

John Z. Ming Chen · Yuhua Ji

Canadian- Daoist Poetics, Ethics, and Aesthetics

An Interdisciplinary and Cross-cultural
Study

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ISBN 978-3-662-47958-2 ISBN 978-3-662-47959-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-662-47959-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015951974

Springer Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London
© Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2016

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Printed on acid-free paper

Springer-Verlag GmbH Berlin Heidelberg is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

To / 献给:

Heather and Dr. James Steele

Chen Suming, Zhou Jian, and Zhou Xiuling
(陈苏明、周坚、周秀苓)

Jianqiang Lin (林健强)

Daoism and Canadian Literature Foreword

Canada. Why should we take it as a starting point for our multinational Daoist project? Why not America? Why not Britain or Germany? The answers are, paradoxically, simple and complex. The simple ones may run the full gamut of surface attractiveness in size, position, language, culture, nature, and colors: Canada is big, in fact, the biggest country in the world in terms of territory; it sits on the North Pole, half submerged in unspoiled water, with much pristine land “from coast to coast to coast,” as CBC anchorman Peter Mansbridge likes to repeat. Canada is one of the few countries that turned bilingual and multicultural much earlier than most other countries and is deemed a peace-loving and peace-keeping country replete with red salmon and red maple leaves on white snow. Simple answers can run endlessly, but we will let the cat out of the bag: Mary Wu, our English composition teacher, came from Canada, more than three and a half decades ago, so did Dr. Robert Cosby, our American literature professor in graduate studies. Their instructions and inspirations have been instrumental. This much can be said: in an inter-related and interpenetrating sense, these simple answers have intimate though sometimes tenuous connections with certain Daoist values, visions, and schemes on the one hand and with Daoist causality of the cosmos and “ten thousand” things on the other. As our thesis unfolds in the book proper, we hope all these Daoist-related themes will become apparent and meaningful.

Complex answers are much harder to find, as any “intelligent and complex human beings” would expect, so said Gayatri Spivak in a different context at the Asian Center Auditorium at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, in 1993. Take, for example, Hu Fuchen, a preeminent Chinese Daoist scholar. He has perspicaciously though uncannily pointed out the potential for Canada to be an ideal place for Daoism, as compared with America, in his *A General Discourse on Daoism* (translation ours; 2009: 126), but Hu does not expound on the specific reasons. On this side of the Pacific, a few famed North American writers or critics have provided us with literary intimations or examples that border on modern or postmodern enlightenment, if not apocalypses. The first is German-born writer, translator, and essayist F.P. Grove. His *In Search of Myself* and *A Search for America*

both conclude, with an undisguised candor, that America has lost its ideals and that Canada is a better place than America. He arrives at this determination after nearly a thousand pages of exploration, and this determination explains his choice to stay in Canada and become a Canadian citizen. Another Canadian writer, poet, essayist, and critic Margaret Atwood wrote two novels turned movies: *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. In the former, diseases from the south (read: America) can be construed as imagery and symbolism of anti-Americanism; in the latter, the escalating military violence and blatant misogynist attitudes against women in a dystopian society present a scathing critique of American religious fundamentalism. Our study does use these two Canadians for illustrating certain Daoist values and visions.

Similarly, two novels turned films by as many American writers also come immediately to mind: Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Where are the protagonists in these novels trying to escape to? Canada. Again, these two works of fiction have confirmed the will and need to embrace Canada as a haven, if not heaven. Here is not a place to give all the answers as to why both American writers envision Canada as a better place than America, and we do not mean to be anti-American for no good reason. Rather, we suggest that the works by Canadian and American writers cited above may offer some measure of hints about our choice of Canada as the first country for scrutiny.

In fact, Canada boasts over 70 fiction writers, poets, and critics/theorists who have been influenced and inspired by, and who have contributed to, Daoism on a global scale. Number counts, and there is power in a great number. This is the highest number per capita among all English-speaking countries; it is a number that serves to justify our placing Canada first. While we do not wish to engage in an unwarranted eulogy, Canadian creative writers have given us much food for thought. They range mainstream writers such as Malcolm Lowry, Fred Cogswell, Geoff Hancock, and Gary Geddes to multicultural and First Nations writers like Edith Eaton, Fred Wah, Sky Lee, Paul Yee, Wayson Choy, Joanne Arnott, and Larissa Lai. Why have they been drawn to, and engaged in the construction of, Daoism then? It will probably take two or even three slim volumes to answer the question satisfactorily.

In this connection, we will strive to address a further question why Canada has produced an equally impressive number of Daoist-inspired critics/theorists in the world per capita. Canadian critics and theorists like Northrop Frye, George Woodcock, W.H. New, Sherrill Grace, Shaobo Xie, John Z. Ming Chen, and Peide Jia have commented on Daoist creativity, topics, and visions. Xie and Chen have also identified linguistic and philosophical parallels between Jacques Derrida and Daoism in the mid-1990s. To crown it all, Zhang Longxi, author of *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics East and West*, delivered a series of Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto, which resulted in the publication of *Unexpected Affinities: Reading Across Cultures*. Significantly, his latter work has pointed out that many people have missed what follows from Kipling's much-cited line – "Never the twain shall meet"; the ensuing lines from Rudyard Kipling's poem actually suggest the possibility of the meeting of the West and East. As the globalization keeps roaring and moving with a relentless logic of its own, East and West

are bound to meet more than before. Canada seems to have shown the enviable possibility of bridging East and West in the recent past and in the near future.

“We are all immigrants,” Margaret Atwood once wrote. We can take this remark to mean locally or globally, and we can move well beyond the boundaries of Canada to those of the planet in relation to other planets in the universe. Canada is an immigrant country, with its fair share of ambivalence and diasporic experiences; it is also, to follow Linda Hutcheon’s argument, a typical postmodern country. Canadians have used their creative and critical energies to communicate or commune with, and to construct, the Dao, from another place and another time. As our thesis unfolds, we hope the readers will find a number of keys to the Daoist continuum and conundrum across languages, literatures, and cultures.

“Just watch me.” The initiator of Canadian bilingualism and multiculturalism and former Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Trudeau, once said invitingly. Let’s wait and watch what Canada has to offer.

Vancouver, Canada
Xiamen, China

John Z. Ming Chen
Yuhua Ji

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A Note on Standardization

In the past decade or so, most Daoist scholars all over the globe have adopted the pinyin system in place of the Wade-Giles system. We follow suit. However, in cases where previous publications or translations are cited, we have kept intact spellings such as “Tao” or “Taoist.” This decision is to prevent anachronisms and to respect the authenticity of earlier publications and the decisions of their authors.

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Daoism and World Literature Series Preface

Canadian Daoist Poetics, Ethics, and Aesthetics: An Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Study is an inaugural volume of a series of books on the relationships between Daoism and Western philosophy, religion, literature, as well as theory and criticism. We use Canada to commence our multinational project for reasons to be specified in the Foreword of this book, and subsequent volumes will examine America, Britain, Germany, France, and other countries, individually or collectively. In the current age of globalized scientism, consumerism, materialism, and “late capitalism,” to cite Fredric Jameson, our interdisciplinary, inter-literary, and cross-cultural approach can be, hopefully, vindicated. Such an approach can also start to address some of the ecological, moral, ethical, sociopolitical, and spiritual issues besetting the world, issues that blind and even soulless scientific and technological developments and advancement cannot even begin to solve. This much we hold dear: just as philosophy and religion are part and parcel of the mind, soul, and spirit of a culture, so literature and literary criticism can express, embody, and construct the sum total of the feelings and emotions, as well as the aesthetics and intellectual depth and width of a nation or the world, as an interconnected and harmonized community.

Daoism as a philosophy and religion has defied linguistic and cultural boundaries, and in the present, twenty-first-century postmodern era, it has taken roots in many non-Chinese literatures and cultures. Similarly, Chinese Daoist literature and literary theory have also traveled abroad through translation into many non-Chinese languages. Consequently, a sea change has occurred with Daoism as philosophical, religious, and literary discourses across the globe. In the last few decades, such hybrid Daoist discourses have been (re-)constructed as a theory in the West in the postmodern age; it has constituted an active theory of and for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the full sense of the term. We will discuss this phenomenon and feature a relatively brief introduction to Daoism in Chap. 1.

Philosophical Daoism’s acceptance or construction in the West is not new by any stretch of the imagination. As a matter of fact, such continental philosophers as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Martin Heidegger have studied and written on

Daoism as a philosophy and initiated a Western or Westernized Daoist discourse in the sense of Michel Foucault's theory. Hegel, lecturing on Daoism and Chinese philosophy identified in the *I Ching* nearly 200 years ago in 1816, said the following:

We still have [Lao Tzu's] principal writings; they are available in Vienna and I have seen them myself. One special passage is frequently quoted from them: "The nameless *Tao* is the beginning of Heaven and Earth; with a name *Tao* is the mother of the Universe (All Things). To the Chinese what is highest, the origin of things, is nothingness, emptiness, the altogether undetermined, the abstract universal, and this is also called *Tao* ..." (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 125).

Recent re-thinking of Hegelian philosophy in the context of anti-Orientalism, as well as of the history and discourse of the Other, has drastically changed the international intellectual landscape; however, Hegel remains, in our view, a chief, though at times misleading, proponent of philosophical exchanges between the East and West. Almost a hundred and 50 years later, Martin Heidegger was to converse on Daoism in a similarly open spirit, dictated by the imperatives of his times as much as by his own intellectual pursuit. According to J.J. Clarke, Heidegger "drew inspiration for some of his major ideas from the East, namely from Daoist and Zen Buddhist classics" (2000: 172). In light of this revelation about Heidegger, Clarke cites R. May as suggesting that "a chapter in the history of modern Western ideas may have to be rewritten" (2000: 173). So Heidegger and Daoism are no longer strange bedfellows. Of particular interest is Heidegger's significance across both the Atlantic and Pacific. A decade later after Clarke's observation, renowned American literary and cultural theorist Fredric Jameson was to compare Heideggerian and Daoist visions. In his 2010 *Valences of the Dialectic*, Jameson writes: "Even the notion of *Stimmung* is probably too subjective to render this world, now ominously darkened, now struck by sunburst: Taoist notions of world harmony and world balance are more satisfactory" (551). Jameson does not elaborate on his the reasons for his Daoist preference, and it is up to us to probe the matter further in this series.

It is when we treat Daoism as a philosophy and a religion that the issues of effecting change have become more complicated and, therefore, more challenging. We deem it necessary to cite from another preeminent German philosopher and political economist, Karl Marx: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it" (accessed from the Internet). If we intend to "change the world," as Marx has so forcefully put, how would Daoism fare? As a religion, Daoism has indeed exerted its influence globally as well. In the view of Laurence E. Sullivan's Preface to *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape* (2001: ix-x) distributed by Harvard University Press, religion, spirituality, and faith can be highly performative and lead to social and environmental changes. China has translated this English book into Chinese, and ecological changes have occurred. In history, Daoism can and has been developed and treated as both a religion and a philosophy with the concepts of "ti" and "tien" (Chang Chung-yuan 1968: 59-63). So, the hard-to-define and hybrid nature of Daoism does not in any way hamper its effectiveness in bringing about spiritual and material changes in millions and millions of Chinese and non-Chinese lives.

The following facts should be mentioned before we proceed further. Daoism as a heterogeneous philosophy and/or religion has defied linguistic boundaries and, in the current twenty-first-century postmodern era, has sprouted in many non-Chinese literatures and cultures. Chinese Daoist literature has also traveled abroad through translation into other non-Chinese languages. In fact, as a cultural product of ancient China that regards no facile disciplinary boundaries, Daoism has evolved or mutated into an “East Asian” religion in North America (Neusner 2009, 4th ed.; Scott 2012). In spite of decades and even centuries of repression and marginalization by the ruling classes and dominant ideologies (e.g., Confucianism and Marxist-Maoism) for the past two and a half millennia, Daoist religion has started to regain its strength domestically and internationally in the past decade or so (Palmer and Liu, ed. 2012).

For the authors of this series, the advent of the twenty-first century has ushered in several important events: Xiamen University faculty have produced two Chinese books partially on Daoism. We have, on our part, published two books and many essays in English and Chinese related to Daoist literary themes and visions across cultures. More remains to be done, of course. We are here to continue the healthy publishing streak in English abroad; our intention is to carry the torch of globalizing Daoism in this century and beyond. Thus, this series will bear witness to an age of global Daoist rejuvenation and renaissance, which may well approximate the glorious era of the Spring and Autumn Period in Chinese history in the axial age. Reconsidered will be Chinese philosophers, creative writers, and critics or theorists such as Laozi, Zhuangzi, Tao Yuanming, Li Bo, Su Shi, Lu Xun, Shen Congwen, Wang Zengqi, and Ah Cheng, to name but a few.

