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Breaking up the Canon of Literary Modernity: Classicism in the Ecopoetics of David Hinton and the Materialism of Zeng Shaoli. A Preliminary Outline of Epistemological Changes in Contemporary American and Chinese Lyricism

The target of this essay is to open possible pathways to approach the phenomenon of a self-remodeling of classicist poetry in the 20th and early 21st century by focusing on the process from two different angles rarely perceived as related to each other: first, the remodeling of Chinese lyrical classicism through a strand of modern American poetry harking back to Ezra Pound and currently crystallized in the translations of David Hinton and, second, the transition that modern Chinese poetry written in classical language and conforming to prosodic rules of classical style poetry, sometimes referred to as "old style poetry" *jiu ti shi*, underwent after its rebirth as "unofficial" poetry online since the beginning of this century. Although there are obviously no direct links between the aforementioned tradition of modern American poetry and neoclassicist cyberpoets like Zeng Shaoli I argue that in both cases the classicist inspiration and poetic drive is motivated by concern with the increasing imbalance between natural, social, and individual resources, on the one hand, and an indomitable desire to accumulate economic and political power on the other. A permanent devaluation of language in the human realm, matched by a permanent devaluation of currencies in the economic sphere, provokes poetic responses in the very interest of humanity. The neoclassicist lyricisms that I draw into comparison display both subtle distinctions and common traits in this response to the starkly different environments of their respective contemporary literary scenes.

Keywords: Chinese Poetry, American Poetry, Lyrical Classicism, Translation, Ecopoetry, Old Style Poetry, Ecocriticism

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1.

Within the Chinese literary tradition, lyric poetry is perhaps the most important reference point for defining the classical. Its axial position among the genres of so-called literati arts in Imperial China is implicit. As the rhetorical and aesthetic code for the interference of the subjective mind and intent into objective events pertaining to the interaction of (cosmic) nature and (imperial) politics, the most dominant tradition of lyric poetry harkens back to the Confucian paradigm 詩言志 *shi yan zhi,* meaning "the lyrical pronounces intent". As a means of subtle self-expression in Imperial China (3rd century BC to early 20th century), lyric poetry became at once a cultural form of intellectual autonomy, an artistic discipline that allowed for freedom of mind beyond social restrictions and despotism, *and* a privilege of those social ranks who were more or less obligated to bow to the former. Only a radical change of orientations – initially pushed within circles of the 1920s avant-garde intellectual elite but subsequently continued by radical and often violent strategies of "social engineering" – shifted the balance of literary forms in favor of epic, fiction, and critical prose, which were considered more appropriate and effective literary means for realizing the modernist project of re-building China as a "nation".[1] However, as the modern and contemporary world – which took its present shape by traversing projects of nation-building rather than completing them – has reallocated basically all genres of art and literature within new social and political contexts, lyricism now, too, appears in a new light that clearly disavows formerly well-established critical categorizations, such as the form of "expression of innermost feelings" (corresponding to the conventional generic Chinese notion of 抒情 *shu qing*, [lit.: to express personal emotions]), Shen Congwen's 沈從文 (1902–1988) "abstract lyricism" [抽象的抒情 *chouxiang de shu qing*], or Li Zehou's 李澤厚 (b. 1930) "lyrical ontology" [情本體 *qing ben ti*]. In his "The Lyrical in Epic Times" (2015) David (Der-wei) Wang coined the term "critical lyricism" and explained it as "a poetics of selfhood that informs the historical moment and helps define Chinese modernity in a different light."[2] Accordingly, lyricism should be understood as a form to comment from a critical distance upon the "epic" and "perilous" experience of China's (and the world's) transition between disputed historical narratives and an often bitterly contested, open future.

Although Wang seems inclined toward a humanistic construction of the lyric poet and the latter's spontaneous freedom of expression vis-a-vis violent ideological and political struggle and, thus, as one reviewer remarks, "the complicated and overdetermined historical process through which the lyrical unfolds itself by

[1] In the early 1930s Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) opined that lyrical poetry had fulfilled its function in China's cultural history in the age of the Tang poets (7th to 10th century AD).

[2] Wang (2015: ix).

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confronting political urgencies is downplayed”,[3] his approach not only instigates a new way to understand how lyric poetry renewed its prominent position as literary genre in the contemporary sinophone world but also brings us closer to the phenomenon of a self-remodeling of classicist poetry – a particularly Chinese form of modern lyricism Wang doesn’t explicitly consider in his book – and the success of this way of writing verse in contemporary virtual literary scenes.

Modern lyric poetry in classical style, [Chin.: 新舊體詩 *Xin jiu ti shi*], or, as I will continue to call it here, modern or new classicist poetry,[4] is now widely practiced and performed in Chinese conventional mass media – from popular public competitions broadcasted by CCTV to traditional literary print media and, of course, as “unofficial poetry”,[5] often displayed on private blogs and web-pages. As Michel Hockx has proved in 2004, the virtual space in China – despite heavier-handed and much more proactive censorship – still provides an environment of poetic customs reminiscent of the culture of poetry societies 詩社 of the 19th and early 20th century that in late Imperial and early Republican China, respectively, had provided semi-public spaces of regional or even local coloring that sometimes subverted but almost always diverted from orthodox views.[6] This phenomena must be observed against the background of a concurrent development in recent Chinese literary culture, which has been described by Hockx in another article published only a few years later:

> By the 1990s, most if not all avant-garde authors supposedly turned away from extreme experimentalism and instead started producing work that was more accessible and more marketable, or simply stopped writing. […] the authors previously belonging to the avant-garde voluntarily adopted establishment techniques, thus normalizing their own work, rather than waiting for it to be normalized.[7]

It is quite obvious that the successful continuation of gradual economic liberalization led by the Chinese Communist Party has made the ubiquitous commercialization of culture an effective tool in the hands of the powerful – particularly after the brutal suppression of the democracy movement in 1989 and the subsequent persecution of its leaders, resulting in the fragmentation and isolation of all its groups and networks of supporters. Cultural commercialization allowed the political leadership to *offer* more freedom of expression and wider public resonance under the precondition of a commercial success that tends to marginalize the incommodiousness of avant-garde culture.

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[3] Tu (2016: 191).

[4] I adopt this term in reference to the “Frankfurt Consensus”, which was agreed upon in 2015 by a representative group of international scholars and since then has served as basis for research on modern classicist poetry and its evaluation within the narrative of modern Chinese literature. See also: Yang (2015).

[5] Tian (2009).

[6] Hockx (2004).

[7] Hockx (2009: 413).

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My main objective here is to develop a critical approach to the phenomenon of contemporary classicist poetry on the Chinese internet based on the assumption that, after the end of the Mao era, the function of money as a form of credit confirming trust between political power and its citizens was first revitalized before it gradually replaced – though never radically substituted – the role of revolutionary ideology, which had been firmly installed by the totalitarian system. This has implemented major changes in literary culture in China since the 1990s. However, modern classicist poetry, according to several of its critical readers, seems exempted from this evolution of mainstream literary culture in its particular *façon*. Its authors often hesitate to accept the denomination "poet", and, thus, they most often communicate their positions in the semi-public spaces of the internet. It remains like classical poetry from Imperial times: "intransparent" for mass audiences, because it essentially appeals to a sense of *plaisir du texte* (pleasure of the text) that requires the immersion of the reader in intertextual dimensions of language, subject matter, and poetics. Thus, the paradoxes of new classicist poetry on the internet become obvious: firstly, in the coincidence of a medium that serves commodity and commerce with a culture of reading that defies the commodity character of commercial literary entertainment (because text studies require too much time, which too few readers are willing or able to spend); and secondly, in its capacity for "internal consumption" by audiences that share no social presence except for their more or less anonymous status as netizens.[8] These paradoxes may give us reason to think of new classicist poetry as *virtual* poetry (in a double sense) as compared to the officially acknowledged, commercially more advanced *real* poetry scene of modernist verse.[9]

By analyzing some examples of contemporary classicist verse by internet poet Lizi 李子 (b. 1964), who for several years has most prominently represented the experimental tendency in classicist verse (as compared to the dominant majority of authors publishing classicist verse by following an agenda of cultural conservatism or even revisionism), I will elaborate on certain stylistic features of Lizi's intriguing poetry *against the background* of contemporaneous tendencies in North American ecopoetics as represented by David Hinton (b. 1954). The latter is a poet and well-versed sinologist and probably the most accomplished living translator of classical Chinese verse into English. Hinton has developed the Poundian tradition of modernist poetics into the present anglophone lyric scene. His style of translation and his theory both bear the Poundian conviction that

[8] Tian (2009: 37f.).

[9] Maghiel van Crevel in his field-work "Walk on the Wild Side: Snapshots of the Chinese Poetry Scene" prefers to speak of the avant-garde although he clearly sees the problem of this term in the context of contemporary poetry. I think the term should be avoided, because an avantgarde cannot be part of an institutionalized literary business of the kind that is typical for contemporary Mainland China's society. Avantgarde seems impossible in a closely monitored medial space where the well-founded Chinese notion of the "public intellectual" 公共知識分子 *gonggong zhishifenzi* has become politically sensitive and can easily lead to institutional sanctions.

