

## TOWARD A GENERAL POETICS OF CHINESE-WESTERN LANDSCAPE POETRY: A SEMIOTIC-DECONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH

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### I. THE DECONSTRUCTIVE TENDENCY IN SEMIOTICS

To be sure, the deconstructive tendency occupies a privileged position in Derrida's deconstruction theory. Yet it is wrong to regard deconstruction as Derrida's monopoly, for the deconstructive tendency in fact cuts across the varied modes of contemporary thinking but with different gestures. Five deconstructive tendencies may be defined in semiotics. First, what semiotics aims at is the abstract system which makes possible the significative, communicative behaviors, and this abstract system can be regarded as a deconstruction of the empiric world, a world only accessible to our five senses. Both De Saussure's emphasis on the *langue* rather than the *parole* and Peirce's building his semiotics within mathematics and logic reveal the abstract, universal, scientific character, the anti-empiric, deconstructive tendency, of semiotics. Second, it is presumed in semiotics that semiotic behavior is a cultural behavior and construction, that is to say, it is bound up with its temporal-spacial cultural environment. This cultural notion is in some way a deconstructive process to any transcendental "truth" as claimed by certain philosophies and to any "ideology" disguised as truth or naturalness in the process of myth making (Barthes 1972 a: 109-59). Indeed, any semiotic behavior is a process of selection and combination (Jakobson 1971: 243) wherein certain elements and ways of combination are abandoned; and "meaning" is after all a cultural unit articulated within a certain culture (Eco 1976: 2.6).

Third, the semiotic subject, i.e., the sign user, also undergoes a semiotic deconstruction. For Barthes, the semiotic subject is almost equated to "the wake of all codes which constitute me [i.e., the subject]" (1974: 10); and for Lotman, the se-

miotic subject uses signs to put the world into a certain model and at the same time models himself by such a semiotic program designed by the semiotic subject himself (1977: 7–12). Fourth, a self-deconstructive spirit is always maintained by semioticians, no matter how objective, universal their methods try to be in their researches. For example, Barthes makes it clear that structuralist activity is a process of decomposition and recomposition, with an anthropological addition, to “reconstruct an ‘object’ in such a way as to manifest thereby the rules of functioning (the ‘functions’) of this object;” and the “simulacrum of the object” thus produced is “but a directed, interested simulacrum” (1972 b: 214–15). Meanwhile, Eco is concerned with the epistemological threshold which no discipline can cross, saying that the semiotic approach is “more like exploring a forest where cart-trails or foot-prints do modify the explored landscape, so that the description the explorer gives of it must also take into account the ecological variations that he has produced” (1976: 29). In short, semioticians do not hide from us their subjectivity, their theoretical choice, and the necessary epistemological boundary; rather, in their researches they in some way or other expose those elements before us. Fifth, a philosophy with a semiotic deconstructive tendency is eventually suggested by Peirce. Every thing can be a sign and nothing is a sign until it enters into the process of *semiosis*. A sign relation, that is, a standing-for relation, is therefore superimposed upon the world. The world is no longer physical and direct, but also intellectual and mediative. As Peirce beautifully puts it, “all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs” (1931–58: 5.448n).

This semiotic deconstructive tendency is of course different from the deconstructive tendencies in other disciplines, and in fact its five specific features as defined above constitute the discipline and the spirit of semiotics. In the present study, I shall follow this semiotic deconstructive tendency to outline in a survey the concepts and efforts which have contributed to the formation of landscape poetry as a genre, and suggest, as the main body of the essay, three deconstructive perspectives to expose the inner problems and paradoxes which we must encounter in formulating a comparative discourse of landscape poetry East and West.

## II. FORMATIONS OF LANDSCAPE POETRY: A DECONSTRUCTIVE SURVEY

Here I shall give a survey, with a deconstructive attitude, of the problems involved as noted in the discourses which contributed themselves to the formation of landscape poetry as a not-yet-well-defined genre. First, landscape poetry and consciousness of landscape coincide with each other. Wang Yao 王瑤 (1973) noticed this and suggested that the shaping of the consciousness of landscape as such in the Six Dynasties of China 六朝 was indebted to the Occult Learning 玄學 of that time. Wai-lim Yip 葉維廉 (1978) confronted this problem in a comparative perspective and stuck to the question of adequacy or inadequacy of the landscape. Yip's focus on this question may be seen as a response to the question raised by Wesling (1970) in the Western context: the adequacy or inadequacy of the landscape in Wordsworth's poetry.

Second, landscape poetry is not a well-defined genre, whose boundaries are rather blurred. In the Chinese case, Lin Wen-yüeh 林文月 (1976) represents the traditional approach, taking Hsieh Ling-yün's 謝靈運 (385-433) poems as the model of landscape poetry: landscape poetry is "to copy the mountain and portray the river" 模山範水, a phrase taken from Liu Hsieh 劉勰 (465-522), and to describe as well the poet-traveller's mountain-river journey itself. Wai-lim Yip (1978) does not model his concept of landscape poetry on Hsieh's poetry but on what he sees as landscape's self-sufficiency, without the poet's mediation and interruption, as he finds in Wang Wei's 王維 (701-761) and Liu Tsung-yüan's 柳宗元 (773-819) poems. Yip points out that Hsieh's poems belong to the category of excursion poetry in *Chao-ming wen-hsüan* 昭明文選, an anthology edited by Hsiao Tung 蕭統 during the *Liang* Dynasty 梁朝. By saying so, Yip seems to imply that Hsieh does not represent the proper model of landscape poetry—the excursion element interrupts the perceptive mode and thus makes landscape poetry impure. Meanwhile, Frodsham (1967) correctly lay emphasis upon the necessary Transcendental foundation of landscape poetry East and West and upon the figurative mode by means of which Transcendental or ethical principles are conveyed in landscape; yet he is wrong in giving Buddhism a power equal to Neo-Taoism in the formation of Chinese landscape poetry by elusively putting Buddhism and Neo-Taoism side by side in his phrasing, for we would rather say that if there was a Buddhism there, it had been absorbed and transformed in Neo-Taoism of that time.