By our last count, no fewer than six Nobel laureates in literature and ten Nobel nominees on the world literary stage have been attracted to, or have constructed, Daoism in engaging ways. We have also established for this Daoist studies series several long lists of Chinese writers and philosophers translated into English, German, and French; in this regard, some lists of British, German, and French writers and critics will also be examined.

In our estimation, three main reasons seem to account for Western fascination with Daoism. Chief among them is an intellectual one: certain crises of faith and reason have occurred in the West in the wake of World War I, and especially World War II. Postmodern life is also an issue worth examining from a Daoist perspective. For some, European, if not Eurocentric, philosophies and religions seemed to have lost their long-held persuasive power in convincing the West and the rest of the world of the assumed superiority of Western rationality, teleology, and purposes of history. Next come the social-cultural, ideological, and political-economic reasons. Daoism, however transformed and constructed, can offer and has offered much enlightenment and wisdom to the West (J.J. Clarke 2000). Last but not least, and most importantly for our global literary-cultural project, literary, aesthetic, creative, and critical concerns and considerations reign supreme. Daoism has been employed variously in pondering matters of creative and critical synergies. We hope, of course, to find out more reasons.

Owing to space constraints, this monograph confines largely itself to Daoist poetics, ethics, and aesthetics constructed in Canada. Subsequent volumes will

cover new Canadian-made Daoist politics and theory and criticism, as well as those in America and in other European countries.

Let us begin a new Daoist-inspired journey to the West from the East. As the legend goes, Laozi left a pithy 5000-word book, the *Daodejing* (*Tao Te Ching*), before journeying through the Hangu Pass in Lingbao County, Henan province, to head West – out of China. He was never to return, or he returned in the figure of Buddha, as another story has it. We understand, of course, that Laozi’s West (i.e., India, to China’s West) is by no means our current, twenty-first-century West; we owe it to Laozi to follow his spirit and steps across the globe. The old saying that there is no turning back can hardly hold true at present. Ours is a two-way street between West and East, back and forth, endlessly.

Vancouver, Canada
Xiamen, China

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Acknowledgments

Dr. John Z. Ming Chen (陈中明), Guest Professor of the College of Foreign Languages and Cultures (the College), Xiamen University, China, thanks tremendously the Administration Office of Social Sciences Research of Xiamen University for the generous and continual grants in support of several series of projects under the rubric of “Making Philosophy and Social Sciences Prosper.” He is also deeply grateful to Professor Yuhua Ji (纪玉华) for his various and fruitful endeavors to bond Chen’s lifetime academic and cross-cultural interests with the research and publishing imperatives of the college and of Xiamen University at large. The result is a win-win situation for all parties.

For their indispensable insights, suggestions, and guidance in the past three decades, we would like to thank a long list of people genuinely. They consist of, in particular, the following mentors, colleagues, and experts in the fields of comparative, literary, and cultural studies, in religious and philosophical Daoism, and in classical Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, and Buddhism: Daniel Overmyer and Michael Duke of the University of British Columbia, James Steele of Carleton University, Adrian Hsia of McGill University, and Daoist and Tibetan-Buddhist master Ge Yingcai 葛英才 of Calgary, in Canada; Daoist master Guan Shixiong 关世雄 of Boston, Daoist master Yan Xin 严新 of California, and Fengshui master Jianqiang Lin 林健强, Daoist master Tu Jinsheng 涂金盛, and Daoist-Buddhist master Kenneth Chung 钟万年 of San Francisco, in the United States; and Daoist Master Chen Yongjun 陈永均 (disciple of the White Cloud Temple) of Beijing, Daoist-Buddhist Master Chang Geng 常根 of Shenzhen, and Daoist-Buddhist masters Chu Shiong Tian 徐尚田, Yip Chun 叶准, and Yip Ching 叶正 of Hong Kong, in China. John Z. Ming Chen appreciates especially the timely encouragement and enlightenment from preeminent Daoist scholar Hu Fuchen 胡孚琛.

We also thank the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* for granting us the written permissions to reprint the essays, in slightly revised forms for this monograph, on Malcolm Lowry, Fred Cogswell, Jacques Derrida, and Chuang Tze.

Special thanks are extended to Dr. James Steele, Adjunct Professor of the Department of English, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. Over the past few

years, he assiduously, unflaggingly, and meticulously edited the Daoist Glossary and a series of reviews of some 76 Daoist-related books, in Chinese and English alike. Though not an author of this monograph, he has nonetheless made multiple contributions beyond any description to this monograph. Dr. Steele's wife, Heather, has also played an indispensable part behind the scene in supporting her husband and in offering expert and sensitive editing advice. Thus, this volume is dedicated to this loving Canadian couple first and foremost.

For the invaluable emotional support, loving care, and nutritious foods during the last stage of this study, John Z. Ming Chen genuinely thanks his elder sister, Chen Suming 陈苏明; her husband, Zhou Jian 周坚; and their daughter or his niece, Zhou Xiuling 周秀苓, in Shenzhen, China, from early December 2014 to early January 2015 and from mid-February to March 6, 2015. Without them, this book may still remain in incubation; therefore, this monograph is devoted to them as well.

Our sense of academic modesty and propriety has also guided us to thank genuinely the anonymous internal and external readers, for or of Springer, of an earlier draft of our manuscripts. Their astute and frank suggestions have definitely enriched and improved the current book.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Daoism or Taoism is both a philosophy and a religion, though defining it once and for all, historically and globally, has never been an easy task. This difficulty continues to hold true even according to recent observations by internationally recognized experts such as Livia Kohn in the United States (“Daoist Studies in North America: A Survey of Scholars and Recent Trends” 2009) and Hu Fuchen in China (*A General Introduction to Daoism*, 2009: 6). For a brief and simplified introduction here, however, Daoism is first and foremost presented as an immensely rich and heterogeneous philosophy about the Dao and its power or virtue (*de* in pinyin) as a creative principle, about the dynamics of the yin/yang, and about the harmonized qi giving rise to everything. Daoism also covers a multitude of bio-spiritual practices related to the afore-mentioned concepts and principles, best expressed in original Chinese pinyin above to avoid potential corruption in misleading, reductionist, or even Orientalist translations (Keping Wang, *Reading the Dao: A Thematic Inquiry*, 2011: xii). Historically, this philosophy gave rise to a religious movement some 1800 years ago in China, a movement that not long after turned into an organized Daoist religion. This religion spread to Europe and then North America in the past few centuries, and has been subsumed, in English, under the umbrella term Daoism in pinyin or English, or Taoism in the Wade-Giles system.

Consequently, Daoism as a term is a current English coinage that refers to two fundamental concepts or terms in Chinese, first, 道家 (*daojia* in pinyin), Daoist philosophy, and second, 道教 (*daojiao* in pinyin), Daoist religion. 道家 (*Daojia*) in Chinese are two characters originally used by Sima Tan in the early Han Dynasty, to designate a pre-existing school of thought that was started, arguably, some 2600 years ago by the legendary Laozi, was expanded by Zhuangzi, in the axial age characterized by Karl Jaspers, and continued and reinvented by their followers throughout history to this day. The two-character term, 道家 (*daojia*) has since always meant the philosophical school of thought for the Chinese without causing much confusion or debate. As such, Daoist philosophy is characterized by emphases on “Dao as reality: the search for a new reality,” “opposites: contrast and complementation,” and “de and the integrity of the individual,” wuwei (non-action), and

ziran (naturally so) (Karyn L. Lai, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy*, 2008: 74–81).

In contrast, the term 道教 (*Daojiao*) in Chinese refers to a much later organized religious movement or school that has evolved into many branches for about 1800 years since the late Han Dynasty. This Chinese term also clearly designates the religion as derived from or based on the foundational texts by Laozi, the *Daode jing*, and by Zhuangzi, the *Zhuangzi*, or *Nanhua zhenjing*, with the deification of the authors and the scriptural canonization of the texts. There is little confusion or debate about the meaning of this Chinese term, 道教 or *daojiao*. According to Livia Kohn, this religion has “three...most important aspects,” including “the Dao as the underlying power that creates and supports everything,” “the understanding of multiple layers of heaven,” and “the firm conviction that the qi-based can be transmuted into an immortal spirit entity” (*Introducing Daoism*, 2009: 223–225). In Ralph Heintzman’s more recent, East-West comparative view, “[t]he Buddhist, Hindu, and Daoist traditions don’t lack reference to Heaven, or even to God or gods” (*Rediscovering Reverence*, 2011: 38.)

However, since the term Daoism or Taoism in English North America presently covers both philosophical and religious theories and practices mentioned above, confusions have arisen about semantics and classification. Partially because of this, debates by scholars about the divisibility of religious and philosophical Daoism have flared up, though there has been recent consensus established (Hu Fuchen 2009: 6–7). In addition, because of the compartmentalized, disciplinary study of Daoism in the North American educational system, the division of religious and philosophical Daoism has persisted. Scholars and teachers in different departments of North American educational institutions have staked separate territories and claimed various truths. As a result, the whole picture of what Daoism has often been unwittingly compromised.

Furthermore, as religious or philosophical Daoism is Americanized or Canadianized in its globalization process in the past century or so, intriguing transformations have necessarily occurred. Recent studies have tracked and analyzed some of these transformations (Adrian Hsia, ed., *TAO: Reception in East and West*, 1994; J.J. Clark, *The Tao of the West*, 2000; Gary D. Deangelis and Warren G. Frisina, eds., *Teaching the Daode Jing*, 2008; LLC Books, *American Taoists*, 2010). Yet, while North American scholarship about religious or philosophical Daoism has grown exponentially in the past 10 years (see Works Cited and Referenced), the same cannot be said of English scholarship about Daoism as a religion or philosophy in relation to literature and arts. Indeed, several key Daoist scholars have repeatedly called for serious and systematic studies in this largely untapped area (John Z. Ming Chen, *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers*, 2008; Livia Kohn, *Introducing Daoism*, 2009: 230; Jonathan Stalling, *Poetics of Emptiness*, 2010: 194–198; and Wei Li and John Ming Chen, *A Study of Canadian Social Realist Literature: Neo-Marxist, Confucian, and Daoist Perspectives*, 2011).

Lastly, as Daoism is globalized, and as literary and cultural studies have taken new turns in recent decades, it has been gradually constructed and employed as a critical and literary theory in the postmodern sense. This phenomenon has occurred

in the West, especially since post-structuralism and deconstruction held sway in the 1970s and 1980s before giving way to cultural and global studies in the 1990s. Quite a number of Western and Chinese scholars have contributed to Daoism's globalization and theorization.¹ In short, the East-West intellectual, inter-literary, and cross-cultural arenas have witnessed the so-called linguistic, philosophical, religious, and cultural turns, which have all had intriguing, liberating, and empowering contacts and experiences with constructed Daoism. By the early twenty-first century, this fact has become evident: Daoism in China and the West has been revitalized, re-configured, and re-instituted. As a result, new interpretations and constructions abound.

In fact, two massive anthologies of global reach have duly recognized the major shift, given due credence to Daoism as a theory in the postmodern and global sense, and contributed to the dissemination and re-construction of Daoism after its being deconstructed by post-structural critics and theorists in the West and East. Take, for example, American editor Vincent Leitch's much lauded second edition of the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (2010): it has recognized the need to include critics and theorists from the East and added an excerpt from eminent Chinese philosopher Zehou Li's earlier work on Chinese aesthetics, which is composed of three Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist strands. Likewise, in *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology* freshly released in April, 2013 to critical acclaim, Canadian editor Richard Lane embraces Daoism in conjunction with deconstruction as a theory. These timely global acknowledgements are of no small significance. As a result, by the thirteenth year of the twenty-first century, Daoism, in whatever constructed or reconstructed forms, has spread into myriad areas of studies, in much the same manner as Marxist, Freudian, and feminist theory.

Now we turn to the approach, main purposes, and contents of this volume. Our approach is multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural, and we employ globalization, comparative, and literary-cultural theory, including constructed Daoism as a theory in the postmodern sense. The chief goals are two. The first is to construct a cross-cultural Daoist imaginary or continuum between Chinese literature and culture, broadly conceived, and literatures in English and East Asian (diasporic) literatures across linguistic and cultural barriers. The results would be newly constructed Daoist poetics, ethics, aesthetics, and politics. The second goal is to build trans-Pacific bridges among conventionally isolated disciplines in inter-literary, diasporic, and cross- or multi-cultural studies. Thus, Daoist philosophy, religion, literature, and theory as an inter-related and integral field are all scrutinized globally across disciplines, languages, and cultures.

In terms of contents, this volume moves, in broad outline, from Daoist poetics and ethics to Daoist aesthetics, to be followed by a chapter on Daoist discourse on language and truth in general. In accordance to this overall design, this monograph studies creative major Canadian writers, i.e., Malcolm Lowry, Fred Cogswell, Lo Fu, and Paul Yee, as well as philosophers Jacques Derrida and Chuang Tze (Zhuang Zi).