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classical Chinese poetic language is capable of restoring an immediate and "just" (正 *zheng*) response of the subjective mind to the objective world corresponding to later ecopoetic concepts of "wilds" as designations of the mental spheres of true experience. In Hinton's paradigm "Wilds of Poetry" and in his way of translating classical Chinese verse, a branch of contemporary Western poetics appears to be attracted, in a way quite similar to Lizi and his followers, *by the eminence of the game of classical Chinese verse.* Thus, rather than translating classical verse into irregular free verse, which would ostensibly emulate the "spontaneous" flow of everyday experience, as most of his predecessors did, Hinton opts for carefully balanced and energetic parallel couplets. Moreover, just as Hinton's new approach to interlingual and intercultural literary translation produces a new form of ecopoetics that both continues and aptly changes the tradition of modern avant-garde and American free verse, Lizi's new classicist verse deviates from the canon of literary modernity by intentionally setting back its "progressive" agenda. Moreover, I intend to show that both styles, each in a particular context of the history of modern lyricism in China and the West, infuse the classical into the modern. In doing so, a contemporary monologue of modernity that lacks the visionary power to provoke and challenge political authority, economical systems, and social status is broken up. Money – as the sole form of credit that under the conditions of globalization is empowered to warrant social and ecological balances or to unhinge them and which reflects the trust of societies in political ideologies or the lack thereof – is often at the center of this new critical lyricism.

2.

Whereas modern and contemporary Chinese lyrical poetry in translation seems to enjoy a very limited impact on audiences outside the sinophone world, its classical predecessors are incorporated into the evolution of modern North American poetry in the 20th century to a degree unmatched by any other model of premodern classical style. In a statement for a symposion on "Chinese Poetry and the American Imagination" (1977), the poet Kenneth Rexroth (1905–1982), also known for his translations of Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) and Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–1151), summarized:

> Today, for a very large sector of American poets, the poetry of the Far East is more influential than 19th and 20th century French poetry, which has dominated the international idiom for so long, and certainly incomparably more influential than English poetry of the 19th century. […] It would be possible to name over a hundred American poets deeply influenced by the poetry of the Far East and some who have difficulty in thinking about poetry in any other idiom than Chinese or Japanese.[10]

However, sinologists in the West (as most of their colleagues in China) usually maintain an uneasy distance from this aspect of classical Chinese poetry: its tran-

[10] Weinberger (2003: 210).

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sition into new cultural and linguistic contexts and texts via translation, modern poetics, and various discoveries in the intercultural flow of ideas admittedly often challenges traditional methods of philology to a degree that unnerves linguists and textual critics who still dominate the academic learning of classical Chinese literature. Notorious is Alexander Kennedy's verdict on Ernest Fenollosa's (1853–1908) influential essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry", which was edited and circulated by Ezra Pound first as a manifesto for the Imagist movement in 1919 – the same year that in China the modernist cultural movement began to postulate and to practice a radical ban on classical literary language – and for a second time in early 1936. When in 1958 Kennedy, a Yale professor, called the essay "a mass of confusion"[11], he delivered a solid backing to any expert of the Chinese language who feels content to play the role of a gatekeeper and exclude any approach to Chinese poetic writing save the one of the linguist and grammarian. However, in 1967 Jacques Derrida reclaimed Fenollosa (and Pound) for his "history of writing that is the response to the 'history of being' in the West".[12] Ten years later, in 1977, François Cheng's «L'écriture poétique chinoise» (Chinese poetic writing) appeared, a book that essentially, though not explicitly, supports Fenollosa's "ideogrammic" understanding of Chinese writing as a mode of poetic language. Nevertheless, scholarly skepticism clearly continued to prevail, and it took another three decades before, in 2009, another Yale professor, Haun Saussy, together with Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein, published a critical study and new edition of a text that in the meantime had become a trend-setting milestone of innovative poetics in the 20th century, yet still remained profoundly ignored by many scholars of Chinese language and poetry, retrenched in their unwillingness to accept that poetic knowledge must treat the functions of language according to its own objectives.

3.

In reading this essay, one might observe a subtle link between modern aesthetics and the search for values that has motivated the developing of new conventions of poetic language over the past hundred years. In other words, stirring awareness of the rapid *devaluation* of language, often comparable to a shock wave cleansing the mind and forcing it to open up toward new horizons, new spaces for uncontaminated words to be filled with *meaningful existence* came to be the initial force of poetry as literary avant-garde. Though ground had to be regained sooner or later after the shock wave that was to give historical momentum to Pound's discovery and editing of Fenollosa's essay. In his text, Fenollosa exclaims: "Metaphor, the revealer of nature, is the very substance of poetry", and, a few lines later, he confirms this belief, writing:

[11] Kennedy (1958).

[12] Saussy / Stalling / Klein (2008: 36).

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> […] the Chinese written language is <sic!> not only absorbed by <sic!> the poetic substance of nature and built with it a second world of metaphor, but has, through its very pictorial visibility, been able to retain its original creative poetry with far more vigor and vividness than any phonetic tongue.[13]

Thus, the value sought in linguistic and poetic expression was considered the equivalent of the riches of nature, not the result of the latter's exploitation via abstraction that serves the subjective bias alone. On the contrary, language should be "absorbed by the poetic substance of nature". In other words, poetic language was not to classify, divide, and abuse nature for subjective purposes but to become part of nature that was its own origin. This conceptualization clearly foreshadows the ecopoetics evolving among later American modernist writers like William Carlos Williams (1883–1963), Kenneth Rexroth (1905–1982), Charles Olson (1910–1970), Gary Snyder (b. 1930), Michael McClure (b. 1932), and David Hinton (b. 1954).

But Pound, in his 1936 edition of "The Chinese Written Character" opened still another level of equivalence by ascribing to language the quality of a *social resource*. Under this aspect, in Pound's specific word choice, language, proceeding via abstraction, is compared to "a cheque drawn at the bank":

> Its value depends on what is there to meet it. If Mr. Rockefeller draws a cheque for a million dollars it is good. If I draw one for a million it is a joke, a hoax, it has no value. If it is taken seriously the writing of it becomes a criminal act.
>
> The same applies with cheques against knowledge. […] An abstract or general statement is GOOD if it be ultimately found to correspond with the facts. BUT no layman can tell at sight whether it is good or bad.[14]

Language via "abstraction" – and metaphor in Fenollosa's sense *is* abstraction – facilitates social interactions, makes sense of being social. Not unlike his Chinese contemporary Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), Pound saw in language the organism of any form of society or human communality (including the "nation") and in the author the person ultimately responsible for keeping or restoring its health or functionality. In "ABC of Reading" (1934), Pound noted:

> Language is the main means of human communication. If an animal's nervous system does not transmit sensations and stimuli, the animal atrophies. If a nation's literature declines, the nation atrophies and decays.[15]

The double parallel of language and physical body versus language and financial credit is highly suggestive. In fact, it suggests the dialectics of nature / body ("nervous system") and society / credit (trust) that pervades Pound's poetics and bears the powerful immediacy of images in his verse. Pound's insistence on pure poetic language and on the eminence of poetic writing as a method of purification (healing) of the mind, or, as he also calls it, of "building light", inhabits the

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[13] Ibid., 54-55.

[14] Ibid., 7.

[15] Pound (1991: 32).

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"Confucianism" of his mature poetics and is most obviously reflected in his ideogrammic inclusion of Confucian notions like 信 *xin* (trust), 誠 *cheng* (sincerity), or 正名 *zheng ming* (rectification of names), and the imperial myths that pervade his opus magnum, the "Cantos". Rarely perceived, however, is the strong presence of poetic reflections on East Asian landscape painting and poetry in some of his strongest "Cantos". In 2008, Wai-lim Yip published a meticulous analysis and philosophical discussion of Pound's "Canto 49" under the title 龐德與瀟湘八景 *Pangde yu Xiao-Xiang ba jing* ("Pound and the Eight Views of Xiao Xiang") on which I will largely rely in dealing, from a constricted perspective, with the double aspect of nature as the resource of life and beauty and of credit as the resource of social power (legitimacy) and political stability (peace).

The critical discipline of Pound's poetic visions becomes apparent in his creation of a negative counterpart to the utopian idea of a wise, *organic* and "Confucian" communality of nature and society, and of society in itself, which is to say by its own nature. Pound was convinced to have found this counterpart, from the 1920s almost to the end of his life, in usury or *usura* as he called it in verse. His famous *usura* "Canto 45" bears the gesture of a litany and thus distantly echoes Hebrew religious traditions from the Prophets of the Old Testament. It is, like it or not, a great poem and at once a polemic against Judaism, which Pound – like the young Karl Marx out of mere suspicion – blamed for the most horrific evils of capitalist rule. In the subsequent quotation, I have omitted all anti-Semitic passages in order to focus attention on the topic of the immediate correspondence between devaluation through exaggerated interest rates – resulting in abuse of financial credit – and, consequently, social and physical disease. Pound thus constructs a dialectical model of life as organism and usury as the "canker" that threatens it:

> With usura
> […]
> […]
> no picture is made to endure nor to live with
> but it is made to sell and to sell quickly
> […]
> with usura the line growth thick
> with usura is no clear demarcation
> and no man can find site for his dwelling.
> […]
> Usura slayeth the child in the womb
> […]
> It hath brought palsey to bed, lyeth
> between the young bride and her bridegroom
> […]
> They have brought whores for Eleusis
> Corpses are set to banquet
> at behest of usura.[16]

[16] Pound (1993: 229-230).