Third, as to the formation of Chinese landscape poetry, the broadest frame of reference is first suggested by Wang Yao. During the third century, with the collapse of the stable society of the *Han* dynasty 漢朝, the decline of Confucianism, and the continuing wars and chaos, there was a revival of Taoism among the scholar-gentry, who took refuge in it and finally found themselves at home with it. The scholar-gentry expounded the Taoist texts, namely, *Lao-tzu* 老子 and *Chuang-tzu* 莊子, and reinterpreted *I-Ching* 易經, the most occult Confucian classics, as a kind of Taoist metaphysics; and these three texts were called “the three occults.” 三玄 This Neo-Taoism—based on these three texts, somewhat influenced by the newly arrived Buddhism, called “occult learning” or *hsüan-hsüeh* 玄學 at that time—provided the varied themes for and was reinforced at the same time by the so-called “pure talks” 清談 among members of the scholar-gentry. A particular mode of poetry was born in this intellectual atmosphere, which is categorized by Wang Yao as *hsüan-yen* poetry 玄言詩; or we may say, *hsüan-hsüeh* poetry. Under the influence of the Taoist “talks,” it is natural that the poets talked about Taoist philosophy in their poetry. Indeed, *hsüan-yen* poetry is simply a Taoist discourse in the form of verse, too much burdened with Taoist jargons and allusions. The passage from *hsüan-yen* poetry to landscape poetry during the Six Dynasties was noticed by the critics of that time, such as Liu Hsieh and Chung Hung 鍾嶸 (483–513). Both Liu and Chung seemed to see landscape poetry as rather a reaction against *hsüan-yen* poetry, against its unartistic, unpoetic quality. Yet, viewed from a philosophical standpoint and put back into its total context, landscape poetry was an extension rather than a change of *hsüan-yen* poetry as suggested by Wang Yao. The reason is not only that the *Tao* which they both represent remains the same but also that those Taoist statements and allusions sometimes remain in the landscape poetry. That is to say, as Wang Yao (1973) suggests, the poets finally discovered landscape as the medium for the presentation of the *Tao*. The term “medium” here is not used in the external sense as mere vehicle but as something through which the *Tao* is substantiated and concretized. Whereas, landscape was not the object of meditation in English poetry until Romanticism and was used only as background, rhetorical figure, and religious, moralistic allegory before that time—the varied uses of landscape can also be seen in Chinese poetry before the appearance of landscape poetry during the Six Dynasties as shown in Wang Kuo-ying 王國瓔 (1988). Nicolson (1959) suggests that English landscape poetry was indebted to the “excursion poetry” of the eighteenth century while “excursion poetry” was derived from the “cosmic voyage” of the seventeenth

century.

Fourth, has the Chinese attitude toward nature and landscape ever undergone any significant change? Does the Chinese mind always have aesthetic consciousness of landscape? Is it true that behind landscape there always resides the *Tao* for the Chinese mind? These questions lead us to the Western counterpart wherein similar questions have entertained interesting speculations. According to Nicolson (1959), a change in aesthetic consciousness of landscape may be seen in comparing English poetry of the seventeenth century with that of the mid-eighteenth century, a change from "mountain gloom" to "mountain glory" in Nicolson's own terms. For example, in the poems of Cotton ("The Wonders of the Peak"), Donne ("An Anatomy of the World"), and Marvell ("Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-Borow"), mountains are described as Nature's disgrace, shames and ills, like warts and wens (Cotton); unjust, hook-shoulder'd, ill design'd, deforming earth and frightening heaven (Marvell); warts, pock-holes in the face of earth, so high like a rock so that the floating moon would shipwreck there (Donne). In short, mountains are rather ugly, for they violate the concept of symmetry, an aesthetic, theological presupposition rooted in the Western mind before the Romantic period. In fact, Christianity does not regard this world as beautiful, for beauty belongs to God. In the Old and New Testaments, certain mountains are considered as sacred for their association with the God; yet no beauty of mountains is particularly mentioned. This theological presupposition may even influence man's perception; the example of Petrarch given by Nicolson is striking. In his ascent of Mount Ventoux in April, 1335, Petrarch was gratified for the grandeur and majesty of the mountain; yet this aesthetic response was overcome by the theological presupposition when he took up a copy of the *Confessions*: Petrarch became angry with himself for his admiring things of the earth, forgetting that the human soul is the only subject for admiration. Therefore, when he descended and gazed back, the lofty summit of the mountain appeared to him scarcely a cubit high, compared with the sublime dignity of man. Nicolson locates the genesis of aesthetic consciousness toward the mountains at the turn from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Nicolson is right in pointing out that "theology, philosophy, geology, astronomy—basic and radical changes in all these occurred before the 'Mountain Gloom' gave way to 'Mountain Glory'" (1959: 3). For example, Henry More attempted to synthesize the infinite space—newly discovered by his contemporary science—and the traditional Platonism, by considering the infinite space not only as real but divine. Thomas Burnet powerfully expressed the paradox between