¹ See Works Cited for J.J. Clarke 2000: 184–193; Jonathan Culler 2011: 14–16; Chen 2008; Wei and Chen, 2011.

The four major Canadian creative writers and critics have interpreted and constructed Daoism in their distinctively unique ways, according to their specific needs of the time and place, and to their creative impulses. As Fredric Jameson has said, “Always historicize” (*The Political Unconscious*, 1981: 9). The following substantive chapters share thematic consistency and unity in terms of Daoist poetics, ethics, and aesthetics; furthermore, they are arranged according to the rough chronological order, based largely on the dates of the publication of these authors’ major Daoist-related works. Malcolm Lowry, featured in Chap. 2, is arguably the very first writer in Canada to explore and construct the Dao in new and innovative ways; we feel compelled to use this chapter to re-define the Dao in a global and Canadian context and to set up the yin/yang paradigm for subsequent chapters on other writers to follow. His Western upbringing and contact with Eastern philosophies and religions have been well documented; however, his critique of industrialization and urbanization, and his re-examination of human beings relation to nature or the cosmos from a modernized Daoist perspective have not been fully discussed yet. Thus we focus on these unexamined dimensions. In addition to his re-worked interpretation of the Dao, we have found in Lowry’s corpus an early version of Daoist proto-feminist poetics and Daoist eco-criticism, though he has not couched his criticisms in precisely these new terms. Furthermore, by hailing and discoursing on the Dao as early as the first half of the twentieth century, Lowry was in fact well ahead of many Western poststructuralists in focusing on language and meaning, and in critiquing European logocentric traditions from a professed Daoist perspective. To further demonstrate Lowry’s contributions, we also discuss or make references to, where appropriate, Western thinkers, philosophers, and critics/theorists: A.C. Graham, Jacques Derrida, Helen Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Gayatri Spivak; the latter are all situated as being engaged in meaningful conversations with each other regarding certain Daoist principles on a global scale.

Chapter 3 builds on the multi-layered interpretations of Lowry’s uniquely constructed Daoist poetics and studies Fred Cogswell as another chief exponent and constructor of a different kind of Daoist poetics and ethics. Cogswell’s is a poetics of suggestive silence, elaboration, and the Dao’s natural rhythms. We argue for, in particular, Cogswell’s skilled and strategic re-inventions and applications of Daoist principles in matters of poetic form and content. Also evident is Cogswell’s sharp and philosophic-poetic critique of Western dualistic and Western humanist mentality, as well as his advocacy of a re-worked Daoist world outlook for modern life and ecology with the Daoist Nature writ large. In constructing Cogswell’s Daoist poetics developed under new global and Canadian local circumstances, we bring into the discussion Hegel, Karl Marx, Margaret Atwood, Earle Birney, and Hugh McLennan. The cross-cultural and global significance of Cogswell’s constructed Daoist poetics is obvious.

Chapter 4 discusses the 2001 Nobel Prize for Literature nominee Lo Fu’s re-invented Daoist inter-literary and cross-cultural poetics. Such a poetics is set in a dialogic relation with Confucian and Western poetics and metaphysics in a global and diasporic context. We address current critical deficiencies regarding Lo Fu’s Daoist poetics as a result of heavy focus on Buddhist and Confucian poetics. Also

discussed are European poetic and metaphysical traditions, with some focus on Lo Fu critiquing European poetics as practised by Kafka and Mallarmé. Quite a bit of space is devoted to Lo Fu's new poetics of the void and empty. Lo Fu, a poet and critic twice self-exiled with rich diasporic experiences, thus bridges and puts into a new Daoist perspective both Chinese and Western poetics and ethics.

Chapter 5 re-constructs Paul Yee's Daoist and Confucian ethical and spiritual value systems out of the specific Canadian social, cultural, and historical milieu of his fictional and historical writings. Here, we take a literary-cum-cultural approach to Yee's female characters and ground them firmly in the multi-cultural soil of North America and particularly Canada. We show different Western (mainly Christian) and Chinese (chiefly Confucian and Daoist) value systems play out in various and interactive ways. The critique of several key Confucian tenets is complemented by an endorsement of other valuable and recoupable Confucian ones. Emergent is an authentically constructed Canadian Daoist ethics or value system that seems to pre-figure a Daoist-feminist ethics, one that militates against misogynist and patriarchal rules and practices and that advocates spontaneity, individuality, independence, and freedom of imagination and will.

Chapters 6 and 7 embrace Daoist aesthetics as constructed respectively in Lowry's and Cogswell's works. Though Lowry wrote chiefly as a novelist and Cogswell as a poet, they were inspired, equally if differently, by the beauty and power of the Dao in a variety of natural imagery and symbolism. "The Dao models itself on Nature"; this has practically become a literary leitmotif. Indeed, Lowry and Cogswell have long ago started what is fashionably called the environmental or ecological aesthetics. But Daoism perhaps predates by far the twentieth and twenty-first century preoccupations with ecological issues made worse by the advent of capitalism and industrialization and its concomitant malaise. All these accounts, ultimately, for the fact that Harvard University Press found it necessary to publish a tome, *Daoism and Ecology* to re-invent Daoist aesthetics and politics. From China to Canada and vice versa, Lowry and Cogswell have allowed their imagination to roam freely without national or geographical boundaries. As a result, their re-invented Daoist aesthetics defies time and space to reach a new height of harmonized and achieved artistic and natural beauty particular to Daoist philosophy.

Chapter 8 embraces issues of the beauty and power of language to express or encode truth in more abstract and discursive terms by discussing comparatively and cross-culturally the theories of Jacques Derrida and Chuang Tze (Zhuang Zi). The chapter demonstrates, among other things, that certain dimensions of the twentieth-century deconstruction theory have been anticipated or pre-figured in ancient Chinese Daoist philosophical discourse, though marked differences exist to challenge any facile collapsing of Western and Chinese philosophical discourse on language and truth. The chapter also brings together influential Western thinkers such as Carl Jung and Hegel to showcase the broader implications of Daoism for Canadian writers and critics as well as for non-Canadian ones.

Needless to say, each of the above-mentioned major Canadian writers, as well as Jacques Derrida and Chuang Tze, has developed unique Daoist perspectives and executed distinctive artistic performances. In particular, Canadian writers' twentieth-

and twenty-first-century creative interpretations and constructions of Daoist concepts and principles have contributed considerably to the global Daoist imaginary or continuum in the English-language world. The Conclusion thus re-connects and recapitulates these writers' singular achievements in one final chapter; it further theorizes these authors' philosophical, spiritual, and literary accomplishments in terms of properly named Canada-made but globally significant Daoist poetics, ethics, and aesthetics.

Owing to space constraints, this volume confines itself to Daoist poetics, ethics and aesthetics constructed in Canada. The next volume will cover newly fashioned Canadian Daoist politics, as well as Daoist theory and criticism in more recent years. For readers' easy reference, we have attached to this volume an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural glossary of key Daoist aesthetic or literary terms. The third Daoist volume will be, in turn, followed by monographs on American-constructed Daoism in literature and in the field of theory and criticism. After America, subsequent volumes will probably explore Daoism in relation to literature and theory in several key European countries.

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Chapter 2

Malcolm Lowry and the Dao

... at such a time of stillness, at the brief period of high tide before the ebb, it was like what I have learned the Chinese called the Tao, that, they say, came into existence before Heaven and Earth, something so still, so changeless, and yet reaching everywhere, and in no danger of being exhausted: like "that which is so still and yet passes on in constant flow, and in passing on, becomes remote, and having become remote, returns". (Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place 236)

Although critical works on Malcolm Lowry are voluminous, only one article has done some justice to the influence of Daoism on his novella, "The Forest Path to the Spring" (hereafter abbreviated as "The Forest Path") (cf. Cross; Grace 1982; Vice). Barry Wood's "At the Edge of Eternity," initially published in *Canadian Literature* and re-published in W.H. New, ed. *Malcolm Lowry: The Writer and His Critics*, deals mainly with three issues in relation to the Tao¹: It correctly identifies the *I Ching* and the *Tao Te Ching*, especially the latter, with its "yang-yin [sic] Tao symbol" (190) and principle, as a fresh source of Lowry's inspiration; it also competently explains what the yang and the yin mean when applied to concrete objects; and finally, it correctly analyzes a number of major images and symbols in illustration of the circle-center structure and the "total fusion of opposites" (191), a fusion which enables the narrator to achieve enormous artistic creativity.

However, upon close examination, Wood's handling of the Tao errs regrettably on three crucial points. First, he makes a close connection between the *I Ching*² and the *Tao Te Ching*, but fails to spell out the fundamental differences between the cosmological and philosophical principles expounded respectively in the two works.

¹Tao should be pronounced dow as in the word dowager. A variation of this spelling from the Wade-Giles system is Dao, the way an educated Chinese would write it. The Chinese idioms or set expressions, *daojia* and *daojiao*, respectively signify Daoism as a school of philosophy and Daoism as a secularized form of religion. All subsequent Chinese proper names and words will be presented in the *pinyin* system, excepting those already established in current use.

²The name literally means the classic or bible of changes. It is allegedly the first written work in Chinese history to deal with the laws of changes in a schematic and proto-scientific way. Its main differences with the *Tao Te Ching* are spelt out, for instance, in Maurer (38) and Zhao (45; 47); cf. also Zhang Songru's "Preface" to Zhao's work (3) for succinct comments.

For one thing, although the *Tao Te Ching* does derive the concepts of yin and yang from the *I Ching*, it reverses completely initial order of importance placed on the two by the *I Ching* (cf. Zhao 43–47). Suffice it here to stress this point: for the first time in the Chinese history of cosmology, philosophy, and aesthetics, the *Tao Te Ching* advocates the yin, literally the shaded and the feminine, with the connotations of the soft and the weak, instead of the yang, the sunlit and the masculine, the hard and the strong. Thus, Wood is at fault in lumping together the two texts in the same line of thought. The second problem is inextricably related to the first: although Wood matches the two chief concepts of yin and yang with their respective concretized entities (e.g., the dark and the bright, the passive and active), he consistently puts yang before yin, creating a reversed order of priority for the discussion of the nature and workings of the Tao,³ thus missing one of Lowry's major artistic preoccupations, his challenge of conventional views of the feminine. Thirdly, one pair of Wood's yang/yin opposites ("good/bad" 190) does not reflect Taoist usage: Lao Zi's philosophical disinterestedness identifies or implies no moral preferences in any of his paired opposites (Graham 1986, 28; 1989, 331).

It is our contention that Lowry draws upon Taoism far more extensively than Wood has granted. To begin with, for Lowry the central image of water in its metonymic chain is not only imbued but also often equated with the Tao or the Taoist spirit. Water, especially as deluge—a punitive act of God—is of course a frequent image and theme in Western literature. But Lowry's water, as an extended metaphor, is by no means invested with such apocalyptic overtones of the Bible. For him, water is constantly present, supplying unflinching sustenance to all creatures or sustaining vitality for changes, activities, and movements, and it further represents the immanent nature of the Tao operative in everything. Second, in adopting the Taoist yin/yang perspective to all things and their metamorphoses and movements, as well as in disturbing, collapsing, and eventually reversing the binary oppositions, Lowry has come remarkably close to formulating and articulating Jacques Derrida's post-structuralist poetics. This observation may sound absurd at first. But our misgivings will quickly dissipate if we consider the many affinities between Derrida's and Lao Zi's philosophies of deconstruction and make a link across time and space between Lao Zi's and Zhuang Zi's discourse and Lowry's artistic sublimation of the Taoist philosophical tenets.⁴ Further, Lowry reshapes his whole vision of the human world and Nature in accordance with Taoism, and stresses harmony, balance, and peace. The Taoist or Edenic Eridanus thus epitomizes his ideal world of existence.

The possible influence of the *I Ching* has been confirmed and discussed by, among others, Epstein with the note "Edition unknown" (13, 38, 220); by New (1971b, 56); and by Grace. (1982, 60–61.135).

³ Many other Western scholars have made the same error (cf. Chen 1966, 115). Unfortunately, even the *A Chinese-English Dictionary* has, among 70 entries on yin and yang in the correct order, one idiom with reversed yin and yang: "Yinyangjia: the Yin-yang School of Positive and Negative Forces" (826). To be consistent with the Chinese idiomatic expression, the English should run as "the Yin-yang School of Negative and Positive Forces."

⁴ The notion of deconstruction can be traced in Lowry to his reading the *Tao Te Ching* (cf. Grace 1990a). For the reversal of values in Lao Zi and Derrida, see Graham (1989, 227–31); (1986, 2–3); Xie and Chen. We borrow the term "poetics" from Culler (1982, 7).