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William Cookson (1939–2003), a major transmitter of Pound in the late 20th century, has delivered an interesting comment on this "Canto", declaring:

> [...] usury, or avarice, which treats money as a commodity which can be bought and sold, rather than as 'a ticket for the *orderly* distribution of what is available' [Pound], destroys civilization and degrades the mysteries of sex and nature.[17]

Thus, money again appears as the equivalent of language (words). The value of both depends on the reality of the resources they are equated with. If the value of money does not correspond properly to the resources available for production, interest rates and credit are turned into destructive energy. This must be understood in order to appreciate the impact of Ezra Pound's "Chinese" landscapes – like the one which will be presented below in conjunction with "Canto 49" – on David Hinton's ecopoetics.

4.

But before we take a glimpse at a great Southern Chinese landscape trimmed into a great Western modernist's utopian vision, let us briefly be reminded that, in fact, awareness of a baleful disproportion between financial credit, the credit political power enjoys (or the lack thereof), and of the abundance of nature as a source of happiness and erotic *jouissance* appears already strikingly open in the works of China's greatest premodern poet, Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770). The first poem in a series of twelve titled 解悶 *Jie men*, or "Getting rid of the blues", reads as follows:

解悶	Getting rid of the blues
草閣柴扉星散居	Thatched pavilion, ramshackle gates, dwellings scattered like stars,
浪翻江黑雨飛初	waves roll, the river blackens, the rain begins to fall.
山禽引子哺紅果	A mountain bird brings it chicks to feed them red berries,
溪女得錢留白魚	the girl by the creek gets a coin and leaves a white fish.[18]

When these lines were written in the early 760s, not only the author personally but humanity all over the Chinese world was deeply disillusioned and vastly imperiled by the disruptions of civil war and the unrest of endless political rivalries in the aftermath of the An Lushan-Rebellion (755–763). At the time, the imperial dynasty of Tang had just regained central power, but violence continued all

[17] Cookson (2001: 63; italics: F.K.).

[18] The translation by Stephen Owen, a major authority on Du Fu's poetry is quoted from the question-and-answer-webpage Zhihu 知乎 where it is presented together with the poem's Chinese text and an interlinear version: https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/84350582 [14.11.2020]. There is also a YouTube recording of Stephen Owen's public lecture "Returning to the High Tang" at the Council of East Asian Studies at Yale University (56th Annual Edward H. Hume Memorial Lecture). In the lecture, Owen elaborates on the poem and in developing my ideas on the poems allusive echoing of historical contexts I partly drew on Owen's analysis.

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over the realm, because restoration had to be paid for with numerous concessions of territories and rights to former rebels. These often fought against each other, or more or less covertly challenged the dynasty, calculating that their own power would grow under the umbrella of the court's policies of appeasement. In other words, the *abundant* resources of the realm, rightfully possessed by the court, in most eyes appeared to be wasted by oppressive factionalism among the middle ranks of the ruling elites, which caused dramatic inflation of credit: i.e., interest rates, levied upon the people by the ruling strata of society. The first two lines (the first couplet) of the poem express a sense of those times in laconic, metaphorical language. In compliance with the formal claim of parallel syntax, the ending of the first line 星散居 *xing san ju* nevertheless should not be read univocally as a metaphoric comparison of "stars" (in the sky) and "dwellings" (on earth), both equally "scattered", but also as a subtle allusion to the well-known expression 散人 *san ren.* In literary Chinese, a *san ren,* literally a "dispelled person" and "outcast", is someone who has lost function and position in the social hierarchy. But there is also a 散人之道 *san ren zhi dao*, a Dao, a principle, a way of being an outcast.[19] This "way of being outcast" means that in fact no personal motivation, no subjective inclination, has led to the diremption of individual existence and the representation of universal order in the human world. It is rather the positive quality of a man's knowledge, which realizes the corruption of power and the inflation of social (moral) values. Thus, Du Fu's personal experience, his self-perception as politically engaged but permanently ignored advisor and administrator shines like a watermark through the constellations before they disappear beyond light rainfall that ends on the rolling waves of the Yangzi. The expression *xing san ju,* when read as "stars dwelling like outcasts" contains both the imperturbable truth of cosmic principles *and* poor knowledge of and respect for the latter in a human world moved by times as dark and turbulent as the currents of the Yangzi.

So, how to "get rid of the blues"? After a short descent from the "thatched pavilion" 草閣 *ge men* and "ramshackled gate" 柴扉 *chai fei* to the banks of the torrent there is a mountain-bird not afraid to bring its chicks close to the water and feed them with berries (of a water plant?). There is an obvious parallel between the mountain-dweller and the bird. Both apparently belong to the wilderness. They do not fear time – the torrent – because they take it as natural. For both, time is an inexhaustible source of being, alive or dead. There is no power borrowed on time (by Heaven to rulers obsessed with themselves), no credit lent on luxury commodities to boost prices and to cause excessive inflation, which in metaphoric language would correspond to the torrent overflowing the shore. Instead, a girl who has come

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[19] It is discussed frequently in Late Tang and Song literature. Outstanding examples are Lu Guimeng's 陸龜懞 (d. 881) 江湖散人轉 *Jianghu san ren zhuan* ("Biographical essay on a Dispelled Free-Booter") and Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1036–1101) 雪堂記 *Xuetang ji* ("Notes on My Residence in Snow").

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from a creek passes by offering delicious fish on the trail by the riverside. For a mere coin she "leaves" 留 *liu* a delicacy that would have been hardly available to someone like Du Fu anywhere closer to the urban centers with their great markets. Thus, the girl suddenly turns into an incarnation of nature's abundance and the beauty enjoyed by those who know how to share it without abuse.

Like many pieces of Du Fu's late verse, this quatrain in fact reads as an appraisal of the remoteness and peripheral ease of self-sustained existence in a morally distressed human realm of swaying political and economic balances. The quite unconventional keyword (字眼 *zi yan*) which discloses the true nature of the poem is doubtlessly 錢 *qian*, the "coin" in the last line. It signifies the only interpersonal exchange that plots the sequence of images. But by coming and passing by, rather than building a cadence to round up in a final image the hitherto underlying idea of self-sufficient resignation, it shifts perception. The original sentiment of being "dispelled" 散 that seems to be associated with a lone subject lost somewhere at the bottom of a Yangzi canyon whence it penetrates the canvas of heaven above, affecting even the stellar constellation, suddenly has disappeared against the little scene on the ground. The occasional transaction with a girl that "gets a coin and leaves a white fish" enlivens the outcast. A desperately impoverished Du Fu enjoys precisely this sense of remoteness and freedom. The coin merely fulfills its mutually beneficial function of facilitating an exchange of goods between locals and strangers, signifying the just value of delicious fish that is directly available.

5.

The value of this coin remains largely unaffected by exaggerated taxes and interest rates that, in the history of the empire, almost regularly disrupted and turmoiled the daily life of local people, causing waves of migrants who, at times, were united by apt leaders to form rebel armies. These indulged in the occasional plundering of townships and cities and sometimes even held their ground in remote areas as de facto independent rebel states. Paradoxically, the Confucian ideology of imperial rule traditionally emphasized the right and duty of imperial governance to produce and use money as a means for the compensation and control of productive inequalities caused, for example, by natural disasters. A 1st century BC treatise on tax policies and government monopolies, the "Discourses on Salt and Iron" 鹽鐵論 *Yan tie lun*, explains invention and dispersion of money by referring to the holy mythological founders of imperial civilization. At the same time, the text appraises the function of money as a necessary tool in the hands of wise rulers (Tang 湯 and Yu 禹) to create "kindness" in a world that appears to be threatened by natural disaster alone:

> During evil and obnoxious years, they circulated money and goods [created currency and markets] in order to spread surplus [of production] and to fill [the gaps] caused by shortages. […] With the gold of Mount Li and the bronze of Mount Zhuang Yu and Tang

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coined credits in order to spread value among the people. Therefore, the whole world praises their kindness.[20]

凶年惡□，則行幣物；流有餘而調不足也。… 禹以歷山之金，湯以莊山之銅，鑄幣以贖其民，而天下稱其仁。

It is unlikely that Ezra Pound knew this text, but the editions of the Confucian classics that he studied and partly translated over decades contain numerous passages advising rulers to disseminate abundance among the people – in other words: to invent markets and to control them – which would secure the subjects' loyalty. "Kindness" 仁 *ren* is the ideal virtue of an authoritative person in Confucianism, meaning that the holder of a superior position lends an ear to advisers and considers general welfare among the people to be his first concern. Thus, according to orthodox conviction, "kindness" is the source of abundance rather than nature itself.

In Pound's monumental work of a lifetime, the epic "Cantos", the text that now follows appears shortly before the opening of a sequence of Cantos tightly intertwined with a narrative of the history of the Chinese empire from its mythical beginnings with the legendary "emperors" Fu Xi 伏羲, Yao 堯, Shun 舜 and Yu 禹 down to the last empire of Qing 清 (1644 AD–1911). The empire in these Cantos is hailed as a bright, shining example of humane governance based on rational principles and nourished by wisdom and the "kindness" of rulers who never seem to ruthlessly exploit or abuse their natural resources – and thus succeed in creating and maintaining *abundance.* Canto 49*,* which is placed before this section, contains the whole essence of Pound's poetic vision of imperial China as a humane world that mutually conforms to the riches of nature and civilization. The poet would later call this passage a "glimpse into paradise".[21]

CANTO XLIX

For the seven lakes, and by no man these verses:
Rain: empty river, a voyage,
Fire from frozen clouds, heavy rain in the twilight.
Under the cabin roof was one lantern.
The reeds are heavy; bent;
and the bamboos speaking as if weeping.