science and theology, between man's despise and praise of the mountains, between man's trained belief in symmetry and restraint in aesthetic response on the one hand and man's elevated disturbance by violence and the vast in man's experience with mountains on the other hand. All paved the way for the birth of aesthetic consciousness of the mountains, oceans, and rivers. The aesthetic concept of the sublime gained its momentum; man no longer limited himself to the symmetrical beauty of nature but also aesthetically responded to the wild, diverse side of nature; that is to say, the "natural sublime" was born eventually. Nicolson stresses that as far as England is concerned, the aesthetic concept of the sublime was not derived from Longinus's "rhetorical sublime" as scholars have suggested, but based on the "natural sublime," that is to say, based on the actual, sublime feeling in man's experience with nature when the traditional theological, aesthetic presuppositions were put aside or lifted away; in fact, the concept of the sublime as suggested by the English critics, notably, Joseph Addison (1672–1719), Joseph Dennis (1657–1734), and Shaftesbury, did not closely follow the Longinean tradition but developed along the line of natural sublime. Indeed, the genesis and maturity of the concept of the sublime in England coincided with the Englishman's enthusiasm for mountain climbing and for the wild, diverse form of the Chinese garden which was newly introduced to England.

### III. DECONSTRUCTIVE PERSPECTIVE I

Two categorical meanings have been distinguished from the term "nature," namely, internal nature, referring to the essentials and essence of man and cosmos, and external nature, referring to the natural world accessible to our five senses. This distinction may have a useful discriminative function categorically; yet in the last analysis, the opposition of the internal and the external is nothing but deceptive, since what is called "external nature" is already a human concept, a humanized response to the physical world, a sign transformed from the physical, empirical state of the world. Indeed, to follow Peirce's perception, the external world perceived by man is already a world perfused with meanings. Otherwise, the external world is only the world governed by physical, chemical laws without man's knowing of it. When the physical state of the world is touched by human language, which is a modelling system as intimated by the Russian semioticians, it takes on human color

and becomes a sign. Layers of meaning are scattered upon the physical, empirical state of the world by man as culture develops. This semiotic behavior may not be detected without much posterior reflection; yet when the meaning or interpretant greatly contradicts the physical, empirical state of the world upon which the meaning or interpretant superimposes itself, or when the interpretants superimposed upon the same physical world in different ages greatly contradict each other, the enforcing power of semiotic behavior will be easily detected. From this perspective, the change of aesthetic consciousness of the mountain as shown by Nicolson reveals clearly how the empirical state of the world may be approached by totally different interpretants and thus reveals the semiotic behavior behind. Surely, the birth of a certain interpretant is only the beginning; the interpretant must undergo the process of conventionalization by repeating itself until it eventually becomes a functional unit in the whole culture.

Do the Chinese term "landscape" or "*shan-shui*" 山水 and the English term "nature" refer to the same thing? After making allowance for the necessary difference between these two concepts as developed in two different cultural contexts, we still have to ask: is the Chinese "*shan-shui*" just a synecdoche of the Western "nature," using the part to stand for the whole? Even though we, tentatively, say "yes," we still have to ask why *shan-shui*, which means "mountain and river," is chosen instead of any other natural object? This involves a significant aesthetic issue, especially in the Chinese-Western comparative perspective. In the West, the formation of *aesthetic* consciousness of landscape in the Romanticism was the development and recognition of the concept of the sublime, and the concept of the sublime found its sign or signifier in the high mountains. Does the use of the term "*shan-shui*" in China also imply such an aesthetic question? Does the differentiation between landscape or *shan-shui* poetry and nature poetry lie in the aesthetic feeling of the sublime? No simple answer could be entertained. On the one hand, Chinese landscape poetry does not limit itself to mountains and rivers but extends to all natural objects; yet on the other hand, in the divisions of Chinese painting, *shan-shui* (mountain and river) and *hua-hui* 花卉 (flower and plant) are two separate categories, so the possible implications of choosing mountain and river alone as the name of the poetic genre should not be overlooked.

Nonetheless, what is behind the Chinese and English landscape poetry is not simply the aesthetic question of the Sublime but also involves the theological problem

of the *Tao* or Transcendental *Logos*. It is the right time for us to ask a further question now: in the English Romantic period and in the period of the Six Dynasties, that is, in the times when the aesthetic consciousness of the landscape was respectively taking place in China and England, what interpretants were superimposed upon the physical state of the world? Tsung Ping 宗炳, a painter of the Six Dynasties, announced that “mountains and rivers beautify the *Tao* with their forms” (Yü K'un 1975: 583). 山水以形媚道 What Tsung Ping says may represent the general attitude of his contemporaries. The *Tao*, supposed as something behind nature or landscape as declared by Tsung Ping, is the *Tao* defined in the context of occult learning, the current mode of philosophy of that time. We are told that Tsung once sighed that “old age and illness come upon me; I am afraid that I cannot visit all celebrated mountains. I shall clear my mind and contemplate on *Tao*, travelling upon the mountains while lying on bed” (Yü K'un 1975: 584). 噫！老病俱至，名山恐難遍遊，唯當澄懷觀道，臥以遊之。

This convergence between landscape and *Tao* corresponded to the Taoist meditations aroused by mountains and rivers as seen in the landscape poetry of that time, for example, in Hsieh Ling-yün's poetry. Meanwhile, Liu Hsieh, a critic, held on the dialectic relation between landscape poetry and *Neo-Taoism* when he came to describe the emergence of landscape poetry in his time: “At the beginning of the *Sung* Dynasty [420–479] some development in the literary mode could be seen. The *Chuang* and the *Lao*'s philosophy retired and the poetry of mountain and river began to flourish.” (1976: Chapter VII, “An Exegesis of Poetry”). 宋初文詠，體有因革，莊老告退，而山水方滋（「明詩」篇）。Liu's statement may be interpreted in terms of the background-foreground dialectic: the philosophy of *Chuang-tzu* and *Lao-tzu* retired to the background while the mountains and rivers were pushed forward into the foreground.

