 614.

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learning (*shu* 書) have nothing to do with poetry. Yan Yu's attitude towards *li*, however, is not without ambiguity when he says:

Poetry is concerned with a different kind of talent (*bie cai* 別才), which has nothing to do with books; it has a different kind of appeal (*bie qu* 別趣), which has nothing to do with principles (*li*). However, if one does not widely read books and thoroughly inquires into principles, one will not be able to reach the ultimate heights [of poetry]. That which has been called "don't travel on the road of principles, don't fall into the fish trap of words" is the superior way.⁵⁷

Thus, Yan Yu does not completely dismiss *li* in poetry. He rather regards the thorough investigation of principles to be a fundamental requirement of a poet's cultivation, just as the reading of books. In the resulting poetry, like in that of the Han, Wei, and High Tang which he sets as a model, *li* should be inherent without, however, showing traces of bookishness, rational discourse, or philosophizing which some of the Jiangxi 江西 poets around Huang Tingjian—the main targets of Yan's criticism—as well as the Song philosophers indulged in.

At another place he actually includes *li* as one of the four necessary elements of poetry which are: "diction" (*ci*), "principles" (*li*), "idea" (*yi*), and "inspiration" (*xing*), and he characterizes the poetry from the Southern Dynasties till the Tang in the following way:

People of the Southern Dynasties excelled in diction (*ci*) but were weak in principles (*li*). People of our present dynasty [i.e., the Song] excel in principles, but are weak in idea (*yi*) and inspiration (*xing*). The people of the Tang excelled at idea and inspiration, and principles were inherently there. However, in the poetry of the Han and Wei no outer sign of diction, principles, idea, or inspiration can be found.⁵⁸

This means that great poetry reflects "principles" (or conforms to reason) without there being any outer signs of it—an ideal which he, as a neo-classicist, sees realized only in the poetry of the Han and Wei and, to a certain extent, also in that of the High Tang. He thus anticipated, or rather determined, the archaist movements to follow in the Ming and Qing.

Yan Yu does not elaborate on the personal qualities of a poet. Just like Ye Xie, he hardly mentions *qing* at all (in the meaning of

⁵⁷ Yan Yu, *Canglang shihua*, in *Lidai shihua* 歷代詩話, He Wenhuan 何文煥 ed. (Peking: Zonghua shuju, 1981), vol. II, p. 688. This is a modified translation from Richard John Lynn's "Orthodoxy and Enlightenment: Wang Shih-chen's Theory of Poetry and Its Antecedents", *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, Wm. Th. De Bary, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p. 227; see also Lynn, "Talent", p. 158, and Debon, Günther, *Ts'ang-lang's Gespräche über die Dichtung* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1962), p. 61.

⁵⁸ Yan Yu, p. 696; cf. Lynn, "Orthodoxy", p. 223, and Debon, p. 86.

emotion) as a fundamental requirement in poetry.⁵⁹ In passing, he touches upon one fundamental requirement, however, which Ye Xie also gives much weight to, judgment (*shi*), saying, "for the student of poetry, judgment is the most important thing".⁶⁰ This fits in with his demand that, although great poetry does not show any outer traces of "principle" and "book learning", a poet has to use his intellectual capacities to the utmost in order to investigate thoroughly into the reality of things and read widely.

Later theorists were divided on the issue of book learning and principles as aspects relevant to poetry. The controversy which Yan Yu's statement excited in later times is very well documented by Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞 and R.J. Lynn and need not concern us here in all its detail.⁶¹ Interesting in our context, however, is the following passage by the Ming archaist Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602), in which he draws upon the Buddhist meaning of *li* and *shi*, thereby criticizing trends in Song poetry in the same vein as Yan Yu did before him:

The followers of Chan have prohibitions against the two *zhang* 障 (*avarana*, "screens"—obstacles/illusions) created by *shi* (phenomena) and by *li* (rational principles). For the sport of it, I suggest that the failures of Song poetry can be attributed to these things. Su [Shi] and Huang [Tingjian] liked to employ textual allusions (*yong shi* 用事) and thus, because of the allusions involved, allowed the screen of phenomena to take effect. The Chengs [Cheng Yi 程頤, 1033–1107, and Cheng Hao 程顥, 1032–85] and Shao [Yong 邵雍, 1011–77] were fond of discussing principles and thus because of *li* became bound by the screen of principles.⁶²

This shows that *li* and *shi*—the latter both in the sense of facts and bookish allusions as characteristics of Song poetry—were considered by the archaists of the Ming to be "obstacles" on the way of poetry. In line with Yan Yu, they modelled after the poetry

⁵⁹ In fact, he only once touches upon *qing*, paraphrasing the well-known passage from the "Great Preface", that poetry is "expression of mournful feelings" (*yinyong qingxing* 吟詠情性), Legge, *Classics* IV, p. 36; Yan, p. 688, Debon, p. 61. The context of this saying in the "Great Preface", however, is rather pragmatic: The historiographers of old "expressed their mournful feelings" in order to "condemn their superiors".