Autumn moon; hills rise above lakes
against sunset.
Evening is like a curtain of cloud,
a blur above ripples; and through it
sharp long spikes of the cinnamon,
a cold tune amidst reeds.
Behind hill the monk's bell
borne on the wind.

[20] Concerning translation, notes and Chinese edition I refer to Levi, Jean: «La dispute sur le sel et la fer. 鹽鐵論 (Les Belles Lettres)» (Levi 2010: 12-13). The translation from Chinese and French I offer here has been moderately adapted to the background of this essay.

[21] Cookson (2001: 69).

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Sail passed here in April; may return in October.
Boat fades in silver; slowly;
Sun blaze alone on the river.

Where wine flag catches the sunset
Sparse chimneys smoke in the cross light.

Comes then snow scur on the river
And a world is covered with jade.
Small boat floats like a lanthorn,
The flowing water clots as with cold.
And at San Yin
they are people of leisure.
Wild geese swoop to the sand-bar,
Clouds gather above the hole of the window.
Broad water; geese line out with the autumn.
Rooks clatter over the fishermen's lanthorns,

A light moves on the north skyline;
where the young boys prod stone for shrimp.
In seventeen hundred came Tsing to these hill lakes.
A light moves on the south sky line.

State by creating riches shd. thereby get into depth?

[…]
[…]
[…]

Imperial power is? and to us what is it?

The fourth; the dimension of stillness.
And the power over wild beasts.[22]

The text that has been shortened to better adapt its contents to the principal direction of the discussion, which was inspired by album leaves of an anonymous Japanese painter of the 17th century. The paintings were executed in the style of the Chinese Song (10th–13th century) or the Japanese Muromachi period (14th–16th century). In Pound's lines, from the very beginning down to the last quarter of the text, the reader senses the dim, melancholic glow of Xiao-Xiang landscape painting, the lyrical tune of the Chinese Sao-tradition that dominates landscape painting during Southern Song (12th and 13th century) and later is reflected in Muromachi style. Zen monks of the Muromachi period and those who followed their style had transformed the melancholic nostalgia which adheres to the Chinese Sao-tradition into a serenity that is rather inhabited by the passions

[22] Pound (1993: 244-245).

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and sentiments of landscape sceneries than expressing them. Pound had captured this sense from the album leaves and mastered it in his own words.

Two voyages of legendary outcast heroes of ancient Chinese and ancient Greek literature seem to coincide with the vibrant images of the initial sequence: the errant Qu Yuan 屈原 and the seafarer Odysseus, who deceived the Cyclops by calling himself *outis* (ancient Greek: “no-man” – “and by no-man these verses”), both betrayed by men and struggling for the support of the gods. But the poem unfolds without any hero voicing it as a “no-man’s vision” of a world smoothly moved by cosmic (“Sail passed here in April; may return in October”) or historical (“In seventeen hundred came Tsing to these hill lakes”) forces.

The interaction of light and reflecting water, with misty clouds casting shadows over rippled surfaces throughout the whole text, suggest an abundance of natural beauty inherent in the landscape. Snow *un*covers a “dimension of stillness” at the heart of these proceedings. Only in the last third of the complete text, history and the power of human governance interfere: “A light moves on the north skyline; […] In seventeen hundred came Tsing to these hill lakes.” Europe of that time witnessed the age of Enlightenment – and, yet, this remains a place “where the young boys prod stone for shrimp”.

The inspiration of this line, again, seems at least twofold. Children, playing at the shores near fishing villages, are part of the traditional repertoire of East Asian landscape painting. It seems likely that Pound contemplated such a detail on one of the album leaves. It is, however, unlikely that the painter would have depicted the boys “prodding stones”. Against the poem’s background, which soon after surprises the reader by directly addressing the problem of public debt – the “evil” of a state that issues currency to allow the privileged to enrich themselves at the expense of the general public – “prodding stones” gives the idea of a primitive or naive currency merely meant to serve the distribution of the abundance of natural fare (“shrimp”).

Thus, “imperial power”, in Pound’s epic vision of “Chinese empire” as an alternative history of civilized humanity guided by Confucian wisdom, becomes this “dimension of stillness” represented in the inalterable return to that solemn, eternal silence inhabited by a world “covered with jade”. In other words, the power of “kindness” over “wild beasts” is celebrated in this poem. The Jade Emperor, 玉帝 *Yu Di*, the ultimate (Daoist) deity in Chinese imperial mythology, opens the invisible gates to his empire (the “paradise” that the poet has allowed us to catch a glimpse of) and the two errant outcasts – Qu Yuan and Odysseus – are permitted entrance.

6.

Pound’s classicism is all but formal. It rather seems based on his mythic belief in the *abundance* of nature as *beauty*, as much as in his sharp criticism of avarice

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and that individuals and communalities in his thinking may be severed from it, especially when it degenerates into a common practice that deserves the name "usury" (*usura*). Usury "kills the child in the womb", which means, it dispossesses life of its future – it delivers the body (form) to its single finiteness. A classical work of painting, music, or poetry, however, is not reborn into so many futures:

> [...] because it conforms to certain structural rules, or fits certain definitions (of which its author had quite probably never heard), it is classic because of a certain eternal and irrepressible freshness.[23]

In his discussion of the poem referenced above, Wai-lim Yip argues that:

> the fact that the poetic language can be free from syntactic rigidity is directly related to the Daoist idea of non-interference with Nature's flow and this non-interference is also an affirmation of the immanence of things in Nature.[24]

This is also one if not *the* original position of various modernist free-verse movements (for example, imagism and vorticism), but also that of leading American West Coast poets who basically have performed the transition from the poetics of Pound (which still sought backing for the authoritarian and antisemitic ideologies of the age) via the Beat Generation to post-modern ecopoetics.[25]

Let us proceed from here to two contemporary American poets and translators of classical Chinese verse, Gary Snyder and David Hinton, whose translations of Liu Zongyuan's 柳宗元 (773–819) famous quatrain "River Snow" 江雪 *Jiang xue* take us back to the very same prominent location within the literary cosmos of imperial China, into the melancholic and energetic mountain-and-water sceneries along the rivers of Xiao and Xiang, shrouded in myth and legends.

江雪
千山鳥飛□
萬徑人蹤滅
孤舟簑笠翁
獨釣寒江雪

[Snyder]

These thousand peaks cut off the flight of birds,
On all the trails human tracks are gone.
A single boat – coat – hat – an old man!
Alone fishing chill river snow.

[Hinton]

A thousand peaks: no more birds in flight.
Ten thousand paths: all trace of people gone.
In a lone boat, rain cloak and hat of reeds,
an old man's fishing the cold river snow.

[23] Pound (1991: 13-14).

[24] Yip (2008: 179).

[25] Outstanding personalities of the movement, like Allen Ginsberg or Gary Snyder, have profiled themselves as poet, "dropout" and political activist at once and have thereby avoided both marginalization and absorption by the ephemeral violence of political and ideological struggle in the modern age.

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Both poet-translators, though each of them represents another generation and a new approach to poetics, received from Pound the concept of dynamic images that spontaneously govern human perception rather than hierarchical structures of prosody, syntax, and grammar. Poetic language is possessed by these images and their power rather than vice versa.

Chinese commentators of Liu's masterpiece, which turned canonical, have seen in the ambiguous abundance of the landscape covered with snow[26] a sign of imperial power, whose "kindness" has no limits to the subjective mind. Yet, this inexhaustible "kindness" obviously is "frozen", which means that, temporarily, its benevolent influence on each particular being (customarily signified by rain and warmth) remains impeded. Proceeding from this layout, the positive abundance of the whole snow-covered landscape appears to have switched to a negative mode. The solitary fisherman in his "lone boat" holds out at the very heart of an immense stillness *as if* there were *nothing* to fish for but snow. Exchange, suggested in the ultimate abstraction of landscape imagery as the interaction of "Heaven" (the flight of birds) and "Earth" (human trails), is interrupted completely. Alluding also to the myth of cultural hero (legendary "emperor") Fu Xi who supposedly had deviated the original characters from the traces of birds on the ground, thus, creating at once the foundations of a universal scripture and interlingual communication and of astronomy as a way to decode the language of Heaven 天 *tian,* this poem implies dumbness. There is no language, no power – except for the widely ambiguous power of stillness. What is more, there seems to be no interhuman exchange, no trade of goods, no demand, no offer suggested by trails of smoke ascending from small marketplaces or commercial banners above tavern roofs. It is this stream of traffic (which I would call typical of both classical Chinese and very contemporary circumstances), language, communication, commerce, and currencies in the midst of which the old man (whoever he might be) remains stuck, because the flow of circulation has ceased to move, to nourish, to carry on its back merchants and travelers.

Both translators are aware of the fact that this ancient poem reaches out to the modern reader from an age of historical transition, of multifarious fragmentation, of broken traditions and deranged values that held sway over Chinese life from the late eighth until the tenth century AD. And they both may more or less share a general view, which the older poet, Gary Snyder, once expressed fairly concisely in an uncompleted manuscript titled "Empty Mountain":

> Because these poets were men and women who dealt with budgets, taxes, penal systems, and the overthrow of governments, they had a heart-wrenching grasp of the contradictions that confront those who love the natural world and are yet tied

[26] "Jade" 玉 *yu* in classical literary Chinese is a metonym for snow; thus, the "world covered with jade" in Pound's Canto accurately reflects a metaphorical and aesthetic code that had developed over centuries in transmitting Xiao-Xiang landscapes by the reception of classics.