Moreover, it is Nature as Mother, and more directly, the narrator/jazz composer's wife, both supreme yin elements, that inculcate the narrator with the main tenets of the Tao (in the two senses that Lowry exploits). Therefore, "The Forest Path" not only proves to be a "paeon to love, nature and harmony" (Grace 1990a, 131); it also constitutes an unabashed encomium on the yin (with all of its associations), as a quintessentially vital balancing force so often neglected, trivialized, and ignored in Western patriarchy.⁵

2.1 The Rich Meanings of the Re-invented Tao

Before examining the controlling Taoist image of water, we should conduct an intertextual study on what Lowry sees as the Tao. The passage, quoted from "The Forest Path" and prefacing this paper, shows a mixture of plagiaristic paraphrasing and direct quotation,⁶ two features at once suggestive of Lowry's erudition and characteristic of his style of working layer upon layer of meanings into his writing. A look at the following poem from the *Tao Te Ching (Dao De Jing)* by Lao Zi (Lao-tze)⁷ may hint at some of the textual changes Lowry has made:

There was something heterogeneously formed,
 Predating Heaven and Earth in its birth.
 Soundless, formless, it stands solitary and does not change;
 It revolves without pause.
 This can be considered the mother of the universe.
 I do not know its name;
 Constrained, I would designate it "Tao,"
 And if forced to assign it a name,
 I would call it "Great."
 "Great" means "passing,"
 "Passing" means "Distance,"
 And "distance" means "returning." (Ch'en 142)

Although we are unable to locate the English version of the Taoist gospel which may match Lowry's citation precisely in his quotation marks, this chapter leaves no doubt about the source of his inspiration. In his novella, Lowry skillfully para-

⁵This aspect of Taoism has been commented on in many Western works and it influenced notions of its desirability for and adaptability to Feminism and Women's Studies in China and in the West. Julia Kristeva, for instance, extols Taoism in this context in her *About Chinese Women* and in a recent editorial in *Canadian Literature*, George Woodcock urges his readers to "over-value women" (7; cf. also John Z. Ming Chen, "Theorizing about New Modes of Representation and Ideology in a Postmodern Age: A Study of Margaret Atwood and Li Ang," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*. Vol. 21.3 (Sept. 1994), 341-54.

⁶For Lowry's intertextual mind in Kristeva's sense, see Grace (1992).

⁷To the best of our knowledge, Barry Wood was the first to identify the *Tao Te Ching* as an intertext. But Wood apparently did not take the trouble to check the specific chapter(s) or passage(s) that may correspond to Lowry's quotations. Given the extreme difficulty in ascertaining what Lowry actually read about Chinese philosophy, cosmology, and aesthetics in general, and the *Tao Te Ching* in particular, we are obliged to rely on internal evidence in "The Forest Path."

phrases the initial eight lines and then quotes directly, thus making his prose more fluid and readily comprehensible to the English reader. He clearly sublimes the notion of “Great” applied to the Tao, Heaven, Earth, and man in the *Tao Te Ching* in the latter part of the poem, since it does not mean anything specific or even philosophically profound to an ordinary reader: “Thus, the Tao is Great;/Heaven is Great;/Earth is Great;/And man is Great./In this universe, there are four ‘Greats’,/And man occupies one of them./Man emulates Heaven;/Heaven emulates the Tao;/And the Tao emulates that which is natural to it” (Ch’en 142). It is also possible that Lowry himself may have been baffled by both the abstractness and universal applicability in the word “Greatness” and decided not to avail himself of this particular idea in his own creative writing. However, despite such generic alterations by Lowry, which transform the poem into prose, the Taoist intertext remains. To start with, there is *one* kind of substance only, the Tao, before everything else in the universe. Hence, monism may be the word to designate such a cosmological origin. In addition, the Tao is Mother of the universe; it is essentially female, or at least androgynous. Further, the Tao gives birth to heaven and earth, which represent yang and yin respectively, thus initiating the yin/yang principle and complementaries,⁸ Fourthly, the Tao can be observed or perceived in myriad objects or phenomena and in their constant changes and circular or cyclical movements.

However, if we attempt to arrive at the definition and the ontological status of the Tao by summing up the above four points in philosophical terms, two meanings of the Tao arise: first, it means the “primordial natural force, possessing an infinite supply of power and creativity” (Ch’en 1981, 6), but it is unlike Aristotle’s notion of prime matter, which is “devoid of any forms and creativity” (Chen 1989, 117). Lowry’s stars in the remote distance and water everywhere may be the best examples illustrating this aspect of the Tao. At other times, the Tao designates the inherent laws governing the changes and movements of all cosmic substance and natural

⁸ Interested readers may want to consult Shi’s translation of Chuang Tzu for further illustration of the cardinal yin-first-yang-second principle (72, 328, 398, 420). For a different translation, see also Burton Watson’s *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. On this score, Graham, otherwise an authority on the Tao, seems to have erred in suggesting that “this inversion [of the yang and yin] is hardly found in Chuang-tzu” (1989, 223). Since the Chinese both respect and conform to certain ways of saying things, we believe that Zhuang Zi accepts, if only tacitly, the yin-first credo as already reversed by Lao Zi, for granted (cf. note 3 of the present article). Also worthy of note are two issues. First, Chuang Tzu’s concept of the specific embodiments and functions of the Yin and Yang differs considerably from Lao Tzu’s (cf. Graham 1981, 7–8, 132–34). Also, recent studies have questioned both the traditional lineage from Lao Zi to Zhuang Zi and the historical personage of Lao Zi, whereas leading Mainland Chinese scholars still uphold the connection between the two (about the question of the importance of the inner and outer chapters of *Chuang Tzu*, and relatedly, for a sophisticated confrontation with scholars who seek to dismantle the connections and affinities between the *Tao Te Ching* and *Chuang Tzu* cf. Zhao 53–58 and 59–66). For another opinion cf. Graham (1981, 3–5; 1981, 126–28). Graham specifies five stages of the legend in his article, “The Origins of the Legend of Lao Tan” ([1986] 1990), but we found most persuasive E.M. Chen’s “Conclusion” on the status of the *Tao Te Ching* as the master text of Taoism (1989, 18–22). The central similarities as well as differences between the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Chuang Tzu* are elaborated upon also by Zhao (1986, 67–90) and Graham (1981, 126–28, 188, 197–99); see also Note 1 in Xie and Chen 1992.

objects; it is immanent, not transcendental. Lowry's recurrent images of the tides and oceans in constant flow ideally exemplify such laws. Lowry is fascinated by both the materiality and regularity of the Tao, although he describes the latter in appreciably greater detail.⁹ These two layers of the Tao closely interrelate and interact, resulting in a text abundant in water imagery and pervasive of the Taoist yin/yang spirit.

There still exists an ineffable and transcendental dimension to the metaphysical Tao in Lowry's work. At this stage, we can only venture the conjecture that the first chapters in the *Tao Te Ching* and "The Forest Path" are both obsessed with naming the world (in Lowry, the New World) into being by language or discourse and with the almost endless proliferation of meanings that words or signifiers can set in motion. Compare, for instance, the following lines with Lowry's ruminations about the power of the word ("the Word is the beginning of creation itself" 269) and the richly pregnant meanings in the names of shacks and houses (220–221, 258):

Tao that can be spoken of,
Is not the Everlasting (ch'ang) Tao.
Name that can be named,
Is not the Everlasting (ch'ang) name.
Nameless (wu-ming), the origin (shih) of heaven and earth;
Named (yu-ming), the mother (mu) of ten thousand things. (E.M. Chen 51)

Again, paradoxically, language has the dual function of constructing a linguistic or semiotic system out of the (original) pre-linguistic world and, at the same time, severing itself from the organic reality and resulting in its own inadequacy, instability, and arbitrariness. Other chapters in Lowry and Lao Zi continue this linguistic-philosophical pursuit, though in a sporadic fashion.¹⁰ But it is the two meanings of the Tao—its materiality and regularity as bodied forth by water and its movement/stasis—that occupy the bulk of Lowry's artistic and creative attention.

Water imagery virtually inundates every page of the story. Although Lowry adopts the yin/yang Taoist principle and understands the importance of balance (cf. Wood 190), he also keenly senses a lack of equilibrium between the yin and yang elements and vigorously seeks to complement the yin. As a powerful yin element, water not only illustrates the nature and movement of the Tao, but also offsets the threat of yang fire (more on this in relation to war). At every turn, we find Lowry employing, in a metonymic chain, the following signifiers: fog, haze, mist, steam, vapour; rain; spring, streams, brooks, rivers; tides, currents; sea, ocean. Although we do not know whether Lowry read other chapters in the *Tao Te Ching* specifically on water as a manifest form of the Tao, the citation in the epigraph of this article from "The Forest Path" vividly describes the Tao as tides in constant motion. A

⁹The paradoxical nature of constancy and change implied in the definition of the Tao has been initially articulated by Qian Zhongshu; his student, Zhang Longxi, deals with it at great length (1992, 21–29).

¹⁰We understand the problematics of language and reality by a comparison of Zhuang Zi's and Derrida's theory of deconstruction (cf. Xie and Chen 1992: 363–76).

closer examination of a few passages from the Taoist bible may further illustrate the trajectory or patterns of movement of the Tao/water:

Chapter XI

Circularity is the movement of Tao (Ch'eh 13)

Chapter XXV

It [Tao] revolves without pause.

...

And "distance" means "returning." (Ch'en 142)

Chapter XVI

Now, of the myriad things in all of their profusion each again returns to its root.

Returning to the root is called "tranquillity;"

And "tranquillity" is called "restoring the original nature." (Ch'en 110)

In both Lowry's and Lao Zi's texts, reverberating everywhere are such phrases as flux and flow, curves, circles, cycles, and returns. They graphically inscribe the circular or curvilinear movements of water in its multifarious forms (e.g. vapour, mist, steam). It is true that Lowry has made conspicuous use of the circle in *Ultramarine*: he sees them as "closed," "vicious," and then open and benevolent (Grace 1982, 11). But there the image is geometrical and seems relatively fixed. Here, inspired by the fluidity and power in the tidal water like the Tao as a cleansing and purifying element in the inlet, Lowry allows water to run its own course: either by evaporation, by lunar or solar gravity forming tides, or by free fall, water moves constantly and incessantly—in the air, at sea, on land—creating minor circles as in ripples (241, 286) or huge curves as in rainbows (241, 286).

It is worth mentioning that the images of tides have kept resurfacing in Lowry's oeuvre ever since the first voyage novel, *Ultramarine*, well before Lowry comes to grips with Taoist concepts. But once he associates the tide with the Tao, the former no longer remains just an insignificant object, an isolated natural phenomenon, or even merely a powerful literary image. For him, the tide assumes a philosophical and cosmological dimension, paradoxically the universal law of movement and stillness (particularly "at the brief period of high tide before the ebb" 236) existing in all things. Partially because of this unifying or totalizing function, Wood has described the Tao image as linking "all ... levels of meaning" in "The Forest Path" (190).¹¹ Invariably, the images of water exhibit a pattern of returning or cycles, local or global. It is through this constant recirculation that water gains its endless movement, just as the Tao revolves or returns incessantly in circles or cycles.

Lowry's consistent representation of the movement of the Tao through the image of water in motion carries over to his vision of human beings as part of the universal scheme subject to such a law. To cement his point, Lowry re-evokes his paraphrasing of chapter 25 of the *Tao Te Ching* at the end of his novella:

And the rain itself was water from the sea, as my wife first taught me, raised to heaven by the sun, transformed into clouds, and falling again into the sea. While within the inlet itself

¹¹ For a more comprehensive study of Taoist imagery at work in the whole Lowry canon, see John Ming Chen, "'The Voyage That Never Ends': Malcolm Lowry's Taoist Aesthetics of Return/Reversals," in *TAO: Reception in East and West* edited by Adrian Hsia (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

the tides and currents in that sea returned, became remote, and becoming remote, like that which is called the Tao; returned again as we ourselves had done. (286)

In a symbolic act ridding the citation of its quotation marks he uses earlier, Lowry makes the Taoist intertext part of his own signifying system. Noteworthy is the fact that the narrator's wife makes him realize the profound truth about the circular (spatial) and cyclical (temporal) movements of rains and tides. It is as if the wife, being feminine and yin in the Taoist world, by nature knew her alike element intuitively and intimately. The narrator, on his part, hastens to add that he learns quickly and sees clearly the pattern of returning in the human sphere: the seasonal coming-home from the ocean of their neighbours (the fishermen), as well as their own re-visit to Eridanus after years of absence. Both water and human beings are thus viewed as being governed by the same law of circular or cyclical movement, a law particularly well expounded by the Taoist symbol of the yin/yang circle.

If the circularity and cyclicity of water imagery exemplifies the Tao in motion, water in its relatively peaceful moments not only adds to the yin power: but also brings out some other aspects of the Tao: its humbleness or humility, its clarity and tranquillity, and its sobering and balancing power. The first of these relates to the low position of water the Tao always takes. Its voluntary humbleness is best suggested in the following lines from the *Tao Te Ching*:

Chapter VIII

The highest adeptness is like water,
And the adeptness of water lies in its benefitting the myriad things
Without contending with them.