⁶⁰ Yan, p. 687; transl., Lynn, "Orthodoxy", p. 219; cf. Debon, p. 59.

⁶¹ See Lynn, R.J., "The Talent Learning Polarity in Chinese Poetics: Yan Yu and the Later Tradition", *Chinese Literature: Essays, Article, Reviews* vol. V, No. 2 (July 1983), pp. 157–184, and Guo Shaoyu, ed. and annot., *Canglang shihua jiaoshi* 滄浪詩話校釋 (Peking: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1983), pp. 33–47.

⁶² Hu Yinglin, *Shisou* 詩藪 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), *neibian*, 2.38–39; transl., Lynn, "Talent", p. 161. As Lynn has pointed out, there is a pun involved here: *Shi*, "fact", is applied in its Buddhist meaning as phenomena and in its more common and literary sense as textual allusion.

of the High Tang, which appears to be spontaneously inspired, perfectly natural, profound and suggestive in meaning, and, at the same time, formally well wrought.

By Ming times, trends in Neo-Confucianism had also changed from a rational (extension of knowledge through investigating the principles of things) to an idealistic approach—seeing the mind as the ultimate reality and dismissing investigation of rational principles as useless task. Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), for example, relates to us the story that he once sat himself down in front of a bamboo tree in order to fathom its *li* in the manner advocated by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), but that he gave up the attempt after seven days because of a bad headache.⁶³ Investigation of principles in the external world ceased to figure prominently in the minds of thinkers of late Ming and early Qing. The focus shifted from the outer objective to the inner subjective realm.

Likewise, as to a poet's personal qualities, "talent" had the highest value among Ming and Qing writers. Li Zhi, one of China's most iconoclast thinkers, who in the late Ming with his "expressionistic" literary views stood on the very opposite side of the archaists and with his philosophical ones followed and transcended Wang Yangming's, has left us a piece, entitled "Twenty parts of judgment" (*Ershifen shi* 二十分識), in which he elaborates on "talent", "judgment", and "courage", in fact three of those personal qualities of a writer which Ye Xie also stresses:

If one has twenty parts of judgment, then one may acquire ten parts of talent. For if one has such [a high degree of] judgment, then even if one has only five parts of talent, it will in the end become ten parts. If one has twenty parts of judgment, then one can exert ten parts of courage, for if judgment is that great, even if one has only four or five parts of courage, it will become ten parts. Thus, both talent and courage can be filled up through judgment. If one has talent but no courage, then one is too fearful and not daring. And he who has only courage and no talent will just be foolhardy in his ways and reckless in his endeavours. [Hence the growing of] both talent and courage is supported by judgment, and therefore only [the acquisition of] judgment is difficult [to obtain] in the world. If one has judgment, then even if talent and courage only amount to four or five parts [of twenty], one can in all ways establish oneself and accomplish tasks.

But in the world there are also those who can increase courage through talent and those who can develop talent through courage. One cannot take it altogether in the same way. Yet judgment, talent, and courage are not only [needed] to study the Way, for everything, be it leaving the world or remaining in it (as a Buddhist or Confucianist), ordering one's family, ordering the country, or even bringing peace to the whole world (as demanded in the *Daxue*), one cannot do without these [qualities]. "The knowledgeable has no doubt, the humane is without sorrow, the

⁶³ Recorded in Wang Yangming's *Chuanxi lu* 傳習錄: *Wang Wencheng Gong quan shu* 王文成公全書 (SBCK ed.), 3:51a; see also Chan, p. 689.

brave is without fear."⁶⁴ Knowledge, that is judgment, therefore [if it is there, then] there is also talent, and bravery is courage.⁶⁵

Li Zhi's discussion of these three qualities, the priority he gives to judgment, in accordance with Ye Xie, is in contrast to the prevailing views in the late Ming and Qing which gave more emphasis to talent. Ye Xie does not seem to support explicitly at any place in his writings the views of Li Zhi.⁶⁶ His evolutionary theory of literature presented at the beginning of this study, however, is remarkably similar to Li Zhi's (and Yuan Hongdao's) views, with the only difference that Ye limits his discussion to poetry whereas Li (and Yuan) include vernacular literature and drama. Thus, in spite of their ideological differences—Ye being more conservative than Li—there are remarkable similarities between these two theorists.