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> to the civilized. This must be one reason why [classical] Chinese poetry is so widely appreciated by contemporary Occidentals.[27]

Yet of both translations, although one easily understands that they transmit the same source text – which often is not and never really has to be the case with translations from classical literary Chinese – is appreciated the more distinctively and the more thoroughly when one reads them in comparison.

In reading Snyder, one first becomes aware of his purposeful suppression of the emphatic superposition of sheer numerical abundance formally realized in the parallel construction of the first couplet, which is aptly captured and even rhythmically recreated in Hinton's version:

> A thousand peaks: … .
> Ten thousand paths: … .

While Snyder writes:

> These thousand peaks …
> On all the trails … .

In his distinctively open, deformalized rendering of the couplet, Snyder suggests a gesture different from that of the Tang poem, the gesture of modern American free verse largely inspired by a theory of poetics "which assumes that the Chinese direct apprehension of the real world must be presented in direct, conversational speech."[28] While the tight rhythm of the Chinese text gives a strong, stimulating impulse that strikes the mind with awe, Snyder's verse in the first couplet could have come to mind on a light walk along a mountain ridge with the words being uttered in the rhythm of a swift pace... But then the conversational rhythm falters. Words gradually loose cohesion, the distance between them grows from gaps that still seem bridged by dashes into increasingly transparent spaces of abysmal emptiness:

> A single boat – coat – hat – an old man!
> Alone   fishing chill river   snow.

Is there anyone to talk to at all? Snyder's translation is highly suggestive, and it captures that layer of the Chinese text that makes it a poem on subjective isolation in the immense ground of nature and, thus, a poem about an epistemological process, a state of mind that awaits transition; in other words, Snyder's translation essentially reflects a Western, Zen-inspired and spiritual reading of Liu's quatrain.

Now, at first glance, Hinton's text does not seem less "spiritual". In fact, his own "poetics of wilderness", expounded in books like "Hunger Mountain" and "The Wilds of Poetry"[29], seems to represent a sort of quintessence of the fusion of American Zen culture and the Poundian ideogrammic tradition in contemporary ecopoetics. However, a distinction that becomes obvious as soon as attention turns from

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27 Weinberger (2003: 203).

28 Ibid., xxv.

29 Hinton (2017).

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ideas and contents to the formal aspects of language is that Hinton's translation is much more laconic and completely forgoes the pathos of modernist experimentalism. This is exactly what reveals its quality as a classicist text.

Laconic style and the treatment of poetic forms as patterns of differentiation of the mind, which *per se* is in need of permanent readjustment rather than of permanent revolution, are characteristics of Chinese lyricism, classical *and* classicist alike. Readjustment is re-reading. Thus, the essential function of formal rigorousness in classical Chinese verse, based on parallelism as its framework, is to transform the rhythm of words, the limit of their allocated time, into pivotal stillness by creating a tight net of balances, contrasts, and analogies. By establishing this net, both poet and reader achieve that sense of mental clarity and sagacity that was at the core of poetics in China from the third century AD down to the New Culture Movement of the 1920s. Like most Westerners who have made themselves familiar with the art of reading classical Chinese verse over a long period of time, Hinton must have been aware of this from a rather early stage of his development as a translator. However, *unlike* most translators, he found a way to make this awareness the point of departure and the very goal of his translation strategy: in other words, deepening his and our awareness of the coincidence of formal rigor and mental unbiasedness constitute the radical claim of his poetics.

Behind the apparent simplicity of diction, the claim to respond to the Chinese poem on several levels of its text structure becomes obvious after multiple readings. Instead of imitating the artistic dissolution of grammar – as Snyder does – Hinton on the surface invents a syntactical order that does not exist in Chinese. Much more effectful, however, is the strict measuring of syllabic stresses that follow upon each other in 2+4 sequences resembling the 2+3 of Liu's quatrain, whose lines consist of five syllables each:

> In a lone boat, rain cloak and hat of reeds,
> an old man's fishing the cold river snow.

When the correspondent details of that final image are read crosswise, they suspend the linear time sequence of words (and word order) and reveal a complexity of simultaneous motives. This is how, by reading and re-reading, the intentionality of this text is disclosed:

> lone boat ↔ cold river [isolation]; rain ↔ snow [freeze: disruption of traffic, communication, commerce...]; hat of reeds ↔ old man fishing [utensils of fishermen: natural abundance for personal, thus, ephemeral enjoyment only; thus, the common world of human life disrupted by the life of the cosmos].

As in the Chinese poem, the translation presupposes the reader's literary knowledge. By relying on this knowledge, the reader is allowed to grasp the complexity of the scenery opened by the text and to participate in a vision that fuses the historical crisis of Tang China in the 9th century – its territorial, diplomatic, social, and economic disruptions – with the ecological crisis humanity faces at the beginning of the 21st century – in the alarming absence of proactive political

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measures guided by the concern for all life on the planet as a pre-condition for any distinctive way of human life that would deserve the predicate “civilized”.

7.

To provide a basis for understanding the new classicist poetry 新舊體詩 *xin jiuti shi* in contemporary China, it seems necessary to briefly reconsider two lyricists of the early period of the PRC who seem to represent heterogenous orientations among the authors of today. Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976) must be credited with restoring the public reputation of classicist poetry, even though initially this restoration focused on Mao personally as a glorious leader of the revolution. The publication of a selection of Mao’s poems – most of which had originally been composed in classical meters in a very short time during the Long March 長征 *chang zheng* (1935), yet, in 1958, had been meticulously prepared by Mao and his servile minister of culture, the poet Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), who took care that the texts expressed the freedom and revolutionary spirit of their author – at once claimed respect from audiences due to their sovereign mastery of classical rules. The step was, of course, political, and it happened during a crucial period of crisis and transition that the Communist Party and Chinese society underwent in the aftermath of the political campaign against the so-called “counter-revolutionary Hu Feng clique” 胡風反革命集團 *Hu Feng fan geming jituan* (1954–1958). While oppressing criticism from many popular revolutionaries against his own doctrine of literature and arts as mere functions of revolutionary struggle and allowing revolutionary tribunals to send hundreds of leading intellectuals to labor camps, Mao sought to stimulate wide sympathy for himself as the country’s ambitious political and ideological leader. Stigmatizing Lu Xun’s literary sarcasm as inappropriate and harmful to the building of a new China after liberation, he propagated his classicist verse as the original expression of the heroic eminence of the revolutionary spirit.[30] Guo Moruo himself was among the first who publicly performed the kind of enthusiasm Mao hoped to instigate among leaders inclined to follow him into the catastrophic campaign of the “Great Leap Forward” 大躍進 *Da yue jin* (1958–1961), which he was preparing at the same time:

> The publication of comrade Mao’s poems and song lyrics promoted the Romantic spirit to a high level and restored the reputation of Romanticism. For instance, right now I dare to admit honestly that I am a Romantic. I have never had such feelings during my past thirty years’ engagement in literature and art.
>
> 是毛澤東詩詞的發表把浪漫主義精神高度地鼓舞了起來，使浪漫主義恢復了名譽。比如我自己，在目前就敢於坦白地承認: 我是一個浪漫主義者了。這是三十多年從事文藝工作以來所沒有的心情。[31]

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[30] Yang (2016: 169).

[31] Ibid., 170.

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Although the ideological contents and convictions conveyed by Mao's poetry proclaim a vision of a "New China" ascending beyond the ups and downs of anti-capitalist war and revolutionary class struggle and, thereby, seem to revive the old meters with "youthful energy",[32] the author as a political personality quite closely follows in the footsteps of many a founder of empire on Chinese soil. During initial periods still agitated by violent struggles among factions of the new elites, it was important for the most powerful leader to personally hold sway over all other claims on cultural prestige. Mao presented himself to the public as a master of classicist poetry at a time when the latter was not considered adequate to the formal and stylistic guidelines of official socialist literature. This pinch allowed him to underline his unyielding pretense to absolute personal leadership in such a way that no participant in common political or ideological discourses would ever have dared to challenge.

In contemporary China, Mao Zedong's poetry (and calligraphy) belongs to the most profitable literary commodities. Its ideological value for the perpetuation of the authority of the Communist Party as institutional preserver of the ideas of its state-founding leader and of his personal intents *pronounced* by poetry contributes significantly to the formation of a myth fusing traditional components of ancestor cult with a modern nationalist narrative of China's historical greatness and cultural superiority. I would, however, prefer to take a look at Mao's counterpart, humiliated by the "great leader", who nevertheless created a new way of writing "old-style" poetry in defiance of the arrogance of power actually pronounced by Mao's verse.

8.

One of the intellectuals persecuted and victimized by the campaign against the Hu Feng clique at the end of the 1950s was Nie Gannu 聶紺弩 (1903–1986), a prominent literary figure who in the 1930s had belonged to the narrow circle around the late Lu Xun. Nie began writing classicist poetry during his first year in the labor camp of Beidahuang 北大荒 in Inner Mongolia, and continued to do so throughout his remaining life, which he spent mostly in camps or in jail, with the exception of a few years as a civilian under surveillance in Beijing between 1962 and 1966, and his last decade between 1976 and 1986, when he was first freed from jail and later rehabilitated. In the 1980s, his lyrical style became famous and admired by a generation of young Chinese who saw in Nie a hero of inner resistance against the arbitrariness of ideological struggle and the terror of the "Cultural Revolution". However, Nie had been a broken person ever since his first attempts to write in classical style. Knowing that his life as a public writer was terminated with his first condemnation to a labor camp, he later mocked himself in an autobiographical sketch that recalls the moment he suddenly decided to write verse

[32] This is in general the leading opinion among those critics who accept the official account of the founder of the People's Republic of China as one of Modern China's most eminent poets.