A theory of perception was taking place. Both Tsung Ping and Liu Hsieh shared the concept of divine imagination or *shen szu* 神思. Tsung Ping (Yü K'un 1975: 584) stated that “the Reason expresses itself at the moment when the eyes and the mind correspond” 應目會心爲理 and that “all aesthetic pleasures merge in the divine imagination” 萬趣融其神思 — notice that the *Reason* is almost equivalent to the *Tao*. Liu Hsieh put forth a more elaborate concept of divine imagination: “when the divine imagination gains its momentum, all paths are open, rules abandoned, norms withdrawn. So when one ascends mountains, one's feelings perfuse the



mountains, and when one's eyes rove over the seas, the seas will be saturated with one's sentiments: the measure of my talents meets that of the clouds and winds." (1976: Chapter XXVI, "Divine Imagination") 夫神思方運，萬塗競萌，規距虛位，刻鏤無形，登山則情滿於山，觀海則意溢於海，我才之多少將與風雲並驅矣（「神思」篇）。Notice that mountains, rivers, winds, and clouds are on one side while feelings, sentiments, and talents are on the other side, with the perception (the eyes) in the middle to mediate both sides. In short, the theory of divine imagination and the belief in the convergence of *Tao* and *shan-shui* are akin to each other and go hand in hand.

The Taoist thoughts and allusions are abundant in Hsieh Ling-yün's poetry as pointed out by scholars. From a semiotic perspective, a poem is nothing but the outcome of the Jakobsonian selection and combination, so let us use one of Hsieh's poems as an example to show how the landscape and the *Tao* are brought together by means of selection and combination as below:

裹糧杖輕策  
 懷遲上幽室  
 行源逕轉遠  
 距陸情未畢  
 澹激結寒姿  
 團欒潤霜枝  
 澗委水屢迷  
 林迴巖逾密  
 眷西謂初月  
 顧東疑落日  
 踐夕奄昏曙  
 蔽翳皆周悉  
 壘上賁不事  
 履二美貞吉  
 幽人常坦步  
 高尚邈難匹  
 頤阿竟何端  
 寂寂穿抱一  
 恬如既已交  
 繕性自此出

—謝靈運，「登永嘉綠嶂山」

With packed food and light stick  
 I climbed up the remote mountain cave at leisure.

I travelled farther and farther following the water,  
 And walked on lands with endless joy.  
 The gentle flow of water presented itself in cold gesture,  
 While the woods were moistened with frost.  
 The water appeared remoter in a bending stream;  
 Trees went winding in closed cliffs.  
 In the West I said I saw the new Moon;  
 In the East I suspected I was watching the setting Sun.  
 From evening to the dawning of the day  
 The whole area was sheltered in a gloom.  
 The first line of *ku* hexagram honours hermit's life— "not to serve."  
 The second line of *liu* hexagram praises "endurance" and "goodness."  
 A hermit always walks in unobstructed steps—  
 His nobility is far beyond compare.  
 How straight and square the high cliff is when it stands!  
 Maintaining its Oneness in solitude and silence.  
 In a joyful intercourse with Nature,  
 My pure, uncarved nature returns again.

—Hsieh Ling-yün, "Climbing the *Lu-chung* Mountain at  
*Yuang-chia*" (Lu 1984: 1162–3)

The poem may be divided into the descriptive main body (lines 1–12) and the Taoist meditative conclusion (lines 13–20). Several motifs derived from the three occult texts can be found in the meditative conclusion: hermit's life 不事, endurance 貞, and goodness 吉 from *I-ching*, Oneness 抱一 from *Lao-tzu*, and pure, uncarved nature 繕性 from *Chuang-tzu*. We may presume that these Neo-Taoist motifs and interpretants are read out from the landscape as the sign in the process of contemplation; yet some kind of arbitrariness between these interpretants and the sign can not be overlooked, for there is no guarantee for one to arrive at these motifs and interpretants directly from the physical state of the landscape. Indeed, the force of iconicity and the force of arbitrariness always co-exist in the process of signification as shown in the contemporary semiotics and my study of *carpe diem* poetry (Ku 1986). In the present case, these motifs and the Taoist aesthetic, philosophical attitudes contained in the meditative conclusion, namely, remoteness 幽, fartherness 邈, silence 寂, joyfulness 恬, are in harmony with the landscape. Meanwhile, the dialectic process as implied in the Taoist return to one's nature finds its iconic expression in the landscape description: turning, recurring, winding, bending, furthering, all imply some kind of dialectic return. Indeed, both the Taoist motifs or attitudes and the landscape des-

criptions are iconic to each other. Such a selection and combination of natural objects in landscape poetry was determined by the occult meditation of Taoism, for before that time the natural objects were not so chosen and combined as to become iconic to the *Tao*, taken as the Absolute Object and Final Interpretant of Landscape as the Sign in our Peircean triadic semiotic model. All the Taoist motifs, concepts, sentiments, and attitudes are mediative interpretants, leading to the same Absolute Object and Final Interpretant: the *Tao*.