III

This brief survey has shown that Ye Xie's views on "principle", "fact", "manner", and their matching subjective, personal aspects, are not without precedent in the history of Chinese literary criticism. These concepts, rather, appear to be at the very root of Chinese literary theory—particularly, if we take Liu Xie's *Wenxin dialong* as representative of its early, formative phase. But, whereas critics of the later periods, mainly influenced by Chan-Buddhist ideas, have given these concepts only marginal importance or discussed them in rather formulaic ways, as in Xie Zhen's and Wang Fuzhi's *qing-jing* dichotomy (see note 55), Ye Xie, using a distinct Neo-Confucian terminology, expands them to a sophisticated and original system of thought.

At first sight, Ye Xie's theory, giving weight to such aspects as "principle", "fact", and "manner", as well as "judgment", appears very, if not overly, rational.⁶⁷ He hardly mentions the obligatory saying that poetry voices, or is grounded in, emotion, nor

⁶⁴ *Lunyu*, 14:30; Legge, *Classics* I, p. 286.

⁶⁵ Excerpted from Li Zhi's *Fenshu* 焚書 (j. 4, *zashu* 雜述) in *Zhongguo meixue shi ziliao xuanbian* 中國美學史資料選編 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), vol. II, pp. 132–33.

⁶⁶ Ye Xie neither supports the views of the Yuan brothers of the Gong'an School nor those of Zhong Xing 鍾惺 (1574–1624) and Tan Yuan Chun 譚元春 (1585–1637) of the Jingling 竟陵 School who all advocate a rather individualistic and expressionist approach to literature.

⁶⁷ Most of the modern Chinese historians of literature classify him as a "mimetic" critic and stress the systematic nature of his treatise. Apart from this, their criticism is rather inconsistent and often simplistic. Some attempt to give Ye legitimacy within Marxist literary theory by crediting him with a "naïve material-

does he talk much of poetry as a merging of scene (*jing*) with emotion, which had, through Xie Zhen and Wang Fuzhi, become a stock expression in literary criticism by Qing times. And yet, he deals with these views in the following passage in which we find his ideas applied to the practice of criticism, specifically to a line from a Du Fu poem. The occasion arises from a comment made by Ye's imaginary interlocutor, who appeals to the Chan-Buddhist oriented view, stressing the suggestive quality of poetry, and who disapproves of Ye Xie's emphasis on rationality and factuality:

The way in which you have developed these three concepts, *li*, *shi*, and *qing*, can be described as thorough and penetrating to the most minute details. These three words are without doubt the fundamentals for one who is educated. However, if one speaks of poetry, then surely, the one notion, *qing*, has an immutable meaning [as emotion], but *li* and *shi* do not seem to be so important for poetry. The Confucian scholars of old used to say, "Of the things in this world, there are none which do not possess *li*."⁶⁸ However, where poetry is concerned, one would not want to "view it as a thing".⁶⁹ When one speaks of the highest manifestation of poetry, its wonder rests in the boundless suggestiveness and subtlety of thoughts. It dwells in an area which lies somewhere between the expressible and inexpressible; it points to something which cannot be completely understood. The words refer to this, and the meaning refers to that. We have neither fixed clues nor fixed forms for it. It has nothing to do with abstract discussion and cannot be explained through conventional logic. It leads the reader to a distant, hidden, and vaguely outlined sphere. This is the ultimate manifestation [of poetry]. If one should want

ism" (*pusu weiwuzhuyi* 朴素唯物主義), calling him an early advocate of "realism" and "reflection theory" in literature: Min Ze, II, pp. 88-89; Zhang Baoquan, p. 82; Jiang Yubin 江裕斌, "Ye Xie he ta de weiwuzhuyi sixiang 葉燮和他的唯物主義思想" (Ye Xie and His Materialist Thought), *Wenxue pinglun congkan* 文學評論叢刊 (Peking: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1982), vol. 16, p. 274; Zhang Wenxun 張文勛, "Ye Xie de shige lilun 葉燮的詩歌理論" (Ye Xie's Theory of Poetry), *Gudai wenxue lilun yanjiu congkan* (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1981), vol. III, p. 123. Huo Songlin (in his preface to the edition quoted here; see note 5) also calls his theory materialistic: *Yuan shi*, p. 11. Only Zhang Shaokang 張少康 classifies him as a follower of Zhu Xi's "objective idealism" in his article "Ye Xie wenyi sixiang de pingjia wenti 葉燮文藝思想的評價問題" (The Problem of Evaluating Ye Xie's Thought on Literary Art), included in his *Gudian wenyi meixue lungao* 古典文藝美學論稿 (Peking: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1988), p. 448. Well worth reading, because of a differentiated view, is Guo Shaoyu's chapter on Ye Xie in his classic *Zhongguo wenxue pingping shi* 中國文學批評史 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1979), pp. 493-512, and the two articles by Jiang Fan, "Ye Xie Yuan shi ji qi pipinglun 葉燮原詩及其批評論" (Ye Xie's *Yuan shi* and Critical Theory), *Zhongguo wenyi sixiang shi luncong* 中國文藝思想史論叢 (Peking: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 276-96, and Cheng Fuwang 成復旺, "Dui Ye Xie shige chuanguozuolun de sikao 對葉燮詩歌創作論的思考" (An Investigation into Ye Xie's Theory of Poetic Creation), *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 (5/1986), pp. 86-94.