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in "old-style" in response to a guard who had ordered the inhabitants of the barracks to compose socialist poetry one night after work:

> As a result, that night was the first time I wrote about labor, and also the first time I officially composed classical-style poetry.
>
> 於是這一夜， 我第一次寫勞動， 也第一次正式寫舊詩。[33]

In fact, Nie's classicist style is motivated not by a radical agenda – like, for example, the one that was followed by most young writers of the New Culture Movement in the 1920s and 30s, including Nie himself – but by radical experience. Bereft of his personal ambitions and dreams, separated from his wife and friends, as a man in his 50s, 60s, and 70s exposed to the most humiliating conditions, Nie could still rely on his well-trained power of observation and on a profound literary knowledge enriched by a vast reading of Chinese and Western texts. Thus, he indulged in that quite traditional game of penetrating the present world by relying on one's allusive intelligence, the ability to *adjust* phenomena to a sense of imaginative power that expands from an inner world not less present to the one who understands it but almost absent to anyone who does not. Continuing this practice for decades in de facto seclusion, Nie managed to cultivate in a lyrical form the sarcastic realism of his master Lu Xun and the subtle receptiveness of many a poet of former ages. Where Mao, the poet, is merely boastful, Nie is astute. Where Mao seems anxious to strengthen his "Romantic spirit" by referring to literary ornament and mythology, Nie lends an ear to common talk among camp inmates, absorbing the humor of the desperate.

It would be more than desirable to give more space to Nie's work, but here, it must be sufficient to highlight the importance of the "Gannu-style" 紺弩體 *Gannu ti* against the background of the transition from the lyrical avant-garde of the 1980s to the appearance of a "Lizi style" 李子體 *Lizi ti* on the Chinese internet since the early 2000s.

First of all, it is noteworthy that the sense of being a maverick – of not belonging to the core of literary life or of not being in a position to qualify as professional poet – is common to both poets, notwithstanding the difference that Lizi never suffered from political persecution. This sense intensifies poetic consciousness and creates a relation between author and reader that is less public and more intimate. Nie used to share his poems in hand-written form; Lizi is fond of discussing and developing them by communicating online with his followers or via email. Second, both styles share a certain "materialistic" approach to poetic imagination. Things are neither meant "as they are" (realism) nor "as they should be" (idealism or "Romanticism") but as they are made or manipulated by man or by society. Finally, an un-weathered eminence of the classical in form and style prevails over subjective expressivity, which still remains the hallmark of avant-garde lyricism in China.

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[33] Yang (2016: 183-184).

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The materialistic approach of Nie Gannu is most visible in his sarcastic criticism of the ideologically distorted politics of his times. For example, tools in the hands of convicts laboring in the fields or in the mountains – the saw, the scythe – are at once elements of day-to-day life and symbols of the latter's deformation by ideologically motivated violence and injustice. The notorious "three-hundred-thousand words" 三十萬言 *san shi wan yan* of Hu Feng's defense of creative liberty in the face of Mao's doctrinaire views on literature and arts that instrumentalized creativity in the name of party ideology are converted into thirty years in prison. The truth about ideology in Communist politics becomes comprehensible in the way it affects life and thereby turns into subjective experience.

Accordingly, Lizi's poetic creed, casted in the formula 以物證心 *yi wu zheng xin,* "to prove the mind in things",[34] seems almost as far from the overwhelming majority of conservative contemporary classicist poetry as Nie Gannu was from Mao's heroic "Romanticism". When I asked Lizi if he saw a parallel between his understanding of materialist poetics and a mantra of the early American free-verse movement coined by William Carlos Williams (1883–1963) in a 1927 poem – "No Ideas But in Things" – his reaction was reticent, and he seemed to conceive of such observations as coincidental.

In what follows, a small selection of Lizi's poems that more or less cover the timespan from an early stage until the most recent texts (early 2000s until today) will be analyzed with a focus on the substitution of Communist ideology by the ideology of money-making. This does not suggest a continuous line in the rather broad spectrum of Lizi's lyrical motives. But since money facilitates the exchange of commodities by abstracting value, its impact on language under the conditions of radical commercialization, like the one that has changed China over the past forty years, is no less immediate than the impact of ideology on language under totalitarian regimes.

9.

The following text is one of the earliest examples of Lizi's classicist poetry available on the internet.[35] Unsurprisingly, the author, when asked about some features of the text, confirmed authorship but immediately admitted dissatisfaction with its aesthetic qualities. From a neutral point of view that compares this text with more recent achievements, the former could also be described as experimental. My trans-

[34] Public information concerning Lizi's views as a poet and his poetics is scattered on various websites whose authenticity is often difficult to verify. Hence, I rely on a private email exchange with the author which took place while I was working on this essay. Critical essays on Lizi that have been published by various authors in Chinese over the past years are included in the list of references.

[35] The author has confirmed authorship of this text and we have discussed details of it. However, I was unable to retrieve the text from an active link.

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lation into English initially followed my earlier translation into German but has been revised several times, following further investigation and consultation with the author. I first came across this text seven years ago (as of this writing in 2024) while exploring a webpage that currently appears to be inaccessible.[36]

On a formal level, the text is written in classical meter to the melody of 臨江仙 *Lin Jiang Xian* "The Immortals on the River Shore". The melody is said to go back to an aria (曲 *qu*) which had belonged to the repertoire of the imperial music academy at the court of the Tang (7th to 10th century AD) and later became popular in various versions, first among common entertainers, then also among literati-officials who elaborated on the aesthetic qualities of words and text, often dispensing with accuracy in relation to the musical patterns. This, however, did not happen in the context of official culture but in the amusement quarters of China's rapidly growing cities of the 11th to the 13th century. Thus, the transformation of large parts of the Tang court's rich music culture into popular song lyrics performed to an urban auditory had been a common phenomenon during a period which is perceived by modern historians as China's historical transition from the late Middle Ages to early modernity. Lizi's preference for this classical poetic form and style marks a formal difference in comparison with Nie Gannu and the majority of classicist poets who, in general, prefer the traditional 詩 *shi* style to the 詞 *ci* style ("song lyrics"), which were considered "unorthodox" as long as the culture of imperial officialdom continued to dominate literary aesthetics. This may at least be partly due to a libertine spirit that traditionally associates the style of "song lyrics" with the mental wilderness of urban hybridity. Awareness of the latter as the historical context whence the development of "song lyrics" originated opens a first approach to the creative impulse of Lizi's classicist poetry. On the other hand, Lizi, in commenting on his verse, rarely accentuates the semantics of historical form and explicitly circumvents the conservative claim of "conformity" 符合 *fuhe* by using classical poetic techniques such as pun, metaphor, allusion, or various techniques of citation according to the prescriptions of a neo-traditionalist agenda that gained commercial and public success during recent years and that, meanwhile, is actively promoted by state media. This positioning, of course, not only deserves to be respected but is also crucial in appreciating Lizi's style. However, Xiaofei Tian, who was the first to present Lizi to Western academic readers a decade ago, has quoted the poet from an online discussion with a "loyal fan and austere critic" who marveled at the bizarre clarity of Lizi's verse in combining traditional poetic language and contemporary context. His response was: "If I continue to write like this, it would become new-style poetry. So my question is: if so, why not simply

[36] 李子梨子栗的 QQ 家園 QQ 驛站 w0.5ilog.com/cgi-bin/sys/link/home.aspx/lizilizi.htm?maintype=quanji. Link remains inaccessible as of November 9, 2020.

write in new style? I don't understand this myself."[37] Thus, it is more than legitimate to consider quite orthodox elements of traditional form, poetic technique, and vocabulary in analyzing Lizi's texts as well. Even if they might not have been parts of the author's intentional (subjective) writing, unconscious levels of this process, if they can be reconstructed, are no less important for writing and reading new classicist poetry.

Against this background, another comment on the title of the melody seems appropriate. The original context of performance of the Tang court aria alluded to two ancient poems intended to evoke the spirits of two deities of the Xiang River in southern China. These poems were attributed to China's earliest known poet, Qu Yuan 屈原 (340–278 BC), and traditionally perceived as incantations of the female water-spirits by a desperate outcast (the poet) containing strong erotic overtones and nymphomaniac elements. As the original melody had fallen into oblivion, even by the eleventh century, the contents and style of poetic texts titled *Lin jiang xian* soon diversified. Lizi's contemporary version, however, clearly presents an anonymous subject, lost in a city jungle and desolately longing for any kind of solace that "Venus" 金星 (i.e., the "golden star") might have to offer.

臨江仙	Lin jiang xian (The Immortals on the River Shore)
黑屋蕭森人曳影	Black room, desolateness, someone drags a shadow;
行思坐想無憑	Walks to and fro, sitting in restless thoughts.
寒潮挾雪打窗聲	A cold spell carries snow, knocks at the window glass,
舉頭無日月	No sun, no moon shines overhead,
碰壁有金星	But Venus, bumped into the wall.
攬鏡頭存心便喜	Holds on the object lens, looks forward to the shot,
許他浮世飄零	Yet leaves it haltless to the drift of time.
餘錢脆響不輕生	The brittle sound of some lost coins – don't waste your life!
出門還一笑	Go out for having fun again –
燈火大街橫	The avenue in blazing light.