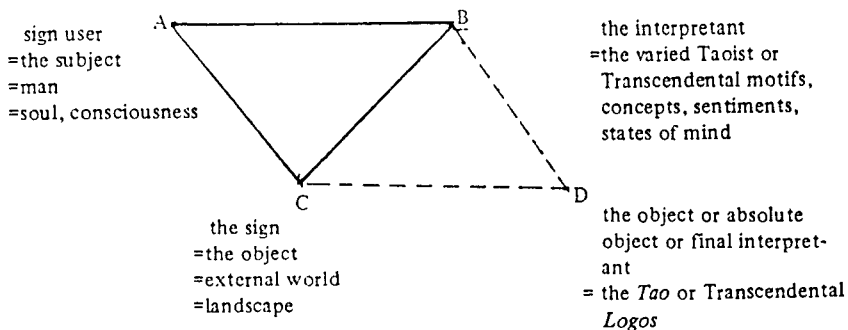
Does the landscape in English Romanticism also imply something similar to the *Tao* as its Absolute Object and Final Interpretant? Deistic theology, pantheism, natural religion, supernatural naturalism, all the concepts Western scholars use to describe what is behind the landscape or nature, point to the fact that landscape is not merely the landscape accessible to our five senses but the landscape supported by what we shall call, for the present case, Transcendental *Logos*, which could be considered as an equivalent and counterpart to the *Tao* of the East. Wordsworth says that natural objects display a “holy plan” (“Lines Written in Early Spring;” Abrams et al. 1979: II, 152–3), and that there resides in nature a power of elevation, a sense of sublime and joy, “a motion and a spirit, that impels/ All thinking things, all objects of thought,/ And rolls through all things” (“Tintern Abbey;” Abrams et al. 1979: II, 157). What we want to prove so far is just that the landscape in both East and West is not only perceptible but also Transcendental—the differences and distinctions between the *Tao* and the Transcendental *Logos*, and consequently between all the Taoist and Transcendental motifs and ramifications, fall beyond the scope of the present study.

#### IV. DECONSTRUCTIVE PERSPECTIVE II

If we take man and culture as the starting point, both the Chinese *Tao* and the Western Transcendental *Logos* as the Absolute Object and Final Interpretant behind landscape perception and landscape poetry are nothing but the result of semiotic behavior in which man and culture act upon the physical state of the world and turn it into a sign for his and culture’s own sake. Contemporary Western critics recognize such a dialectic process in landscape poetry; Hartman (1964) calls this process by the name of the *via naturaliter negativa*, that is to say, the poet negates the landscape so

that he may enter the transcendental world and the whole process is nothing but the pursuit and expression of the human soul. Similarly, Bloom (1970) considers this dialectic process as the self-return of human consciousness *via* nature. On the other hand, the controversy over the adequacy or inadequacy of language or *yen* 言 to convey and express the meaning or *yi* 意 began to gain its momentum in Neo-Taoism of the Six Dynasties when landscape poetry was born. The *yi* covers not only the semantic components but also all the nuances of heart and mind in man's responding to the world. The Taoists began to advocate the meaning beyond meaning, that is to say, the otherliness of language, by "forgetting" and "going beyond" language and meaning. The Taoist distrust of sign system may imply somewhat a dialectic return to the sign user's subjectivity, for in such a Taoist distrust the signs may be taken as inadequate symbols to be passed over or "forgotten" in the Taoist vocabulary *via* which the sign-user returns to himself. From my present perspective, the dialectic process in landscape perception as enunciated by Hartman and Bloom, or obscurely implied in the Taoist controversy over the problem of meaning (*yi*) and language (*yen*), or the signified and the signifier in the large perspective, is in accordance with what is defined as the modelling process of signs in contemporary semiotics: the sign user reads certain interpretants into the signs so that he may model the world into a certain mode and consequently models himself by way of the already modelled world.

Lotman's concept of modelling function and Peirce's concept of *semiosis* may be joined together to account for the landscape perception in landscape poetry, and the whole process may be diagrammed as two triangles with a common side as below:



Triangle BCD represents Peirce's triadic semiotic model which involves a "tri-relative influence" of "three subjects, such as a sign, its object and its interpretant" (5.484);

that is to say, we have landscape as the sign, the *Tao* or Transcendental *Logos* as its object, or more correctly, its Absolute Object or Final Interpretant, and the varied Taoist or Transcendental motifs as its mediative interpretants when Peirce's model is translated into the semiotic process of landscape. Meanwhile, triangle ABC represents another tri-relative relation which takes into consideration the subject-object dialectic and the modelling function, which is, in my understanding, mediated by interpretants. In fact, the subject is defined *via* the interpretants which the subject gives to the object while the object is therefore perfused with meaning: this return to the subject *via* the object through the mediation of interpretants has been explained before in terms of Lotman's modelling function and Hartman-Bloom's dialectical reading of Romantic nature poetry. Now, triangle BCD and triangle ABC share the same side BC. That is to say, the general sign process, represented by BCD, and the subject-object relation and the modelling function, represented by ABC, meet and merge together. In other words, landscape, to the subject, becomes such a sign as to imply the *Tao* or Transcendental *Logos* as its Absolute Object, and the Taoist or Transcendental motifs as its mediative interpretants, through which the subject is defined and the modelling function is completed.