⁶⁸ Zhu Xi's insertions into *Daxue*: Legge, *Classics I*, p. 365.

⁶⁹ Allusion to chapter 20 of *Zhuangzi*: *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, p. 51.

to indiscriminately view everything from the standpoint of "principle", so that one accepts *li* as a fixed quantity, then one may have reality (*shi* 實), but not emptiness (*xu* 虛), then one may hold tight to something, but there will be no change. [The result will then be] wooden and stiff or completely spoiled. It is the same as when a pedantic scholar interprets the scriptures, as when a school teacher explains rules, or if a Chan-Buddhist would meditate on "dead" instead of "living sentences".⁷⁰ I fear that all of this is contrary to the goals of a poet. And finally, where "factuality" (*shi*) is concerned, everything in the world has its inner "principle", however, all "facts" cannot be seen. If one cannot even grasp the "principle" in poetry, how can we then try to check individual "facts"?⁷¹

To this Ye Xie responds:

You only accept as valid the "principle" of which one can speak and which one can grasp, but you do not know that the ultimate "principle" is the "principle" which cannot be expressed in words. Also, you only accept as valid the concrete "facts" and do not know that the non-existent "facts" are the source of all that is factual.

Here Ye Xie means to say that poetry creates literary reality, that, in literature, the non-existent can become fact in innumerable ways.⁷² He continues:

The whole world can talk about that sort of "principle" which can be expressed in words. Why should a poet also waste his breath on this matter? The whole world can report on testable "facts", why should a poet talk about them? There are surely things like an inexpressible rationality and indescribable factuality, which one encounters through wordless comprehension and imagination. Thereupon, *li* and *shi* will shimmer brightly before one's eyes.⁷³

Ye Xie then tries to support his views by citing and explicating four lines out of Du Fu's poetry in which the use of certain characters seems to run counter to the rationality and factuality he demands. To give an example, he explains word for word the line "Green glazed roof tiles beyond the first cold" (*bi wa chu han wai* 碧瓦初寒外) from the poem "A visit to the Lao Zi temple on a winter's day in the northern part of Luoyang".⁷⁴ Here the word *wai* (beyond) appears irrational. He explains the line thus:

⁷⁰ This alludes to Yan Yu's *Canglang shihua*, where it is said that a poet should consider "living" instead of "dead sentences". Yan Yu, p. 694. As to its Chan-Buddhist origin, see Guo Shaoyu, *Canglang shihua jiaoshi*, p. 125, and Debon, pp. 33-34, 176 (note 413).

⁷¹ *Yuan shi*, pp. 29-30.

⁷² Note the similarity to Aristotle's ideas, according to whom the poet does not describe "the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen . . . Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars." Cited from his *Poetics* in Abrams, p. 36.

⁷³ *Yuan shi*, p. 30.

⁷⁴ The matching line reads: "Golden pillars beside the all-permeating ether"

When we speak of "beyond", we do so [in order to] contrast it to something within (*nei* 內). Yet what is the "first cold"? Can here a distinction between "beyond" and within be used at all? Could it be that "beyond" the "green glazed roof tiles" there is no "first cold"? Cold is a form of the cosmic energy (*qi*). This energy permeates the whole universe. There is no place that it does not reach. Could it be that solely the "green glazed roof tiles" dwell beyond it and that solely the "cold" energy is sheltered within the area enclosed by the "roof tiles"? Regarding the "cold", it is here called "first cold". Is this a severe cold or not? "First cold" is formless, but "green glazed roof tiles" have real substance. Therefore we have here a unification of abstract and concrete as well as a separation into "beyond" and within. Does Du Fu make a statement concerning the "roof tiles" or the "first cold", concerning something near or far?