This is a poem about someone still dwelling somewhere in a dark apartment in lofty heights above an avenue in one of Beijing's new northern suburbs, where in clear weather bright mountain ranges come into sight. In the middle of the night, however, the anonymous dweller feels lost not only in the outward desert of life – produced by yet another "economic miracle" in the history of modern

[37] Tian (2009: 42). (Tian indicates the following URL to access her source: http://w0.5ilog.com/cgi-bin/sys/link/home.aspx/lizilizi.htm?maintype=quanji. However, by now the text of the poem dated 2002 December 4 seems to be available for payed members only. The author personally confirmed the authenticity of the reference text of the translation I present further below.) See Note 37.

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globalization – but even more in the depth of his soul. On my suggestion concerning the expression 黑屋 *hei wu*, "black room", the first words of the poem, I received a polite refusal: the term was not an intended reference to the Chinese translation of the title of Stephen King's and Peter Straub's horror novel "Black House", a sequel to the earlier bestseller "The Talisman", which appeared in 2001, only a few years before the earliest version of the poem had been written. I was a bit disappointed, because understanding *hei wu* as phantasmagoric perversion of the common idea of a house – "an endlessly expanding black space that swallows warmth, light, and life" as one reviewer of "Black House" described it[38] – initially seemed quite intriguing. Nevertheless, Lizi admits that he likes horror fiction and suspects that 黑屋吊影 *hei wu diao ying,* the title of a Chinese translation of a Japanese novel of the same genre – I wouldn't have thought of it – might have had an unconscious impact on him while writing the poem.

Accepting this latitude from the author, I will first continue the line-by-line analysis of the text before I will finally come back to this initial term and a determining reference that I probably would have missed had I not entered that level of cyberspace communication between reader and author.

In the second line, the frightening restlessness of the movements appears to be driven by a desperate craving for light – possibly after a power blackout. When this craving finally finds an object at the end of the first stanza – neither sun nor moon "but Venus, bumped into the wall" – the nocturnal space that under the ceiling light would appear as dusky vastness outside the windows now seems to fuse with the window glass, and the immense coldness and darkness outside suddenly turns into a wall in front of the spectator's eyes. The appearance of Venus in this wall of cold and darkness is ambiguous. First, as the third-brightest object in the night sky after the Sun and the Moon, Venus is an inferior, albeit the only available source of light. One has to be satisfied with it even though it seems "bumped into" that somewhat blowy wall: the "cold-spell" arrives with snow and Venus appears in the intervals between the drifts, like a shimmering coin.[39] Another, more colloquial reading of line five would express the shocked state of mind in facing the cold profundity of the skies outside, immediately after the power blackout, with a common saying 眼冒金星 *yan mao jin xing,* literally: "Venus appears in the eyes", which corresponds to the English saying, "to see stars". Regardless of the preferred reading, the first or the second, in the word choice 金星, the component 金 *jin* ("gold") resounds, which can be read as a pun alluding to the common word 金錢 *jinqian* ("money").

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[38] The Guardian (Oct. 7, 2001).
https:// www.theguardian.com/books/2001/oct/07/stephenking.fiction [09.11.2020].

[39] The star Venus in contemporary China is also associated with erotic charm and sexual desire. "Venus" 金星 Jin Xing, for example, is the name of a contemporary Shanghai celebrity, famous as founder and leader of a Modern Dance group, the Shanghai Jin Xing Dance Theatre 上海金星舞蹈團, as book author and as a transgender woman.

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The second stanza begins with the apartment dweller’s vain attempt to capture that ephemerous miracle of the evening star shining between drifts of snow in a photography. Eventually, he leaves the “money-planet”, where it appeared as the phenomenon that captured the night-peerer’s mind – somewhere in this profound “wall” of cold and darkness. Or his sobering senses simply allow him to realize the futility of taking photos of one’s hallucinations. A change of mind takes place. *Real* coins, jangling in the pocket, trigger a different mood. Is it really the money that stifles angst by luring this anonymous apartment dweller away from an overwhelming darkness which, surprisingly, has flooded his private space and his mind down into the “blazing light” of an avenue “for having fun again”? Though these questions can only be posed, not answered, money obviously plays a role in coming down from sudden fright under the overwhelmingly cold and dark sky to a somewhat hasty “fun” in the illuminated avenue. Not unlike the coin in Du Fu’s quatrain, Lizi’s money marks a shift of self-perception constructed on a classical dualistic model of “heaven” (sky) and “earth”. Heaven – awesome, chaotic – isolates any subject (the camera lens) in its search for light; earth – permanent, buzzing – sensually breaks up this mental isolation by dissipation. As we can understand by recalling the discussion of Du Fu’s poem, the classical pattern of permanent, the mutual interaction of “heaven and earth”, which determines the “ten thousand things”,[40] is evoked not to engross and quiet sensual perception in order to achieve clarity of mind – as was and still is supposed to be its function in traditional aesthetics – but to provoke a stirring of perception and mental uprooting, an immediate awareness of experience.

Here we should return to my conversation with Lizi, since it is impossible to ignore his strong suggestion to read 黑屋 *hei wu*, “Black house” as a pun evoking Lu Xun’s metaphor of the “iron room” 鐵屋 *tie wu* from the preface to □ □ *Nahan,* “Call to Arms”, a collection of short stories that Lu had published in 1922:

> Imagine an iron house without windows, absolutely indestructible, with many people fast asleep inside who will soon die of suffocation. But you know since they will die in their sleep, they will not feel the pain of death. Now if you cry aloud to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making those unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you think you are doing them a good turn?[41]
>
> 假如有一間鐵屋子，是絕無窗戶萬難破毀的，裏面有許多熟睡的人們，不久就要悶死了，然而是從昏睡而入死滅的，並不感到就死的悲哀，現在你大嚷起來，驚起了幾個較為清醒的人，使這不幸的少數者來受無可挽救的臨終的痛苦，你倒認為對得起他們麼？[42]

[40] This idea is manifest in classical expressions at the heart of traditional logics and aesthetics in East Asia. For example, in 天地革而四時成 *tiandi ge er sishi cheng*, it is the explanation (彖傳 *tuan zhuan*) to the hexagram 革 *ge* of the “Book of Changes”, which translates as “Heaven and earth undergo their changes, and the four seasons complete their functions”. See: https://ctext.org/book-of-changes?searchu=%E9%9D%A9 [26.11.2020].

[41] Lu Hsun (Lu Xun), Yang Hsien-yi, Yang Gladys (transl.): “Selected Stories of Lu Hsun”.

[42] Quoted from a discussion of the term “iron room” in Zhihu.

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Lizi explains his modification of the term "iron room" as an attempt to change the hyperbolic structure of Lu Xun's wording, which represents the state of things in Chinese society around 1920 as being hermetically shut off against the outer world and against itself, into a more authentic image: that of a room that suddenly turned black after switching off the light or after a power blackout. By understanding the pun, the reader realizes Lu Xun's sarcasm in the light of contemporary Chinese society. If the "black room" is read as the poet's attempt to elaborate on Lu Xun's well-known "iron room", it clearly replaces the latter's metaphoric quality with authenticity. This sense of authenticity at the heart of Lizi's imagination enlivens and strengthens the flow of classical meter and style; and, vice versa, the structural elements of classical poetic language break up the monolithic colloquial tune of quasi-canonized modern poetics.

10.

In concluding I will now discuss one of Lizi's most recent versions of a poem, which the author, according to a public statement, first published online more than eighteen years ago.[43] This poem is written in the *lüshi* form 律詩, a classical meter traditionally associated with the grandeur of Tang poetry and with Du Fu in particular, but is also the most prestigious among modern and contemporary classicist poets. As a popular commonplace of commercial mass media in China, being capable of writing lüshi suggests formal virtuosity and aesthetic sophistication and, by and large, bears a smack of cultural conservatism. For the broad majority of classicist authors, this seems to impose a clear preference for politically insensitive subject matters – though not for Lizi. The first version, published in 2000, was titled "Ecological Topic" 環保話題 *Huanbao huati* and differs in many details, including the style and content of the short preface, from later versions. I cannot go into detail here by analyzing the changes made in the text over the years, but it is worth noting that the initial, quite outspoken title in later years has been substituted by far more allusive and, at once, more suggestive ones. In 2000, the preface speaks of Beijing as 京城 *jing cheng*, "the capital", whereas in later versions, the term has been replaced by 帝都 *di du*, "the Imperial Capital". In the text titled 春雪 *Chun xue*, "Spring Snow", this highly allusive term in line five is matched by "God's exalted plans" 皇天意 *Huangtian yi*. The initials of both terms playfully combine into the word 皇帝 *Huangdi*, "the God Emperor", a phrase closely monitored by the government's internet censors since February 2018.

[43] The following text titled 春雪 *Chun xue*, "Spring Snow", and the corresponding statement were accessible via the following link: http://blog.sina.com.cn/beijinglizi [15.01.2019]. The most recent version of the poem entitled 奇徵 *Qi zheng*, "Surprising Evidence" or "Strange Symptoms", I received directly from the author in an email letter that includes more valuable information on several details hidden in the text and some explanations of Lizi's style of writing classicist poetry as an open process working with the resonance from the readership.