Basing on this theoretical foundation, I shall here apply the method of double perspective, which Derrida would simply call "double", to deconstruct two modes of blindness and insight, namely, the so-called pure presentation and dramatization of the landscape on the one hand and the so-called victory of the mind on the other hand—the former is supposed to be best represented by Chinese landscape poetry while the latter falls upon the Western landscape poetry. We shall take the Chinese landscape poetry first:

人閒桂花落  
 夜靜春山空  
 月出驚山鳥  
 時鳴春澗中  
 ——王維「鳥鳴澗」

Man is at leisure while cassia flowers fall.  
 Night is quiet and spring mountain is empty.  
 Moon rises; a mountain bird is startled,  
 Singing at times upon the spring stream.

— Wang Wei, "Bird-Singing Stream" (1975: 240)

If we surrender ourselves, totally, to the Neo-Taoist belief, it might not be wrong for us to say that what is in the poem is a pure presentation and dramatization of the landscape, without the mediation of man. Yet, in the last analysis and seen from behind, language and writing—pay attention to Barthes's concept of *écriture* (writing)—is a semiotic behavior, and semiotic behavior can not do away with the subjectivity of the sign user. “*I* do not know its name, and *I* call it *Tao* and compel it to have ‘Great’ as its name” (Lao-tzu 1970: Chapter 25; emphases mine). 吾不知其名，字之曰道，強爲之名曰大（老子二十五章）。 “The understanding of the ancient men is supreme. How supreme? In the beginning, they are *aware* of no existence of things; this is perfect, for nothing could be added. Next, they are *aware* that things exist, but no boundaries are made among them. And next, they are *aware* that there are boundaries, but no judgements as right and wrong are imposed.” (Chuang-tzu 1974: Chapter 2. “Equality of Things;” emphases mine) 古之人其知有所至矣。惡乎至？有以爲未始有物者，至矣盡矣，不可以加矣。其次以爲有物矣，而未始有封也。其次以爲有封矣，而未始有是非也。（莊子，「齊物論」） “*I*,” “compel” and “*aware*,” all these words reveal the participation of the subjectivity even in the Taoist statements which denounce subjectivity and sponsor the state of being-in-itself if we are allowed to borrow Heidegger's terminology. Analogous to Chuang-tzu's perspective, the man, the cassia flowers, the mountain, the moon, the bird, the stream are the “boundaries” and outcome of the participation of the subject while the leisure, the quietness, the startling are rather “the right and wrong,” (shall we say metaphorically?) after the further participation of the subject. Although Wang Wei allows the semiotic subject, the addresser in the poem, to naturalize himself and become rather a natural object called “man,” the presence of the subject and its subjectivity is nonetheless revealed. In fact, the activity of nature after the opening of the poem (i.e., man at leisure) is the activity under the contemplation of the subject.

In the light of Western landscape poetry, we may even say clumsily that the so-called pure presentation of landscape in Chinese poetry implies, in fact, a subjective frame, but the frame is just put aside. This theory of frame could be reversely proved by a counter example from Western landscape poetry:

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,  
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,  
*Their thoughts I cannot measure—*  
 But the least motion which they made,  
 It *seemed* a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
 To catch the breezy air;  
 And *I must think, do all I can,*  
 That there was pleasure there. (emphases mine)

— from Wordsworth, “Lines Written in Early Spring;”  
 (Abrams et al. 1979: II, 152)

The words with my emphases function as a contextual frame which modifies the world constructed by the rest of the words. Needless to say, this frame is a subjective, intellectual frame. Wordsworth might believe in something similar to the Oriental philosophy and experience some kind of convergence between the landscape and the *Tao*, but Wordsworth, unlike the Chinese poets, would like to lay bare before us this subjective, intellectual frame, this belief, this participation of subjectivity. Isn't it unfair to say that there is no mediation of the subject simply because of the absence of the frame?

Now let us move to the other side of landscape poetry where the mind is supposedly privileged:

For I have learned  
 To look on *nature*, not as in the hour  
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing sometimes  
 The still, sad music of humanity,  
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
 A *presence* that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of *setting suns*,  
 And the round *ocean* and the *living air*,  
 And the *blue sky*, and in the mind of man:  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking *things*, all *objects* of thought,  
 All rolls through all *things*. (emphases mine)

— from Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey;” (Abrams et al. 1979:  
 II, 157)

In this section where *the speaking subject* reaches its most elevated and most contemplative moment, *the object* (i.e., the light of setting suns, the round ocean, the living air, the blue sky, all thinking things, all objects, all things) continues to play an indispensable role. Meanwhile, the component of the object is subtly reinforced by the tendency of objectification in diction; for example, "presence" in the seventh line acquires some kind of substance of an object by its noun form; thinking subjects and products of thought are further objectified as "thinking *things*" and "*objects of thought*" in the fourteenth line.