It dwells in places which all men disdain,
And because of this, is closet to Tao. (Ch'en 79)

Chapter LXVI

The reason why the great rivers and seas
Are able to be the kings of the various streams
Is because they are adept at dwelling in low places. (Ch'en 276)

In Lowry's text, we are unmistakably reminded by the narrator that he and his wife reside at "water's edge" (228), at the lowest point of the mountain slope just above sea level. One step further would literally push them into the water. This strategically important dwelling-place in the closest proximity to the yin element benefits both husband and wife: they cherish the memories of the sun (yang element) rising and setting, shedding its light slantingly upon the misty sea surface (yin) and creating a perfect harmony of the yin/yang opposites (235); they can hear the breaths and rhythms of the water lapping against their house. In particular, the narrator enjoys to his heart's content swimming in this yin element when it is poised between high tide and low ebb, relishing the "still" moments before it is in motion again. It is as if he were answering the call of Lao Zi whispered two millennia earlier: "Swim with the tides." He must, in the modern cant phrase, "adjust himself to his environment" (Giles 23) and be one with it.

Symbolically too, the couple are humble, simple people who have taken on the humbleness and low status of the water, hence the natural, geographical image translated into a vertical social metaphor. They have chosen to live away from all

signs of upward mobility frenziedly sought by the populace in the city across the inlet: the social climb, material pursuits, and rampant individualism and selfishness. The couple are content to be leading a most basic life as simple and transparent as water. Indeed, when the narrator approaches the fountain, he does so in the mood of a pious disciple of Taoism:

Ah, little path to the spring! It struck me that
I must be at bottom a very humble man to take such
creative pleasure from such an innocent source, and
that I must be careful not to let my pride in this
humbleness spoil everything. (253)

The narrator is keenly aware of his newly absorbed Taoist way of lying low. He does not allow himself even the luxury of piquing himself on his humbleness: each walk to the spring thus turns out to be an ever refreshing lesson in chastened humbleness; more significantly, the pilgrimage culminates in a baptism in water: his manifested Taoist spirit of voluntary humbleness thus combines with the low-lying water, and the spiritual unity with the Tao as water is finally consummated. Also, the stillness of water provides the narrator with a sense of tranquility and of self-reflexivity, as well as a philosophical clairvoyance denied to most city-dwellers. Occasions abound when the narrator, together with his wife, discovers that the water in the inlet can be as smooth and flat as a mirror. He cannot help but marvel at the picturesque scenery of mountains and pines reflected in the water (230). Before this scene, the couple are restless in their effort to solve a pressing issue: whether or not to stay in Eridanus and “renounc[e] the world altogether” (233) when the war is raging. But shortly after this scene of natural peace and quiet, they “had decided to stay,” “swimming every day” (234). From the narrator’s retrospective point of view, the unruffled water functioning like a “dark mirror” (230, 286) first induces and then parallels the stillness and tranquillity of the narrator’s otherwise troubled inner world. It is here that we hear some distant echoes to a few lines from the Taoist text which vividly describe the mirror-like quality of water and its quieting and tranquillizing capacity: “So if the stillness of water fosters sight, we will see even more when our inner gods are still! And what is the quietude in the heart of a sage? It is a mirror for viewing all nature and creation” (Shi, *The Sayings of Chuang Tzu* 146). In both Lowry’s and Chuang Tzu’s cases, the relative calm of the water serves as a catalyst to quiet down the disturbed mind of human beings; such tranquillity also enables the narrator (and by extension, all humanity) to view social turmoil and political unrest calmly and objectively, distance himself from them, and make a quick yet judicious decision to remain in the lap of nature. Lowry’s narrator, we may suggest, arrives precisely at that tranquil state of mind when his boat is afloat on the limpid and calm water.

One may argue, of course, that such a plentitude of water could well be a natural occurrence in the inlet close to the ocean, but Lowry definitely works more meanings into a simple object by counterpointing water against fire, the elemental yang, and its social counterparts such as wars and civilization. We are reminded that the narrator’s first two shacks, together with his manuscripts, were consumed by fire and that forest fire, too, poses a constant threat to the couple. Fire as an element is

thus seen not merely as a hazard, but a force that exerts its will any time when the elements are out of balance. It is little wonder, then, that we have the subtle but clever uses of puns on water in the names of houses such as “Trickle-In,” “Doo-Drop-Inn” (220) and in the titles of his musical pieces, “In a Mist,” “Swinging the Maelstrom,” “Wild Water,” and “Little Path to the Spring” (252–53). As some forms of incantation, the “dripping” names further point to the need for an abundance of water to fend off its opposite. We should also emphasize that only by the waterside of Eridanus can the narrator manage to muster all the water he can to perform the counterbalancing act: the inlet, being connected to the ocean, has no lack of water; the floor of the porch is actually immersed in water at high tide (235); he can easily plunge into the water in case of a fire. In short, all preventive and balancing measures are in place against fire on account of the intimate closeness to the yin water.

The crucial function of water can be better appreciated if we examine recurrent images of fire in Lowry’s work. In addition to the fire that destroys the narrator’s shack in “The Forest Path,” the volcanic fire belching out from *Under the Volcano* and the elemental fire that dogs the narrator on his journey in *October Ferry to Gabriola* (Chapters 16, 18, 19, 28) indicate a thematic consistency in Lowry’s fiction. The various fires in many of his texts also support the observation that Lowry perceived an imbalance of elemental form. Thinking in the same vein, he casts civilization, war, and city in the role of fire to be neutralized or equalized respectively by nature, peace, and countryside. Briefly put, Lowry exploits virtually all of the key functions and attributes of water as spelt out by the Taoist philosopher-teacher. But the student undoubtedly contributes a great deal of his own. What are mostly pithy, suggestive sayings about water in Lao Zi’s intellectual discourse, turns into palpably vivid, concrete, and sensuous images that recur like a leitmotif; the philosophical and cosmic purport of water is by no means lost: it comes through with much force because of, not in spite of, Lowry’s process of concretization and vivification (cf. Althusser; Eagleton 98–99). As a result, the two basic meanings of the Tao (materiality and universal regularity) are fully fleshed out. We cannot but feel with immediacy and concreteness the powerful presence of the water, not only as an object and the complementary of fire, but also as a metaphor for the ubiquitous Tao, operating in everything.

2.2 The Yin/Yang Paradigm and Multiple Applications

If Lowry’s reading of the *Tao Te Ching* leads him to a firm grasp of the two significations of the Tao, it also results in his viewing everything from a fresh perspective of the yin/yang principle. In this regard Barry Wood deserves to be mentioned again: despite his mistake in reversing the yin/yang order, he does correctly pinpoint this cardinal principle as functional in the ultimate achievement of a creative equilibrium (end product) by Lowry’s narrator in terms of space, time, and subjectivity (190–91). Wood’s observations on the effects of a new balance, where the triad is perfectly aligned at a center (Eridanas), can hardly be surpassed. However, we are

more curious about the process of reaching, or at least perceiving, such an ideal state.

Before embarking on an explanation of the process of reaching, we need to further examine yin and yang and their multiple ramifications. On the omnipresence of the yin and yang, Lao Zi makes a most succinct comment; he couches his ideas in a series of numerals and in a loosely tautological structure:

The Tao engenders one,
 One engenders two,
 Two engenders three,
 And three engenders the myriad things.
 The myriad things shoulder the yin vapours and embrace the yang,
 And through the coalescing of these vapours,
 They attain a state of harmony. (Ch'en 207)

Consistent with the monistic views previously mentioned (Chapter 25 of the *Tao Te Ching* and Lowry's paraphrasing on two occasions), this chapter articulates a specific process of cosmic origin from the one to the infinite in arithmetic progression. If we make some East-West comparisons, we notice that the one-two-three-many process of creation in the *Tao Te Ching* parallels Annie Besant's formula of the creation of the world (New 1971a, 129–30). Of course, Besant's interest rests in the spiritual life in the Western (Christian) sense of the word, with God in the center and as a creator. The *Tao Te Ching*, on the other hand, has no use for theology or religion. Its concerns are strictly cosmological and philosophical: it views the Tao (here as heterogeneous substance in a vast nebulous and chaotic space predating everything else) as one self-generating entity, which can "split," as it were, into two, the yin and yang. These two in turn coalesce and form a harmonious vapour (three) and in due course multiply into myriad things (cf. E.M. Chen 158–59).¹² Therefore, everything has the yin and yang sides to it; the perfect balance of them guarantees and produces harmony and peace. Lowry's narrator has to learn to see the two sides simultaneously and value them equally.

But the dynamic and perpetual workings of yin and yang go far beyond what these two words in isolation would suggest. When we juxtapose the two terms and place their respective concretised objects under them, more complex relations emerge: we need to identify not only the opposition or complementarity in each pair (within the same row but across the column, e.g., heaven and earth), but also in each pair formed between different rows and across column (e.g., heaven and autumn in the list below); we also need to understand the cohesiveness and commonality among different items within the same column (paradigm). The recent excavation of the *Lao-Tzu* in Mawang-tui, according to Graham's *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (27–28), has provided us with the earliest comprehensive list of the Yang and the Yin.¹³

¹²A slightly different interpretation of this "splitting" process is in Ch'en (207–208).

¹³Since Lao Zi reverses what used to be the yang/yin opposition, we think it is more appropriate to put the right column on the left, and vice versa. However, as we are quoting, we keep the original order intact. To present-day readers, some of these terms may seem simplistic, fatuous, and even

A. Yang	B. Yin
1. Heaven	Earth
2. Spring	Autumn
3. Summer	Winter
4. Day	Night
5. Big states	Small states
6. Important states	Insignificant states
7. Action	Inaction
8. Stretching	Contracting
9. Ruler	Minister
10. Above	Below
11. Man	Woman
12. Father	Child
13. Elder	Younger brother
14. Older	Younger
15. Noble	Base
16. Getting on in the world	Being stuck where one is
17. Taking a wife/begetting a child	Having a funeral
18. Controlling others	Being controlled by others
19. Guest	Host
20. Soldiers	Labourers
21. Speech	Silence
22. Giving	Receiving

The combination and permutation of a different number of elements taken from the left and/or right columns immediately complicate the overall composition or quality of yin and yang. Although by no means going into every detail on this list, Lowry deals with a variety of binary oppositions or antinomies which can best studied with the yin and yang principle in mind. Moreover, if we change conceptual paradigms, the issue becomes even more transparent. Western metaphysics has privileged the one (or yang in the Chinese system; nearly every item on the left side) over the other (yin), as Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous have persistently critiqued this in different contexts.¹⁴ From a comparative perspective, A.C. Graham

blatantly sexist in a philosophical poem which is the *Tao Te Ching*, but we must make sufficient allowance for both the undeveloped Chinese theoretical discourse and different cultural sensibilities of 2500 years ago, and for the almost always woeful inadequacy of translation. Leaving aside the fact that the 'Preface' of E.M. Chen's 1989 English version of the *Tao Te Ching* (from the classical Chinese) has put the number of translations at "more than forty" (ix), the nearly insurmountable difficulty confronting all translators of Chinese into English has been voiced even with regards to modern and contemporary Chinese (Duke; Lee).

¹⁴For the reversal of binary oppositions between culture and nature, and speech and writing cf. Derrida; for a challenge of the establishment of a binary system in terms of the couple, man and woman: "action/passivity; sun/moon; culture/nature; day/night; father/mother; head/heart; intelligible/palpable; logos/pathos," etc. (cf. Cixous). Interestingly, Cixous's terms, with some possible exceptions, bear a striking resemblance to those used in the Taoist texts. In "Castration or

(1989) perspicuously capsulizes the differences between Chinese and Western views on the chains A and B:

As has long been recognized, China tends to treat opposites as complementary, the West as conflicting. It is the explicitness of the Yin/Yang system which shows up this difference, the first between the conceptual schemes to attract attention. That Western thought not only has a chain of oppositions at the back of it but has a preoccupation about their relation to be exposed and challenged has been appreciated only since Derrida. (331)

Considered in this light, Lowry's narrator must not only understand and appreciate the balance of the yin and yang, he also has to redress the already existing imbalance by stressing heavily the yin side. More specifically, narrator undergoes a process of unlearning and learning anew, step by step in his daily spiritual walk, the woefully neglected importance of the left side in the complementary palm: night/day, winter/spring, stillness/movement, and flexibility/firmness.¹⁵ Lowry's artistic and creative appropriation of the Taoist parameters lies, however, in his moralistic emphasis on the yin, since the original Taoist dialectical division of things does not imply any good/bad moral judgements. Lowry seems to be fairly overt and occasionally vehement in attacking the yang side as condemnable.