Should I try to explain the line through [the category] of "principle" and by checking all the "facts", even if I were possessed with the greatest eloquence, I fear I could not treat the matter exhaustively. But when I try to put myself in [Du Fu's] place and time, I can understand the scene pictured by those five characters. Complete, as if created by nature, it shows itself in the imagination, is felt in the eye, and understood in the heart. The words upon which this interpretation is based cannot be spoken. One may try to speak of them, but one will never succeed in explaining the meaning completely. The meaning reveals itself to me through wordless comprehension and imagination, so that, in the end, it seems to me that there really is a "beyond" and a within, a "cold" and "first cold". In particular, he uses the "green glazed roof tiles" as something concrete which he then can develop. In so doing, he creates a center and something which surrounds it. Emptiness and fullness complement each other. Being and non-being are brought face to face with one another. If we try to understand [the line] in this way, then its "principle" is clear and its "factuality" is real.⁷⁵

Ye Xie tries to demonstrate through his analysis that, while Du Fu's line may not be explicable through conventional logic, it is not absurd, and that the line, or rather the image, possesses a suggestive power which allows the susceptible reader to experience or intuitively grasp the poetic scene. Summing up his arguments, he says:

If one would look at these four randomly chosen examples from Du Fu's works with the eyes of a pedantic scholar and then talk about "principle" [in them], would there be understandable "principle"? If one should talk about "fact", would there be any "facts"? This is what is called the "breaking off of the way of words and language",⁷⁶ the cessation of the road of thinking. But regarding "principle" in these words, it is of ultimate emptiness and yet real, it is ultimately remote and yet near . . .

In summary, if a poet lodges "principle", "fact", and "manner" in such concrete ways [in his verse] that one can talk about and explain them, then his works are those of a pedantic scholar. Only if a poem possesses "principle" which

(*jin jing yi qi pang* 金莖一氣旁), which Ye Xie does not go into. *A Concordance to the Poems of Tu Fu*, II, p. 257.

⁷⁵ *Yuan shi*, p. 30.

⁷⁶ According to Guo Shaoyu's annotations to excerpts of Ye Xie's *Yuan shi*, this

cannot be named and talked of, "facts" which cannot be practiced and observed, and a "manner" which is not to be observed directly, then the obscure and remote will be reasonable (*li*), thoughts and imaginations will be factual (*shi*), and the dim and veiled will have real appearance (*qing*). Those will be words of ultimate "principle", ultimate "factuality", and ultimate "manner". However, how could this exist in the ears and eyes and mental pigeon-holes of pedantic scholars? These three terms that I use are neither useless, nor eccentric, nor narrow. If one grasps their meaning, how could they then only refer to poetry? There is nothing that they cannot be applied to.⁷⁷

From the above explication of Du Fu's verse, it appears that Ye's "principle" and "fact" are not rationally discernible. Quite the contrary, in its ultimate poetical realization, *li* and *shi* are something ephemeral, thus reflecting the inscrutable, living, and organic pattern of the world. They have to be as intuitively grasped by the sympathetic reader as they were embedded in the poem by the poet. With this understanding of *li*, Ye Xie's ideal is not far from Yan Yu's, who said of the poets of High Tang that they "excelled at idea and inspiration (*yi xing* 意興), and 'principle' (*li*) was inherently there".

Let us now try to answer more accurately the question of Ye's approach to literature: Is it mimetic, pragmatic, or, as James Liu suggested,⁷⁸ expressive? Ye Xie's insistence on a poem's reflection of the "principle", "factuality", and "manner" of things and events in the world suggests that his orientation is mimetic. However, the passages last cited show that the reflection of reality he demands is anything but naturalistic. Reflection of a deeper reality, rather, is what he calls for, and this can only be intuitively done and grasped. Seen from this perspective, his approach appears to fall into the category which M.H. Abrams calls "transcendental-mimetic".⁷⁹

We may very well be inclined to classify Ye's call for an individual, non-imitative approach as "expressive". Attacking the archaists of the preceding Ming period who followed models, he repeatedly uses the catchword "to become an independent master", advocating "individualism" in literature.⁸⁰ The following pas-

alludes to the *Vimalakirti Sutra* 維摩經: Guo Shaoyu, ed., *Zhongguo lidai wenlun xuan* 中國歷代文論選 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1980), vol. III, p. 358 (note 79).

⁷⁷ *Yuan shi*, p. 32.

⁷⁸ Liu, James, *Chinese Theories*, p. 85.

⁷⁹ M.H. Abrams characterizes the "transcendental" theory thus: "This theory specifies the proper objects of art to be Ideas or Forms which are perhaps approachable by way of the world of sense, but are ultimately trans-empirical, maintaining an independent existence in their own ideal space, and available only to the eye of the mind." Abrams, p. 36.