When the writing of landscape poetry is rightly taken as a semiotic behavior, we are immediately certain that landscape poetry as a semiotic system must imply its modelling function. That is to say, the sign user or speaker in the poem designs a program to model the world and himself—hermit's life, Oneness, nobility, and joy in Hsieh's poem; quietness in Wang's poem; elevation, sublimity, and pleasure in Wordsworth's poem; and the more general binary oppositions which historically support the above states of mind, namely, eternity vs. vicissitude, quietness vs. unquietness, urban vs. rural. This modelling function can be also seen in the subtle identification between the addresser and the addressee in landscape poetry: indeed, the addresser is in fact speaking to himself and the poem is just a soliloquy. Even there appears a particular addressee in a landscape poem, for example, Dorothy in "Tintern Abbey," the addressee is only a nominative addressee, a structure of expression, a passage *via* which the addresser returns to himself. Notice that the appearance of Wordsworth's younger sister Dorothy in the last section of the poem is to reflect the former self of Wordsworth: "Thou my dearest Friend,/ My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch/ The language of my former heart, and read/ My former pleasures in the shooting lights/ Of thy wild eyes." Wordsworth does not allow Dorothy to reply; she is only a silent addressee. Surely, the quoted passage is addressed to Dorothy as the addressee, but shall we say that the addresser is in fact speaking to himself in this passage, telling himself that his former self has no return? Surely, the addresser speaks to the landscape too. The same addresser in "Tintern Abbey" addresses to the Wye river that "How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,/ O Sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,/ How often has my spirit turned to thee!" The Wye river is only a nominative addressee; the addresser in the passage is rather murmuring to himself that the Wye river is wandering through the wood and he has always turned to it in the city. In "Thou ask me the thorough Way unobstructed/ Fisherman's



song goes deep into the river nook” (from “Answer to Vice-Prefect Chang;” 1975: 120) 君問窮通理，漁歌入浦深（「酬張少府」）although there is a certain addressee “thou,” we still can say that the passage is a self-asking and self-answering of the poet and addresser Wang Wei.

Landscape poetry is a semiotic system and its modelling function is much revealed in the subject-object dialectics. Take Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (Abrams et al. 1979: II, 211) for example, what cuts through all the four stanzas of the poem is the addresser’s characteristic perception of the daffodils:

When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils.  
— from the first stanza

Ten Thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in springtly dance.  
— from the second stanza

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought.  
— from the third stanza

They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude.  
— from the fourth stanza

In the beginning of the poem, the speaker is “lonely,” wandering among vales and hills, until he encounters the golden, fluttering, dancing, sprightly daffodils in never-ending line and becomes joyful. From the subject-object perspective, we may say that the subject is absorbed into the object in his gazing (“I gazed—and gazed”) and acquires the attributes of the object, namely, jocundity and sprightliness. But the interaction is in fact more complex or dialectical than this, for before the subject is absorbed into and assimilated with the object, the speaking subject murmurs to himself in a form of self-persuasion: “A poet could not but be gay,/ In such a jocund company.” Therefore, the subject’s being absorbed into the object is the subject’s design, the subject’s self-compelling; and this reveals what semiotics has enunciated as modelling process, the sign-user designing a program to brainwash himself. The cause of designing such a modelling program, that is, the disturbance to be smoothed

down, is revealed in the motif of loneliness in the beginning of the poem; this “loneliness” is waiting for its opposition and antidote, waiting for the “crowd,” the “company” to counterbalance it as the poem develops. In other words, the speaking subject cannot find company in the human world and finds it in nature. The daffodils, which are the replacement of companions of the human world, will accompany him forever, will become his eternal companion in his solitude, at least in his inward eye. This process of internalization is akin to the above modelling function. “Loneliness” or “solitude” is sometimes considered as positive and favourable to the Romantics; yet we should know that this positiveness is rather deceptive, for the pursuit of loneliness or solitude is more like “flying from something that he dreads” than pursuing “the thing he loved,” (“Tintern Abbey”), if we are allowed to borrow Wordsworth’s words and apply them to the present subject. The negative side of loneliness or solitude, which has been put aside because of the dread of society, keeps coming back; and Wordsworth’s poem reveals to us this necessary negative-positive dialectic of solitude.

### V. DECONSTRUCTIVE PERSPECTIVE III

I now follow Todorov’s model of genre in constructing a general poetics of landscape poetry as I do in my study of *carpe diem* poetry (Ku 1986). The *Tao* or Transcendental *Logos*, the interpretants, the modelling system, all these constitute the semantic component (the content), while the subject-object dialectics, the soliloquy manner, the mediative, nominative character of the varied forms of the addressee, the presence or absence of the subjective frame, all these constitute the syntactic component (the structure) of landscape poetry East and West. Then, what will be the particularities of the verbal component (the expression) of landscape poetry? Central to this question is the problem of adequacy or inadequacy of language and landscape. What I want to do here is therefore not to mention all the characteristic verbal features of landscape poetry, but describe rather two methods common to landscape poetry and essential to the problem of adequacy or inadequacy of language and landscape by turning to Peirce’s theory again.

The first method is iconism where the abstract and the concrete co-exist and respond to each other. The mountains, rivers, natural objects, and their activities,

are the *concreteness* of the landscape poetry, while those verbal signs which are perfused with aesthetic, philosophical connotations constitute *the abstract side*; and we have illustrated earlier the iconic relation between two sides in our examples. Even in the most concrete poem like Liu Tsung-yüan's 柳宗元 "River Snow" 江雪 (1974: 726):

千山鳥飛絕  
萬徑人踪滅  
孤舟蓑笠翁  
獨釣寒江雪

Mountains are thousand but bird's flight *eliminated*.  
Paths are million while man's traces *extinct*.  
*Single* boat—an aged man in a bamboo-leaved cape  
Fishing *alone* the cold river snow. (emphases mine)

In juxtaposition with the *concreteness* of mountains and rivers, certain verbal signs, namely, elimination, extinction, singleness, loneliness, slip rather into *abstractness* perfused with aesthetic emotion. It seems as if the concrete mountains and rivers had soaked themselves in the great sea of abstractness and gusto. From our present perspective, both the *concreteness* of mountains and rivers and the *abstractness* of those verbal signs which connote different gusto and states of mind are iconic to the *Tao* or Transcendental *Logos*, the absolute object of the landscape; and this is what we call the iconism of landscape poetry.