Let us examine the first binary: Nights and days are nothing unusual as natural occurrences, but human perception and treatment of the two parts of a natural cycle can be so drastically biased that Lowry sets out to reverse them. There are two levels on which the night/day complementaries can be studied; the natural and the personal. On the natural plane, the narrator observes the laws in nature which conform to or confirm the yin/yang principle. Although he comes to a better understanding of them, he does not intervene, nor has he any function whatsoever in affecting them. It is banal to say that night follows day, or that there is more life in day than in night, but Lowry's narrator discovers exactly the contrary. In his world of nature, night assumes a conspicuously ascending importance. The first reference to "the Chinese Hats that only walked at night" (237), immediately after Lowry's overt quoting of the *Tao Te Ching*, serves only as a prelude to the drama of seething nocturnal life to the astonishment of husband and wife: "It is only at night that this great world of the windrow and tide-flats really wakes up.... We had a standing joke, and would turn to one another laughing to say in a sepulchral tone: 'It is night, and the Chinese Hats are on the move!'" (237). The repetition of "the Chinese Hats" here

Decapitation," she capitalizes on a Chinese story from Sun-tze [Sunzi]. It is likely that she read the *Tao Te Ching*, since she employs the following concepts central to it: the oneness of men and women (41); moon and sun, activity and passivity (44); the Return (50, the Hegelian model here, but Hegel read and expounded on Taoism, see Chung-Yuan Chang 1970: 4). Also, in "The Laugh of the Medusa," the images of water as feminine (246), of circles (247), and of "wholes" (259) are also reminiscent of those employed in Lao Zi. Similar notions resurface in "An Exchange with H el ene Cixous."

¹⁵Once we apply the yin/yang principle to every object and phenomenon, the complementary pairs can go on almost endlessly. See Zhao for 41 binaries (1986: 44–45). Other potential yin/yang pairs for study in "The Forest Path" are concretized yin/yang complementary opposites: winter/spring; rain/fire; love/hatred; earth/sun; moon/sun; nature/society; women/men; cold/hot; unselfish/selfish; non-violent/violent.

not only emphasizes the night teeming with their movements, but also refers obliquely to the Eastern part of the globe and its activities that are usually opposite to the West. Since the earth spins day and night (excuse the English cliché/idiom; the Chinese phrase would put it as “night-continuing-day”) and has two hemispheres, Western and Eastern, the day/night division is not absolute. References or allusions to the East or China repeated at least five times (216, 228, 236–237, 260, 280–81) also underscore the narrator’s relocation of natural activities by day and night, his global mind, and his awareness of the artificial nature of the dichotomy day/night in the West.

Further, the narrator draws an analogy between night/day and winter/spring in the light of yin/yang relations. As winter drags on and the night gets longer, in both cases by the accumulation of yin elements he realizes two minor truths: the first is the relativity of the length of day and night in two major parts of the year (yang = spring/summer; yin = autumn/winter); the second is the cyclical pattern of winter and spring as an alternation of yin/yang elements (253). Either winter or night will revert itself when it gets to the extreme. Thus, even in bitter cold and gloomy winter and/or in dark nights, the narrator awaits the advent of spring, and of course, its concomitant warmth, with the patience, confidence, and calm that earmark a Taoist, just as he is sure that day will arrive after night is gone in the yin/yang permutations. These instances indicate that he comes to an understanding of the operations of nature: they run, if not counter to, then differently from, conventional wisdom which has valorized day and Spring in the all too natural and cyclical, daily or seasonal movements of the disinterested or indifferent earth and sun.

On the natural and human level, Lowry’s narrator, sometimes with his wife, endeavours to comply with a newly discovered law (movement in stillness) operative at night and to grasp fully its essence. In the first instance, the narrator changes his habits: he becomes fond of, or rather, obsessed with, performing his daily ritual walk to the spring at dusk, the completion of which is usually accompanied by darkness; he is in a way imitating the Chinese Hats, adopting their alternative life-style of nightly movement while others are at rest. Indeed, he rather self-complacently describes himself as a man who enjoys the “life of the night” (250–51). In addition, for more intimate natural and cosmic knowledge of the night, husband and wife sally forth to the forest to observe the stars running their natural course in a nebulous and vast universe not accessible at daytime. There, they understand, from the Taoist still-mobile paradoxical perspective, that these stars look still because remote; that they are often blanked out by city electrical lights—the artificial illumination that is to be rejected later. Furthermore, their little poems or songs in genuine celebration of this part of new-found life of the stillness bring forth the richness and liveliness of nocturnal activities denied to or unnoticed by city-dwellers. A further turn of expectations occurs when the narrator exclaims that even the lion (or cat) metamorphoses into his brother (264–66) and that there is no danger lurking behind or in the forest or behind the dark curtain, nor ghosts or ghouls so much feared by ignorant city-dwellers not living in the neighbourhood of nature.

Therefore, by studying the nightly stillness with the Taoist insight, Lowry subtly exposes the fallacy of traditional myth about the dark: here, in a sense he follows

Joseph Conrad, since he does read *Heart of Darkness* avidly.¹⁶ Most enlightening is A.C. Graham’s diagram, which visually inscribes the reversal of values in Conrad’s masterpiece:

A	B
Thames	Congo
Gloom	Glaring sun
City	Dark forest
Civilized	Savage
Artificial	Tree
Progress	The primaeval
Clarity	Mystery
White	Black (1986, 45)

It is worth mentioning that Lowry’s letters confirm his keen interest in Conrad, although he seems to have read Conrad somewhat differently than Graham suggested (1967, 235–36, 266). In short, Lowry not only re-assesses Western conventional binaries that have valorized only the right sides—nature/culture, dark/light, forest/city—but also corrects the recurrent and entrenched images of nature represented in much of Western literature as the dark, and of the forest as the perilous, the chaotic, the evil, and the feminine, to be excluded or suppressed at all cost.¹⁷ Lowry, though not a feminist in our contemporary sense of the word, lines up the darkness of the night and of the forest with the yin, or the feminine in Taoist terms. In so doing, he subverts and at least partially replaces the dominant Western value system with that of Taoism.

Another case of the reversal of values takes place in the relationship between stillness and movement. As Lowry comprehends it similar to Tao, it is “so still, so changeless, and yet reaching everywhere” (236) and so the law of relative stillness and absolute movement operating in nature applies to the human sphere. The crux of the matter, however, lies in people’s perception of stillness and movement. Society has slighted the former and favoured the latter in industrial development and environmentally unfriendly encroachment upon nature, and Lowry challenges

¹⁶According to Andrew Busza, the title of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* signifies the primary contrast between light and darkness, which can exfoliate into many other sets of binary oppositions—the concrete and the abstract, the knowable and the unknowable, the color dark and white, etc.—as the story unfolds. From our Oriental cultural background, the heart is something hidden inside, hence the unknown and unfathomable, exactly the opposite of a Westerner’s interpretation. The Chinese precepts or sayings—one never says what is in one’s heart, or you can only know a person’s face but not his heart—foreground the dichotomy between the spoken and the unspoken or unspeakable, the surface and the bottom, what comes to light and what is in the dark.

¹⁷In her scathing criticism of the Western habit of marginalizing and condemning certain races and yin images, Cixous, like Conrad, relates the blackness of the skin to the darkness of the forest and spots a pervasive bias against both in “The Laugh of the Medusa” (248–49); but unlike Conrad, she pushes her argument one step further in berating the patriarchal relegation of the female/feminine to the one side of the equation to be feared and suppressed.

such bias through his narrator's daily spiritual walks and recurring self-chastisements. Noteworthy in the first instance is the resonance engendered by the recurrent uses of "still" (in the sense of not moving; 226, 236–37, 258–59) and "remote and still," (236, 268, 286)¹⁸ These words function as a leitmotif, reinforcing the complementary positions of the couple in the forest: the geometrically still points of the spring and the shack where the wife stays constitute the yin ends between which the husband moves; the two fixed centres also contrast sharply with the husband's trajectory of movement. In other words, he must both move and rest, just as stasis and motion are mutually dependent. If both nature and humans are considered together in this microcosmic scheme, we witness a balance well-wrought: when the husband gets dry in the mouth after a brisk walk, water quenches his thirst at one end; when he is exhausted on his way back, his wife comforts and replenishes him with a supper at the other. In both cases he has the compensatory or healing power of yin—water and wife—at his service; the rest (yin) at the two extremes of his arduous movement (yang) further reinvigorates him. Therefore, the yin proves to be indispensable; Lowry's yin/yang design, balanced and perfect. In close relation to the stillness/movement binary relationship is the concept of flexibility and firmness (alternatively the weak, soft and the strong and hard) in the yin/yang paradigm; again Lowry's narrator attempts to understand both, but in particular to appreciate the yin side. The need to balance flexibility and firmness cannot be overemphasized. In his *Shen Shin Pa Fa*, Liu I-ming describes firmness as "strength, sturdiness, decisiveness, keenness." In his *Wu Tao Lu*, Liu further warns of undesirable results of the extreme yang: if one is always "hard," one will be impetuous, aggressive, and impatient (Po-tuan Chang 7). Lowry's narrator embodies this yang end of the pole: not only is he an unfailing walker as opposed to his wife's stillness; more often than not, he also becomes angry, resentful, or even hateful on his way to and from the spring, in sharp contrast to his wife's calm, contentment and love, all characteristics that Liu identifies as flexibility. The following traits of flexibility as suggested by Liu fit the spouse as well: "self-control, humility, consideration of others, simplicity, sincerity, and modesty;" "tolerance, courtesy, self-examination, freedom from compulsive habit" (Po-tuan Chang 6–7). In respect of these associations, it is the blending of yin and yang that is the aim.¹⁹

The workings of the flexibility/firmness dialectics can be best examined in the process leading to the narrator's realization and overcoming his superabundance of hatred, anger, and anxiety on the one hand, and his reawakened sense of his wife's love, passivity, and tranquillity of mind on the other. Since his walks often engender heat physically and hatred emotionally, the latter as a result of his brooding over the

¹⁸We may quote Grace (1990b) here, who has, in another context, pointed to Lowry's intertextual mind: "I cannot hope to comment upon all aspects of this rich intertextuality at this time; the traces are so numerous as to be almost impossible to trace" (198).

¹⁹Richard Hauer Costa touches on the significance of the walks: "All [a series of polarities between God and man, nature and society, etc.] are one tension, of course, and Lowry represents their reconciliation in one magnificent metaphor: the daily act of redemption in walking, at dusk, through the forest to the spring for water" (1972: 142).

war, city life, and Western civilization (244–48), he needs a counterbalance when the two yang elements accumulate to such a dangerous volume as to outweigh his yin.²⁰ The narrator’s wife, always at one end of his trip, provides precisely such an elemental but timely and effective neutralizer. The walk can thus be understood as an exercise in control by working up his yang element and quench it with water, and again working it up, to be pacified by the boundless love of his wife.²¹ The ups and downs of the trip, the curtailing and tempering of his anger by the yin (water/spouse), and even the uncanny shrinking of the slope or distance, suggesting obliquely another means of curbing or cutting short his anger and hatred (the longer the walk, the greater the heat, anger, and hatred), all point ultimately to the healing, and conquering power of the yin (in terms of water here) described in the *Tao Te Ching*:

The softest substance in the universe draws the reins on the firmest.
 That which is without substance can penetrate that which is without seam. (Ch’~211)

 Nothing in the world is as soft and weak as water,
 Yet in corroding the firm and strong,
 There is nothing which can surpass it. (Ch’en 303)

It is again clear that the narrator becomes quickly aware and cognizant of the easily graspable law of balance between the yang and yin. The dissipation of hated and other negative feelings occurs all too naturally: the mere sight of his wife, a soft cry, a gentle hug—all signs of the yin—will set things right again, no matter how “hard” they are. The husband and wife are shown to be mag(net)ically drawn to each other and fuse into one unity, just like the two yin/yang fishes in eternal embrace in the Taoist symbol.

To sum up, Lowry’s firm sense of the Taoist cosmos places all objects in their due yin/yang “slots,” so to speak, without an item amiss: on the one hand, he lines up walking (movement) with anger, hatred, wrath, fire, war, city, culture, all resulting in yang (245–46); on the other, he gathers the forces of yin, with stasis (lack of movement) or passivity: his wife, tenderness, love, peace, water, countryside, and nature. But when the chief human yang and yin representatives—husband/wife—are in each other’s arms and fuse into one (248, 273), everything else on the yin/yang poles seems to fall into perfect equilibrium, and the husband’s consuming anxiety dissolves without delay. Lowe’s vision is simple and spontaneous: the swift resolution of the husband’s intense yang feelings need no “reasonable” explanations,

²⁰Po-tuan Chang also illustrates the undesirable results of being too flexible: If one is always “soft,” one will vacillate and become ineffective. Balance, he concludes, calls for firmness of will with flexibility in action, neither rushing ahead nor lagging behind. The correct balance of yin and yang, in terms of these qualities and applications of firmness and flexibility, is considered to be important for both social and spiritual life (1987: 7). But in “The Forest Path,” we do not find traces of the wife’s being unduly “soft.” The main issue rests, as we maintain throughout this paper, in the excessive yang and the narrator’s attempt to counteract the imbalance.