⁸⁰ *Yuan shi*, p. 16 (see above note 35) and p. 27 (above note 45). Aoki, therefore, classifies him under the category *zi cheng yi jia*; Aoki (transl. Chen Shunü), p. 86.

sage from the "Outer Chapter" (*waipian* 外篇) of his treatise also seems to support this view:⁸¹

In the "Book of Yu" [of the *Shujing* 書經] it says: "Poetry expresses intention" (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志).⁸² Intention is explained as "where the heart goes"⁸³ . . . When intention arises, it might first manifest itself as high or low, great or small, far or near, but when somebody has this intention and he can fill it up with the four qualities I mentioned, talent, judgment, courage, and vigor, whenever he then observes [things] above or investigates them below, encounters objects or is touched by scenes, [his intention] will rise vigorously and be visible everywhere; [manifested as] the vital force of his talent and innermost thoughts, it will flow beyond [what is written down by] his ink and brush. If his intention is high, then his language will be pure; if his intention is great, then his words will be magnanimous; if his intention is far reaching, then his purport will be meaningful. If it is like this, then his poetry will definitely be transmitted, without people trifling about the skillful (*gong* 工) or clumsy (*zhuo* 拙) use of particular characters or sentences.⁸⁴

If we label those Chinese poets and critics as "expressive" who advocate the expression of one's personal nature and emotions (*xingling* or *xingqing* 興情) as the main purpose of poetry—the so-called "natural sensibility" of the Gong'an School and Yuan Mei—then the above passage is not simply an "expressive" statement. It has already been pointed out that Ye Xie in his systematic treatment of outer and inner realms, curiously, does not use the character *qing* in the meaning of emotion, in fact that he, just like Yan Yu, hardly talks about the expression of personal emotion as being relevant for the writing of poetry. In the above passage, he quotes classical statements on poetry from the *Shujing* and the "Great Preface" of the *Shijing* which explicitly refer to "intention" and not "emotion". Although the word "intention" in the formative saying "poetry expresses intention" has been substituted by "emotion" and often been interpreted as such by critics of the Six Dynasties⁸⁵ and later, the word "intention" has a definite Confucian significance: in its early usage it means the intentions of officials on political issues, and in its Neo-Confucian meaning it is the will or purpose which one has to firm up and "set on the [Confucian]

⁸¹ It has been cited by James Liu as an illustration of Ye's "expressionism" in his *Chinese Theories*, p. 85.

⁸² Legge, *Classics* III, p. 48.

⁸³ Legge, *Classics* IV, p. 35.

⁸⁴ *Yuan shi*, p. 47.

⁸⁵ This begins already with the "Great Preface" to the *Shijing*; Legge, *Classics* IV, pp. 35–36. After this, Lu Ji in his *Wen fu* coined the phrase, "Literature traces emotions" (*shi yuan qing* 詩緣情), transl. by Achilles Fang, "Rhyme-prose on Literature", *HJAS*, vol. 14 (1951), p. 536. See also the chapters 6 and 31 in Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong*, Shih, pp. 60–75, 336–45.

Way" (*zhi yu dao* 志於道).⁸⁶ Thus, Ye Xie here does not advocate an uninhibited expression of self, of a writer's emotions or "native sensibility", rather, the expression of the poet's moral purpose, his noble mind (Du Fu's "encompassing mind"), is what he calls for. The Confucian orientation becomes even clearer in one of his letters which, because of the elaborations on his concepts *li*, *shi*, and *qing*, is of some interest here:

Now, the function (*yong*) of literature is really its being a "vehicle for the Way" (*zai dao* 載道).⁸⁷ One first has to distinguish between its source and flow, root and branches, and then one can slowly examine the unusual tracks and special roads it takes . . . Today, writing is [usually] first examined by people regarding its beauty (*mei* 美). If it is beautiful, then all will praise it as such. Now, beautiful writing one certainly can praise, but sure enough there is beautiful literature which cannot be called coherent (*tong*). And then there is literature which might be called coherent but not right (*shi* 是). And, [lastly,] there surely is literature which is right but which cannot be called in agreement with the Way (*shi yu dao* 適於道) . . . If one thus proceeds from the beauty of literature step by step to its being in agreement with the Way, which Way is it that one [ought to] proceed to and rest at? It is the Way of the Six Classics. Everyone can say that in writing literature one has to base it on the Six Classics. People can say it but who really knows it? And of those who should know it, who can really adapt it [to circumstances] (*bian er tong zhi* 變而通之)? Now, if one can know about this, then one can advance to adapting it; one will be able to discern the origins of the Way and infer where it will end. If one is not able to see clearly the principles (*li*) in the world, understand the facts (*shi*) from the past to the present and exhaust the manner (*qing*) of all things on earth, then one cannot easily talk about this.