Such landscape iconism is followed and fully expressed in Chinese landscape poetry. But now a metaphorical method is, characteristically, superimposed upon Western landscape poetry. In Peirce's total model, the metaphorical method is a triadic partition of the method of the hypoicon—hypoicon represents its object mainly by its similarity in its substantive embodiment and is divided into three categories, namely, image, diagram, and metaphor (2.276–77). What I call landscape iconism is based on pure icon, not hypoicon; therefore, the representation is not much based on the substantive embodiment as on its quality, and the presentation itself is only a possibility. According to Peirce, "A possibility alone is an Icon purely by virtue of its quality; and its object can only be a First" (2.276). Tsung Ping is right in saying that "mountains and rivers beautify the *Tao* with their forms," for "forms" are qualities, possibilities rather than substantive embodiments, and the *Tao*

belongs to the firstness, not the empiric secondness nor the mediative thirdness in Peirce's phenomenology. Indeed, landscape is not just the straw dog offered in sacrifice and thrown away while the ritual is finished—the *Tao* and the landscape are bound up with each other and we are even tempted to think that they are searching for each other, and this holy quest is mediated by Man. Mankind indulges himself in mountains and rivers, discovering there endless meaning and a rest place for his spirit, and this is not accidental at all. Nonetheless, when the icon or landscape iconism moves a step downward toward the substantive level, degeneratively, it arrives at the level of what Peirce calls "image." The difference between images and metaphors is that images are "those which *partake* of simple qualities, or First Firstness," while metaphors are "those which represent the representative character of a representamen by representing *a parallelism in something else.*" (emphases mine; 2.277) Both image and metaphor are based on "similarity" as said before; the difference, ignoring Peirce's triadic phenomenology for the moment, lies in that images turn inside upon themselves while metaphors reach outward "in something else" for the "parallelism" between the sign and its object. The binding up of the landscape and the *Tao* or Transcendental *Logos* illustrates the pure mode of icon. The metaphorical mode can be illustrated in the landscape fragment from Byron:

Above me are the Alps,  
The *palaces* of Nature, whose vast *walls*  
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,  
And throned Eternity in icy *halls*  
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls  
The avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow! (emphases mine)  
— *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, III, ixii (quoted from Nicolson  
1959: 16–17)

Here Nature has a Transcendental connotation beyond its physical aspect. Nature is not represented in the mode of icon, not just in the iconism of mountains and rivers, but *via* the mode of metaphor, for the Alps are likened to the "palaces" of Nature and this architectual figure is followed up by "walls" and "halls." That is to say, a metaphorical mode is superimposed upon the iconic mode proper.

## VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have, in a de-constructive spirit, re-constructed the common poetics of landscape poetry as a poetic genre and mode. This re-construction and poetics is normative and theoretical more than specific and empirical. Therefore, this re-construction and poetics may be *theoretically* vigorous—of course, many concepts and arguments could be much improved—but no one will be blind to the problems when the theoretical construction is drawn down to the empirical level and applied to individual texts. It immediately gives rise to the problem of deciding which is and which is not a landscape poem when the meditative, transcendental mode is overwhelming so that the landscape is unable to respond because it has lost its necessary, minimum presence, or when the mimetic, descriptive mode is overwhelming so that the landscape dries up without any Transcendental extension and connotation. Yet, this problem, I think, is not uncommon to any genre, especially when the genre is theoretically constructed. Indeed, a theoretical genre in its pure form and its varied empirical manifestations never fully overlap.

However, it appears that there are fewer landscape poems in the Romantic period of English poetry than we may have expected when we consider each poem in its entirety. To compensate for this, we do have what we would call “landscape fragments” scattered within Romantic poetry in abundance; they almost match the whole range of landscape poetry on all levels, namely, the Transcendental extension, the modelling function, the iconism; and when they are taken away from the poems to which they belong, they are nothing but individual landscape poems. To have to recourse to *fragments as poems* is not necessarily defective in intellect, if the genre is closely bound up with a certain motif, such as the case we have here, for a motif can not always develop fully and occupy the entirety of a poem but makes its appearance in a sufficient form in varied poems. To descend from a *poem* to a *fragment as poem* does not mean to nullify the genre but just make it more inclusive, more compatible with the reality of literature.

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# 從記號解構學的角度 建立中西山水詩的詩學模式

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## 中文摘要

「解構」(deconstructive)的傾向實貫通當代的思維，故論文之初即界定記號學(semiotics)所含涉的五種解構行爲，作爲本文的理論基礎，進而於論文中提出三個解構的透視，以論述中西山水詩，並以此三透視作爲其詩學模式。其一，中西山水詩歌皆有超越感官世界的「道」或「Logos」作爲山水背後的意義，也即普爾斯(C.S. Peirce)記號行義行爲中的「最終義符」(final interpretant)。其二，山水詩歌解釋上的兩極，或謂山水的純然演出，或謂心志的終極勝利，在記號解構學的觀照下，都不免爲兩「偏」，而歸結於記號底「規範功能」(modelling function)及「主體框框」兩概念，以解釋山水詩。其三，山水詩的表達，以「肖象法」(iconism)爲基礎，其上則可上置有「喻況法」(metaphorical mode)。結論則本於前面所述，納入文類學家托鐸洛夫(Todorov)的三元模式，以建構中西山水詩的詩學模式。