²¹The process of tempering the yin/yang elements in humans by repeated experiences seems to be in perfect line with one of the three interpretations of what Aristotle means by catharsis of pity and fear (cf. Ma 1986: 35–37).

nor complications in plot or characterization; a fusion of the yin/yang elements will do. We need to add, though, that Lowry's act of prestidigitation can only result in the peace of mind of the jazz composer, not in any significant, material change of society on the other side of the inlet. Meaningful also is that his wife, except once, never accompanies the narrator to the spring: she is at a still point in the shack; but at the very end, she joins her husband in the forest walk (287), which can be read as a balancing act for herself since she has stayed too still for too long. Together, husband and wife finally strike the right equilibrium necessary for the musician/narrator's creativity and for their happiness and harmony.

2.3 Reversal of Values and Views

"The Forest Path" can also be interpreted as "an epistemological metaphor" (Eco vii), because it artistically poses questions such as: Is nature knowable or "understandable to human perception? How do we know about Nature: by intuition, by immediate experience without the mediation of the intellect, by preconceived social values, or by other means? Chang's *Understanding Reality* has made a distinction between the mind of the Tao and the human mind. The former is associated with "real knowledge"; the latter, with "conscious knowledge." Real knowledge is held to be "nondiscursive, immediate knowledge, originally inherent in the human being and not the product of learning." Conscious knowledge, on the other hand, is formed by training" (Chang 6). The dichotomy between the spontaneous, the intuitive, the natural and the conscious, the cultural, and the unnatural—between "the mind of Tao and the human mind" (Chang 5)—is conspicuously foregrounded: Lowry's narrator time and time again employs similar terms (e.g., 250; 256); and jettisons his old values and language, and opts for new Taoist tenets and terminology. Roughly speaking, the narrator is in possession of three methods of approaching and knowing about Nature: by direct and close observation and comparison; by intuition or spontaneity in its purest sense; and by his wife's untiring and illuminating teachings.

First, the narrator makes, to his anguish, two significantly interrelated discoveries which set in motion the process of re-education. On the one hand, his careful observation of natural objects and phenomena proves over and over again that his previous learning is either insufficient or erroneous (239–40); he has to literally open his mind and body fully to a whole range of new experiences in Eridanus and interpret their significance: the returning patterns of different birds, the brotherhood of the lion, the reviving power of the spring, and the pulse of tidal water, among others. On the other, his first-hand observation makes him think twice about nature's Other: a part of the Liverpool boy still stays with him (241), but, after careful nature-culture comparisons, he refutes society, city life, and Western civilization for giving rise to frenzied selfishness (246–47), crass materialism (248), unbridled aggressiveness (231, 245–46), gross artificiality (250), and total disregard for nature or the earth (241, 279). He chooses instead to translate "the most pure spontaneous

happiness,” (257) probably only possible in the inlet, into a novel mode of life, marked by Taoist values such as simplicity or even primitiveness in lifestyle (223; 248), by peacefulness and tranquillity of mind (231–32), and harmony and co-existence with nature in cosmic and ecological relations (287).²² Lowry suggests, it would seem, that modern society has evolved its own norms and values and corrupted humanity’s innate “goodness” (234) and pristine innocence. By the same token, he espouses direct and unmediated observation of and contact with nature to gain new knowledge and insight and re-establish a different system of values. In addition, there is a mystical dimension to the narrator’s newly felt reality along the path, a dimension that widens his spectrum of sensibility. However, this fresh experience is not to be repeated when he is “consciously” reaching it (271). The process of comprehending its significance is sometimes arduous, other times easy, just as his tours to fetch water may become shortened or lengthened. At the beginning, he seems to be rather clumsy, and works contrary to the way of the Taoist tenet of spontaneity; nothing conducive comes out of such an effort. Yet, when he is not paying attention, not straining to grasp the feel, spirit, or essence of such a reality, he seems to sense in naturally.²³ This aspect of nature he initially views as completely alien to or beyond his intellectual ken: it is not the Freudian unconscious in the deepest recesses of the human psyche, but something mysterious in the external, the preternatural or supernatural world, something which impinges or acts upon the promenader unawares; it is another kind of “reality” (268) that he equates with “dream” and describes as “peculiar,” “uncanny,” (270) and “incommunicable” (273), and ultimately pins down an “illuminations” (272), not unlike those of a Taoist mystic. The crucial point is, paradoxically, to work against his own consciousness. The lack of effort performs wonders. At the end, he has doubtlessly gained, or is granted with, extraordinary powers after walking enough times on the same path: he can now feel what others cannot, thus getting, an enviable access to another, and perhaps higher, realm of mystical or “unconscious” experience open to a practising Taoist hermit. What is of particular interest is the discrepancy between fact and fiction. According to P.S. Epstein, Lowry himself practised magic under Charles Stansfeld Jones’s guidance for “months” and terminated the immersion lessons for fear of “opening doors which should remain closed” (Epstein 13), but in his artistic work, Lowry allows his narrator to experience something entirely new, something Lowry dares not try in person.

Natural phenomena, natural objects, wildlife, these and their nomenclature constitute the first lessons for the male narrator. His wife is supremely versed in naming, which is particularly vital since the couple just disembark in the New World fresh from the old one. The husband’s own city or culture-related language appears not only inadequate but also irrelevant in the Eridanus community and he soon finds

²²A cursory look at Taoist texts will yield many aphoristic sayings emphasizing similar or even identical qualities (cf. Ch’en, 1981: 13–15).

²³One branch of Taoism deals with such mystic, esoteric, and spiritual attainments: the opening up of fresh channels of the human body to the outside world, the lengthening of life expectancy, and the increasing of vitality and sexual potency (cf. Po-tuan Chang 1987; Chia and Winn 1984).

the paucity or poverty of his vocabulary as regards nature (225, 254, 284). It is his wife, a former country girl turned urbanite (249), who, in plain but poetic terms, void of the mundanity or worldliness associated with industrialization and commercialism, instructs him daily on nearly all things and creatures (e.g., birds, plants, crabs, weather) surrounding them and on their natural vicissitudes. It is not surprising, then, that the narrator's obsessions and his plays with naming and with describing and inscribing nature in his wife's rich and concrete vocabulary result in the articulation of a new and different reality.²⁴ Certain Taoist cosmic patterns or regularities also dictate natural changes, however Protean. The narrator's wife, to his amazement, displays a thorough understanding of natural orders and laws. Initially, the husband is often puzzled by his wife's comments on the twinkling but somehow opaque stars: they are observable to the naked eyes, but in too large a multitude or chaos for him to be able to order them into patterns. It is again his wife's pointing out of different constellations and their seasonal courses that enlightens him on the orders and laws of movement, both correspondences to those he just learns from what is close to his Eridanus environs (e.g., the stillness and movement of the water, the circles of rain; the cycles of seasons, etc., e.g., 227, 248–49). From things afar or near, he now understands profoundly the position of man (as species) in microcosmic-macrocosmic relations. Such a vision of the universe does not lead him to the Pascalian notion of human beings as insignificant and vulnerable reeds. Rather, he realizes that humans and cosmos, however tiny or gigantic, are equally subject to the same Taoist laws of relative stillness and absolute movement, as well as to mutability, seasonal and/or cyclical.

The narrator's wife, also, is instrumental in constructing a new aesthetics (broadly conceived), enabling him to discover the symmetry of nature's design and its beauty. This is achieved mainly in terms of the fusion or alternation of the yin/yang elements. There is the joyous scenario where the narrator learns that the mixing of mist (yin) and sunlight (yang) produces a picture of gentle harmony; there is also the touching description of the huge glaring sun and the full moon alternatively pitched against the pine (216, 260), with the tree writing "a Chinese poem" on the moon (216). When the narrator asks—"Could anyone else see it? I had never seen it" or similar rhetorical questions—with a tremendous sense of urgency and immediacy, he is admitting his own former aesthetic myopia; as well, he invites those who are not paying attention to be sensitive to this experience. Therefore, it is only natural that Lowry's piece is replete with details about the wife patiently and recurrently teaching him to "really" see, feel, and sense all natural phenomena and logic, not to be restricted by old habits or biases (248, 250, 256, 259–60). Further, the meteorologist in the wife, in a sibylline style, tells the husband what would come the ensuing day as ordained by natural laws (e.g., the forthcoming snow or changing wind), providing him knowledge about nature's rhythm and teaching him not only to know the present, but also the future of nature's operations. For the narrator, the "real" and

²⁴The narrator also eagerly learns nature-related expressions from Sam and repeats them so that will become part of his own language (225, 254).

the beautiful now exist in nature's lap, something that he and of course, many others, have failed to perceive before he settled down in Eridanus.

Lowry's work, we may claim, shows with compelling sensuousness and concreteness that the wife of his narrator, like Nature, turns into an inexhaustible reservoir of knowledge hitherto unknown to his narrator. For him, she is both an immeasurably superior interpreter of nature and a language teacher. Indeed, to study her is, to an appreciable extent, to know Nature, since he draws an analogy between nature's "shifting moods and tides and darks and suns and stars" and those of his wife (249). More importantly, to adopt her natural discourse is to learn how to inscribe a novel reality with a language that is at once simple and expressive, that empowers him to (re)tell, after his wife, their stories inspired by nature and unheard by many (note the entreating tone in *Hear Us O Lord*). In addition, more than the narrator, his wife is an integral part of nature, so much so that she greatly facilitates her husband's truly organic integration into it. The narrator cannot help but employing phrases like her "mysterious correspondence with all nature" to totalize his fresh impressions of her (249). She is not only at home in nature but also makes it his home, with her daily household chores and cares, working with her indispensable knowledge and skills gained (gardening and house-building) when young in the country.

In conclusion—since Taoist philosophy and cosmology stem from the cardinal yin/yang antinomy which gives precedence, though a slight one, to the yin—Lowry's absorption of Taoism enables him to perceive and value correlatively the two sides (yin/yang) of the same coin and simultaneously. This new perspective leads further to a reversal and/or negation of many of the Western and often patriarchal values. By subtle and complex artistic representation, Lowry lays emphasis on the left side of the complementary pairs like stillness/movement, night/day, darkness/light, women/men, forest/city, and nature/culture. Such an act stresses in essence Derrida's deconstructive philosophical discourse we have come to appreciate only recently.²⁵ Viewed in this light, Lowry's originality and achievement rest not so much in his ability to perceive the necessity of the balance of opposites, as in his effort to redress the reigning imbalances, natural and social. For the two are considered one in the Taoist scheme: Lowry vigorously tips the scale of values and/or elemental forces towards the yin in the world gone berserk from an overdose of the yang (fire, aggressiveness, war, rapid and reckless urban and industrial advancements, etc.) by invoking yin elements in large quantity (water in its multifarious forms, peace, stillness, simplicity, humbleness, vacuity of mind, and so forth). In so doing, he also exhibits a hankering for what Frye calls a 'peaceable kingdom' (qtd. in Grace 1982, 120), where a new blending of antinomies can be accomplished and where the reconciliation of the conflicts between them can be achieved.

²⁵On this aspect in terms of Lowry's other works with Chinese connections, see John Z. Ming Chen, "'The Voyage that Never Ends': Malcolm Lowry's Taoist Aesthetics of Return/Reversal" in *TAO: Reception in East and West* edited by Adrian Hsia (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 197–216.

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Chapter 3

Fred Cogswell's Paradoxical Poetics of Suggestive Silence, Elaboration, and the Dao's Nature and Rhythms

Unfortunately our Western mind, lacking all culture in this respect, has never devised a concept, nor even a name, for the union of opposites through the middle path, that most fundamental item of inward experience, which could respectably be set against the Chinese concept of Tao.

–C.G. Jung, qtd in Chang, *Creativity and Taoism* (6)

Recent years have witnessed deservedly increasing and increased publications on Daoism and its western parallels. To name but a select few, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* alone has featured Shaobo Xie's and John (Zhong) Ming Chen's "Jacques Derrida and Zhuang Zi: Some Analogies in their Deconstructionist Discourse on Language and Truth," (Vol. XIX, no. 3 [Sept. 1992], 363–376) and Chen John (Zhong) Ming's and Shaobo Xie's "Malcolm Lowry and the Tao," a long co-authored essay (Vol. XX, no. 3 [Sept. 1993], 355–380). Most recent and notable is Rujie Wang's "The Mosaic of Chinese Modernism in Fiction and Film: The Aesthetics of Primitivism, Taoism, and Buddhism" (35.1–2 [May–June 2008], 14–39). This chapter joins the company of those mentioned above and examines a Canadian poet, Fred Cogswell's carefully and sensitively developed poetics of suggestive silence, of elaboration, and of the nature and rhythms of the Dao. Given the cross-cultural nature of this study, it is not irrelevant to preface the discussion with an intriguing conversation between two English Canadian writers and critics, Margaret Atwood and Jeffrey Hancock. In fact, what follows is partially occasioned and informed by the two major concerns they raise: a Haiku sensitivity and tradition and, relatedly, a yin-yang Daoist aesthetics, that both bear directly on Fred Cogswell's poetics:

Atwood: How did it [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*] do among the Inuit? Or the Chinese? It's true you can translate things, sort-of, so that they can be read. But efforts to translate haiku have always frustrated me. ... It [the translation] lacks a rich cultural compost. ...