I once wrote a piece called "On the Origin of Poetry" (*Yuan shi*) in which I hold the view that of all the ten thousand things between Heaven and Earth there is nothing which is not comprised by these three [categories] "principle", "fact", and "manner". Therefore, the Way of the sage begins with the investigation of things (*gewu*), because if one investigates into all things there is nothing which does not possess "principle", "fact", and "manner". Where literature is concerned, one should simply also investigate into it as a thing, and that is all. Now, in "providing things" (*bei wu* 備物),⁸⁸ there is nothing greater than Heaven and Earth, and Heaven and Earth have provided the Six Classics. The Six Classics are the origin of "principle", "fact", and "manner". If one talks about it from a comprehensive point of view, then each and every sentence with each and every meaning of all the Classics provide these three, illuminating each other. Talking about it in differentiation, then apparently the *Yijing* 易經 in particular talks about "principle"; the *Shujing*, *Chunqiu* 春秋, and *Liji* 禮記 talk about "facts", and the *Shijing* talks about "manner" (*qing* here certainly also meaning "emotion"). This is the very root of the Classics. And if one wants to infer whence its flow will lead from there, talking first about the flow originating from the *Yijing*, it leads to such writings as

⁸⁶ *Lunyu*, 7:6; Legge, *Classics* I, p. 196.

⁸⁷ Referring to Zhou Dunyi's (1017–73) 周敦頤 famous dictum that "literature has to carry the Way" (*wen suoyi zai dao* 文所以載道); Zhou Dunyi, *Zhou Zi tongshu* 周子通書 (SBBY ed.), p. 6; cf. Chan, p. 476.

⁸⁸ *A Concordance to Yi Ching*, p. 44.

discussions and analytical treatises; the flow originating from the *Shujing*, *Chunqiu*, and *Liji* leads to historical writings, records and narrations, legal and institutional writings, and such. And the flow originating from the *Shijing* leads to such things as songs, rhyme-prose, and poems. The structure and logic of all these is different, and if one views them with regard to the Classics, then they all have their respective belongings, but in that they are in agreement with the Way they are all one and the same. When "principle" and the Way are the substance [of literature], then "fact" and "manner" are always in it, threaded together. If only its "principle" is clear, then it will constitute literature.⁸⁹

Thus, literature has to be founded on the moral principles of the Classics. In accordance with Zhou Dunyi's dictum that "literature is a vehicle for the Way", it ought to express a mind which is in agreement with the Confucian *Dao*. This indicates that Ye's approach, actually, is more pragmatic in a Neo-Confucian way than expressive. Thus it appears to be difficult, if not impossible, to put him safely into one critical category because there are mimetic, expressive, and pragmatic elements in his theory.

What is, in summary, the position of Ye Xie in the context of Ming and early Qing poetics? Put in a simplified way,⁹⁰ we have in this era the tension between individualists and archaists. In the individualist camp are such disparate critics as the Yuan brothers of the Gong'an School, Zhong Xing and Tan Yuanchu of the Jingling School, and their sharpest critic Qian Qianyi of the early Qing. Common to all of them is that they dismissed past models and advocated direct expression of the poet's personal nature and "native sensibility". The archaist camp is equally heterogeneous. First there are such "arch-archaists" as Li Panlong and Wang Shizhen (1526–90) from the Late Seven Masters of the Ming. But one can also add two far more diversified critics to them: Xie Zhen, another "member" of the Late Seven Masters, and Wang Shizhen (1634–1711) of the Qing, because both were orientated towards the past, objected to the uninhibited expression of emotions, and liked to talk of the "spiritual" or "transcendental" aspects of poetry.

Ye has much in common with the individualists in his rejection of past models, calling for a personal approach with each new poet in each new period. His attitude toward the past, however, is not as radical as that of the Gong'an School because, as we saw, he also

⁸⁹ Ye Xie, "Yu youren lun wen shu 與友人論文書" (Letter to a Friend Discussing Literature), *Zhongguo wenxue piping ziliao huibian*, vol. X, pp. 272–73.

⁹⁰ This is treated comprehensively and exhaustively by Richard John Lynn in his articles "Orthodoxy" and "Alternate Routes to Self-Realization in Ming Theories of Poetry", *Theories of the Arts in China*, S. Bush and Ch. Murck eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 317–340; see also Chaves, Jonathan, "The Panoply of Images: A Reconsideration of the Literary Theory of the Kung-an School", *Theories of the Arts in China*, pp. 341–64.

demands that a poet gathers his material from the ancients, maintaining that one has to establish one's individuality on the basis of the Classics and of first absorbing the entire poetic tradition. Only then can a poet become a truly "independent master". In this regard, his view is similar to Qian Qianyi's. Another point of difference lies, to my view, in his strong Confucian orientation, insisting that a poet has to express, rather than his personal emotions and "native sensibility", a morally cultivated mind. One could compare his stand, to some extent, to that of his "model" Han Yu who, as a Confucian conservative, exemplified Ye's ideal of an "independent master" in literature.