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春雪	*Spring Snow (April 2018)*
今春帝都氣候異常， 三月大雪，復有赤塵 暴肆虐，經濟環保之 爭遂復起焉	This spring the Imperial Capital was overcome by bewildering weather-conditions. There was heavy snow-fall during the third month [April-May], then followed brutal devastation by red sands, which entailed one more [flare-up of] the struggle between the economy and the environment
吹嘘橐籥去來今， 異象當春遽降臨。 北上花仙覊受雪， 西來沙怪嘯摧林。	Breath of the cosmic bellow-pocket; erstwhile, tomorrow, now. Strange images this spring rashly descend to make their show. The northern fairy-flowers are reined in by bulks of snow; From western regions sandy-phantoms through the park-groves blow.
榮枯或答皇天意， 利害平添下庶心。 百代劫爭懸勝負， 大棋行此費沉吟。	Abundance, drought – perhaps respond to God’s exalted plan. Profit and harm equally trouble hearts of those below. A hundred generations struggled, all concern for failure and success; Who plays in *this* great game should deeply worry though.

The idea of “spring snow”, in Chinese classical poetry, is ambiguous. Snow is reminiscent of jade because of its cool aura. Song-dynasty poets fancied the scent of winter-plum flowers flourishing on leafless branches – particularly after cold spring nights when they were covered by ephemeral snow. Looked at from a distance, snow covering mountain ranges while sunrays already warm the soil in the bottomland would be perceived as an auspicious omen for life refreshed in a sphere of immortality. This idea is reflected in the expression 花仙 *hua xian*, “Blooming immortal”, in line three. The taste of sophistication which comes with the allusion to classical aesthetics, however, is likely to interact with more ordinary daily perception. The female moderator of a children’s program broadcast by China’s state-owned TV company CCTV, for example, is famous under the name 花仙子 *Huaxian zi*, “Flower Angel”, and this again alludes to a girl-hero of a Japanese animation movie first broadcasted in 1980, which later became popular in China. While the idea of beautifying children or childhood by associating the latter with “immortality” results from a combination of traditional and modern popular aesthetics,[44] the way that the poem presents it reveals a vehemently sarcastic approach to the stagnating problem of climatic changes (aggravated by heavy air-pollution) in the centers of China’s “economic miracle”: the “northern” (Beijing] “fairy-flowers” (immortal child-beauties) are “reigned in by

[44] The traditional element is that of immortal female beauties (fairies), a common figure in popular novels, operas and earlier vernacular literature since the Tang Dynasty; the modern element is childhood as leitmotif of the romantic Self’s narrative and idealized by the latter’s sentimental longing for a pristine human nature.

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bulks of snow" and a following sandstorm – neither anything of the classical nor of the contemporary kitschy "immortality" remains!

A classic quotation, a *diangu* 典故, at the very beginning of the poem gives evidence of the idea of breath as an original energy of cosmic nature. The words, which come from the Daoist classic, "Laozi", chapter 5, at first sight appear as the initial part of a description of the disturbing sandstorm and, as such, they could be a mere rhetorical convention. But as soon as one comes to appreciate the context of the quotation – 天地不仁，以萬物為芻狗；聖人不仁，以百姓為芻狗。天地之間，其猶橐籥乎？ "Heaven and earth are not humane, they treat all beings as straw-dogs; the ruler is not humane, he treats all his subjects as straw-dogs; all between Heaven and Earth is empty like a bellow-pocket" – the mere perception of a natural disaster expands into the perception of human rulers' indifference concerning those exposed to the consequences of their decisions – as if these were just natural.[45]

The poem's allusive language clearly suggests that yielding power is a game that begins with pretending that the interests of those in power are "natural" – in the interest of everyone. However, the "struggle between the economy and the environment", 經濟環保之爭 *jingji huanbao zhi zheng,* the insoluble ethical conflict at the heart of the ideology of making money and globalization, which has long replaced Maoism, nationalism, and empire, violently distorts the illusion of a brave new world guided by the wisdom and scientific cautiousness of government officials – of a civilization that equals "nature" in terms of sustainability, of political power taking care of and holding sway over the abundance of life. It seems that this critical ecological reflection has developed continuously throughout several versions of the poem; in the most recent one, only the title and four lines (lines 2-5) have been changed:

[45] The fact that Laozi, chapter five, considers this indifference of the ruler concerning his subjects a true quality of the Saint 聖人 Shengren seems to have no weight in the intentional context of the poem.

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奇徵	Strange symptoms / Surprising evidence
吹噓橐籥去來今，	Breath of the cosmic bellow-pocket; erstwhile, tomorrow, now.
上苑奇徵帝夢深	Strange symptoms in His Majesty's park, Emperor's dream's deep flow.
白雪雲崩奪花海，	White snow from tumbling clouds taking by storm the sea of bloom;
江沙風暴伐春林。	Stream sands ravished by massive squalls flourishing park-groves hew.
榮枯或副高蒼意	Vicissitudes Mighty Heaven's lofty plans to serve?
利害平添下庶心。	Wide-spread increase of loss and gain affects all those below.
百代劫爭懸勝負，	A hundred generations struggled, all concern for failure and success;
大棋行此費沉吟。	Who plays in this great game should deeply worry though.

Through these changes, the diction of the poem at first glance appears more charged with traditional euphemisms like "His Majesty's park", "White snow", "sea of bloom", "Mighty Heaven's lofty plans". But one must first look more closely at these changes to understand their design. In fact, the more euphemistic their character – by relying on the conventional vocabulary of the classical language – the easier they are to decode, thus speaking more *directly* to the reader than in previous versions. "His Majesty's Park", 上苑 *Shang yuan*, refers obviously to *Zhongnanhai* 中南海, the quarter of downtown Beijing belonging to government and party institutions and strictly isolated from the outer world – similar to the Forbidden City in imperial times – in whose neighborhood it is located. The area, which also plays host to the private dwellings of top officials and their families, is situated along the shores of two lakes lending their names to the place as a whole. The satirical character of the euphemism that follows in the same line – 帝夢深 *di meng shen*, "Emperor's dream's deep flow" – can thus hardly be misunderstood. As we know, the word "Emperor" as a popular pun indicates Xi Jinping, the party and state leader; since he has been declared de facto life-time ruler of the PRC, it is almost impossible not to translate the following word 夢 *meng*, "dream", into Xi Jinping's notorious motto of the "Chinese Dream", 中國夢 *Zhongguo meng.* Accordingly, the opening couplet of the poem, by using literary allusion and euphemisms, creates a satirical image of the pretensions of the Communist Party under its present leader to absolute power sustained by cosmic breath ("erstwhile, tomorrow, now"): in other words, as "natural" and, thus, categorically inexhaustible and without alternative.

However, the two couplets that follow and capture the center of the text, the space where formal devices concentrate the mental energies of a *lüshi*, raise a storm of perverted images: the white snow – a symbol of good hope – rushes

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down from "tumbling" 崩 *beng*[46] clouds, robbing / taking by storm 奪 *duo* a whole sea of tender bloom. The sandstorm brutally hews (伐 *fa*) flourishing park-groves. The verbs *duo* and *fa* both have a strong ring of violence and injustice. In the third couplet, "ups and downs" – as much as "loss and gain" – imply the unpredictability of tension between turbulent economic growth and dramatic ecological losses. These again are obscured by the government's promise of growing national wealth and more social security, for which it claims political credit from the people who remain far below "Mighty Heaven's lofty plans" 高蒼意 *gao cang yi*.

In our discussions of Du Fu's and of Hinton's translation of Liu Zongyuan's quatrains, the poetic tradition of criticizing political power via highly allusive landscape imagery has been delineated and followed upon, first in translation into contemporary American poetry. Its impact on Western ecopoetics has been immense. Hinton's new style of translating classical Chinese poetry can be characterized as *virtual* classicism, because it reflects on the mindscape of classical Chinese poetry by developing strategies able to admit the formally restricted, elliptic, and laconic nature of classical literary Chinese into a modern style of translation into English. The case of Lizi is, of course, a very different one. Nevertheless, Lizi also belongs to the poets of the 21st century who explore the language and mentality of classical Chinese poetry in a state of bewilderment. He rejects the popular conservative appraisal of poetic classicism as continuation or "renaissance" of the heritage of a "glorious civilization". His simultaneous writing of modern and classicist style deserves the name new classicist poetry 新舊題詩 *Xin jiu ti shi*, inasmuch as the term's apparent paradoxicality reflects a bewilderment that follows upon two subsequent radical breaks in recent Chinese history: the break with imperial tradition in the first half of the 20th century and the no less radical break with socialist modernism in its second half. Moreover, Lizi's classicism is *virtual* in that it suspends reality by creating a mode of perception of a hybrid material world that is witty and radically subjective. In this respect, Lizi seems to owe much to modern Chinese writers like Lu Xun, Nie Gannu, and poets of the 1980s. It is not by coincidence that his sarcastic and unyielding response to the continuous heavy pressure on Chinese society by a political power claiming control over all social resources, including language, relies on the language of classical Chinese poetry, an idiom that is highly symbolic of the paradoxes and ambiguities of civilization in Chinese history and in the present. With the concluding couplet of the poem discussed above I would close these reflections. What might sound like a mere critique of political arrogance in plain language – with limited poetic value – is compacted by the laconism and allusiveness of classical language. The pointed irony of the couplet, therefore, gives fresh transparency to a problem of civilization that seems to remain the major challenge of these times in China.

[46] In classical literary language this word also signifies the death of an emperor.

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百代劫爭懸勝負，大棋行此費沉吟。

A hundred generations struggled, all concern for failure and success;
Who plays in this great game should deeply worry though.

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