What about the archaists? A similarity between Ye's and the archaists' theories is that neither advocates the expression of strong emotions. Moreover, a peculiarity of Ye's treatise proved to be that he, although using a set of rationally organized terms and principles, ultimately appeals, as in the passages quoted above, to their inexplicability—which may appear to a "rationally" thinking Western interpreter as an intellectual anti-climax. But here he is, in the Chinese context, in the best of company. The intuitive grasp of the essential being, rather than its intellectual comprehension, is as much a characteristic of Chinese philosophy as of literary criticism, to mention only Daoist thought, Chan-Buddhism, and Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucianism in terms of philosophy. In Chinese poetics, the intuitive apprehension of reality and the suggestive effect of the poetic language and imagery were, likewise, central concepts, not to say common stock, of the post-Tang critics. These notions, originating with Sikong Tu and Yan Yu,⁹¹ were particularly popular with the Ming archaists who, as Richard John Lynn has argued, although being committed to Neo-Confucian values,⁹² liked to express their poetic views, thereby following Yan Yu, in Chan-Buddhist terms and imagery. This, precisely, is what makes Ye Xie's treatise—in spite of its obvious similarities to such ideas—different from the critical writing of the archaists. He does not refer to Yan Yu as a source for his ideas and dismisses the latter's Chan-analogy for poetry.⁹³ Instead he uses a set of terms which have a rational ring and which, in fact, are borrowings from the philosophical

⁹¹ As Lynn has noted, "most theoretical writings of the archaist critics are footnotes or commentaries to what Yen Yü said." Lynn, R.J., "The Sudden and the Gradual in Chinese Poetry Criticism: An Examination of the Ch'an-Poetry Analogy", *Sudden and Gradual—Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, Peter Gregory, ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), p. 402.

⁹² Lynn, "Orthodoxy", p. 255f.

⁹³ Many Qing Critics, including Qian Qianyi, were critical of Yan's Chan-analogy. See Lynn's article "Talent."

vocabulary of Song Dynasty Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism.

But, as mentioned, Ye Xie's elucidation of the Du Fu line, his emphasis on the unnamable *li* and the inscrutable *shi*, as well as his insistence on the suggestive effect of the poetic image, clearly show that he stands closer to the theories of the archaists than he would probably be prepared to admit. Perhaps one could characterize his theory, with all due caution to such ready-made pigeon-holes, as a Neo-Confucian pragmatic "deviation" (*bian*) of the normally Chan-Buddhist oriented "transcendental-mimetic" view, mixed with some expressive elements—or as an elaborate variation of the mentioned formula of mergence of *jing* (scene) and *qing* (emotion), i.e. of outer material and inner personal realms. Be that as it may, Ye's theory strikingly fits the characterization that James Liu once gave to literary theory in general, saying that

just as all literature and art are attempts to express the inexpressible, so all theories of literature and art are attempts to explain the inexpressible.⁹⁴

The analytical way in which he approaches this inexpressible, this solely intuitively comprehensible quality in poetry, again suggests Neo-Confucian methodology. His method is in stark contrast to the common practices of the *shihua*, with their barely differentiated commentary and their assessments which lack analysis as well as thorough interpretation.⁹⁵ Ye Xie's elucidation of the line from Du Fu represents an attempt at critical analysis which strikes one as almost modern. Although he withdraws in the end into inexpressibility, and although the way this line grasps him cannot necessarily be shared by a modern, Western reader (of course, one had to view the poem as a whole in this regard), his attempt at elucidation comes quite near to the goal of literary criticism, once defined by the late Emil Staiger as "to grasp that which grasps us."⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Liu, James, *Chinese Theories*, p. 3.

⁹⁵ See Wai-leung Wong's study of the *shihua*: "Chinese Impressionistic Criticism: A Study of the Poetry-Talk (*shih-hua tz'u-hua*) Tradition" (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Ohio State University, 1976). See also Yang Songnian 楊松年, "Zhongguo wenxue piping yongyu yuyi hanhu zhi wenti 中國文學批評用語語義含糊之問題" (Concerning the problem of ambiguity of critical terms in Chinese literary criticism), *Nanyang daxue xuebao* 南洋大學學報 vol. 8-9 (1974-75), pp. 122-30.

⁹⁶ In the original German, the first "grasp" means to "intellectually comprehend something" (*begreifen*), and the second "to be emotionally grasped" (*ergreifen*): "Dass wir begreifen, was uns ergreift, das ist das eigentliche Ziel aller Literaturwissenschaft." Staiger, Emil, *Die Zeit als Einbildungskraft des Dichters* (Zürich: Artemis, 1953), p. 11.