Hancock: We don't even know how to "read" a Chinese restaurant in Toronto.

The dragons on the wall, the Fo dogs which represent Yin and Yang, the tree figures that represent health, wealth, and longevity. There's something tricky about language.

Atwood: There's something tricky about "reality," let alone language. Insofar as language relates to a cultural experience of reality, to what extent is that transmissible?

(Earl G. Ingersoll, *Margaret Atwood: Conversations*, 1990: 210–211)

Wei Li and John Z. Ming Chen have contributed to this chapter, an essay published previously and re-printed here with permission.

What Atwood tries to unfold in terms of the Haiku sensitivity and its rich tradition can be viewed as arising, at least in part, from Chan (Zen in Japanese) Buddhist poetics (among Shinto and Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism),¹ which is, historically, a mixture and offshoot of Chinese Buddhism and Daoism, according to recognized experts such as Conrad Schirokauer (1991, 115–16). Georg Moeller (2004, 149–50), A.C. Graham (1992) Earl Jackson (1989, 1990), and to a monograph fresh off the press: *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers* (2008, 19–20). Moeller, in particular, has put the complex and intricate interconnection this way: “The modern Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan (1895–1990) accurately summed up the Buddhist ‘reinforcement’ of Daoism by saying: ‘The combination of Daoism and Buddhism resulted in Chanism, which I should like to call a philosophy of silence.’” (149). A similar point has been brought up by Roland Barthes earlier (Jackson 1989); in fact, one may indulge in alliteration and suggest that, like Atwood, Barthes is badly baffled by the haiku’s lack of metaphors and symbolism and its imperviousness to Western interpretation (Jackson 1989). Hancock, we venture to say, seems to understand sufficiently well the Daoist signifying system on another occasion (*Chinada* 157–59). Nevertheless, an explication of the Daoist aesthetics at greater length is necessary in the Canadian context.

We will focus on a number of key features in Fred Cogswell’s poetry that are distinctively Daoist. Besides being an inspiring teacher and warmly encouraging critic/editor (Keith 1985; Gibbs 1983; New 1989), the poet has published over thirty collections of verse. However, he has received unduly little critical attention to date.² Of immediate relevance to this project is the poet’s honest and graceful admission that Daoism informed nearly 50 of his poems, and that he had studied Tom McInnes’s *The Sayings of the Old Boy* and Thomas Merton’s *The Ways of Chuang Tzu*. From this new perspective, one wonders whether his poetics might not have puzzled quite a few Canadian critics.³ Though we have yet to prove this point to our own complete satisfaction – given the dire and disproportionate scarcity of scholar-

¹ Interestingly, part of the Chinese culture, especially Daoism or Daoist poetry and poets, is transmitted to the West through Japan. Li Bai’s “The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter” (Li Po or Rihaku as rendered by Pound and by the Japanese) is translated by Ezra Pound and much anthologized (de Roche 367). We thank the anonymous reader for pointing this out: Li Bai is a Taoist initiated into the Shangqing-school of Daoism of the Tang Dynasty. Dorothy Livesay (1991) mistakes the famous (to the Chinese, of course) story about Zhuang Zi (Chuang Tzu)’s doubling, butterfly-human or dream-reality identity as being of Japanese origin. There is no denying the Japanese changes or transformation of Chinese traditions, literary or philosophical; see Turner (1995).

² Granted that one entry is devoted to Cogswell as a critic and poet in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (1983, 133), we have yet to see any substantial analysis of Cogswell’s poetry or poetics. John Metcalf’s comment in *Kicking against the Prick* is more damaging than fair, and Tracy Ware’s “Is Fred Cogswell beyond Criticism?” does not deal with his poetics at all. Perhaps Cogswell’s poetics is beyond criticism from a traditional Anglo-centric perspective.

³ We wish to extend deep gratitude to the late Fred Cogswell, who had the grace to identify specific poems inspired by Daoist philosophy and poetics.

ship accorded him—⁴we hope that the ensuing discussion will shed some light on three main aspects.

First of all, much of Cogswell's poetry is inspired by Daoist poetics of suggestive silence, predicated upon the bitter realization of the inadequacy of language and the urge to articulate human thoughts, ideas, and feelings. The same realization partially explains his penchant for the haiku, and for similar short poetic forms, which are mostly shortened and subdued "lyrics"⁵ that have managed to survive the Imagist Movement championed by Ezra Pound. Secondly and no less ironically, the same realization propels him to articulate by all means the meanings and manifestations of the Dao as he sees them: by paradoxes and by repetition of words and phrases; by tautological and hence emphatic poetic structures and forms such as the villanelle and sestina⁶; and by intuition or instinct. Finally, the poet's search for balance, rhythm, form, and symmetry in the postmodern world leads to the Daoist yin/yang correlative paradigm and sensitivity that underlies his poetic visions, where companions, complementary qualities, co-ordinated pairs, harmonized self/other, in life as much as in poetry, reign supreme. We submit that, against the steam and stream of post-modern and post-structural ideologies and deconstructionist theories that question or negate meaning and thrive on the challenge to or dismantlement of language's stability and signifying potentials, Cogswell's poetry self-consciously reclaims, asserts, and celebrates order, meaning, and purpose in writing as much as in reality, both human and natural.

3.1 The Paradox of Dao(ing): To Speak or Not to Speak, That Is the Question

The Way [Dao] that can be spoken of is not the constant Way,
The name that can be named is not the constant name.
(Lao Tzu, the *Daodejing*, chap. 1)

Be silent. Who keeps silent inside
Touches the roots of speech.
(Rilke, quoted in Zhang Longxi *The Tao and the Logos* 129)

Speech is silver; silence is gold.
(English proverb)

⁴To the best of our knowledge, a female biographer from Ottawa was conducting a research on Cogswell in 1993, and probably is now finishing a book on him.

⁵The term has come under increasing controversy in recent revamping of its definitions and ideological functions. Whether Japanese or Chinese nature poetry under Daoist and Chan (Zen in Japanese) influence can be categorized as lyrics as defined by Abrams (1988), Palgrave (1994, ix), or Jeffreys (1995, 196–97; 204 n. 4) is very much in question; see Pauline Yu (1988); Yue Daiyun (1992), and Sun (1987).

⁶The title of *Sestina: 50 Meditations* already reveals a great deal about Cogswell's proclivity for the circular poetic form and for cyclicity/return of "eternal" themes.

The opening lines from the *Daodejing* already articulate the dilemma that has haunted and even plagued humanity for nearly 2500 years. The moment we speak (Dao in pinyin or Tao in the Wide-Giles system), we split the phenomenal world from its total, heterogeneous whole and establish a linguistic world. Fully aware of the simultaneous inadequacy and expressiveness of language, Cogswell resorts to imagery to suggest. The most concise of the poetic forms he employs remains the haiku⁷; it comes across also as the most expressive of his Daoist aesthetic of suggestive silence.

In much of his haiku, economy of words is intended not to draw attention to linguistic or self-reflective acts – the writing itself so typical of postmodern fiction in particular, and to certain degree, poststructuralist criticism – but to the objects and events being described or represented; the nows and heres are foregrounded and highlighted. Second, Cogswell refuses to indulge in verbosity, still less the free play of endless signifiers or “traces” (in deconstructionist parlance). In many of his poems, language is so transparent that one feels that things are “thinging”, to vary Anan Smol’s expression (1994, 249). To put in another way, one senses the thingness of things in all its immediacy and concreteness. If we may cite Morley Callaghan, we have indeed “Cezanne’s apples, the appleness of apples” (*That Summer in Paris*). Objects speak for themselves. Similarly, physical acts and even slight gestures convey meaning in its entirety; words, by contrast, are presented as either inadequate or unnecessary, or both:

Haiku

When your eyes speak love
and my eyes answer in kind
why should we need words?

(*Black and White Tapestry* 15; hereafter *BAWT*)

Reading this haiku, one is tempted to repeat that platitude that action speaks louder than words, for in this short piece, the stress is laid on the visual rather than the verbal. The most celebrated Chinese fiction writer, poet, and critic/theorist, Lu Hsun, once counselled that to capture the eyes’ meanings is a most powerful means (*Lu Xun on Literature and Arts*). Cogswell’s poem embodies a similar message. Elsewhere, three of Cogswell’s poems in the haiku series embrace the rhythms, changes, and vicissitudes of the day with few words:

Morning

... the egg-shell sky breaks:
my eyes feast on the rich warmth
of a gold-yolked sun ...

Again, the visual aspect is emphasized. It is here that the proverbial “seeing is believing” becomes concretized and fleshed out. Indeed, synaesthesia facilitates the creation of a well-inlaid collage of with images of roundness: the egg, the egg-shell,

⁷For the philosophical (Daoist and later, Chan or Zen Buddhist and Shinto), literary (Haiku-renka, and historical background and the haiku and the Japanese-Chinese connections, see Jackson (1989, 1990); Stewart (1969, 150–158), Kawamoto (1989), and Moeller (2002, 149).

the eyes, the yolk, the sun – all in round shape suggestive of the Dao symbol. In the sequel to the above poem, we have:

Noon
 ... the world's so heavy
 with the weight of sky colour that
 we need not look up ...

Here, the eyes' functions are ostensibly marginalized or negated: one feels directly the oppressiveness of the sky and the heat; evident also is the attempt to foreground feeling, as does "the rich warmth" in the previous poem. In yet another piece, eyes, not the mouth, become the focal point again:

Night
 ... close your eyes and all
 the shapes and hues of the day will
 live on in the dark ...
 (WTRLS 67)

The poet asks us to arrest the images in "that inward eye", to use Wordsworth's expression from "The Daffodils". Cogswell does away with many words and uses the eyes like a mirror. The gap between language and things is effectively bridged, since the images are re-inscribed, as it were, on the "paper" of the mind already. What is most intriguing seems the simultaneity of two actions – the ceasing of the eyes and the capturing of the images; this, and the contrast of day (a Yang image) and night (a Yin element) in the entire poem, are highly suggestive of the Yin/Yang continuum in complementary relation.

One would miss a good deal if one fails to note the connection between the simplicity of language and that of imagery in Cogswell's poems, since simplicity – of language (cf., the *Daodejing*, Chapters 1 and 81) as much as of life (cf., the *Daodejing*, Chapters 20, 28 and 80) – constitutes yet another conspicuous dimension of Daoist poetics. All of his haiku exhibit a high sensitivity to extra-textual realities and ability to (re)create deceptively simple but unique versions of reality. Additionally, chiefly monosyllabic and Anglo-Saxon words predominate, while transparent, cleanly descriptive details and images impose no human order: ostensibly, of course. These two features of language and imagery constitute a sure sign of Cogswell's artistry of leaving no traces of forcing a point or constructing something. And yet, one knows that this is an "objective" style difficult to achieve, a style that reminds me of Hemingway's pared down prose.⁸ We might safely conclude that Cogswell's haiku (and we hasten to add, the bulk of his non-haiku poems inspired by Daoism) are permeated with this sense of simplicity and tranquillity with the natural world in particular. Consequently, the absence of the "humanizing" tendency, to cite Linda Hutcheon in criticism of Western Enlightenment and modernism (1993), leads to a further implication: One feels little sense of self here, *pace* many Western "self"-centered poets and critics. What we have, instead, is poetic and subtle assertion of the Daoist tenet of non-self, one that renders itself readily useful in

⁸WE shall deal with this aspect in terms of the Daoist poetics of negativity in another paper.

contemporary ecological concerns, as Ellen M. Chen (1989, xi 18, and 34–36), Daniel Overmyer (1986, 112–113), and N.J. Girardot (2001) have perceptively pointed out. In short, many in the West strive for simplicity; Cogswell is at one with it.

In his moments of dispensing with words because of the gap between sound and meaning, Cogswell lays stress on the tactile – the only simultaneous, two-way approach of the senses in the physical dimension (e.g., not the psychic). This poetic proclivity is certainly reminiscent of the Daoist notion of unity (joining the two or more, in fact) and correlative relation as most powerfully bodied forth in the Yin/Yang couplet (e.g., the female/male, the cool/warm). For illustration of reciprocal nature, it might serve my point to cite Rilke's poem made well known by Canadian novelist Hugh MacLennan:

Love consists in this,
That two solitudes protect,
And touch, and greet each other.
(qtd on the dedication page of Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*)

Through the linguistic indexes such as “each other” and “touch” and the image conjured up by “solitudes” (voluntary, we believe), Rilke underscores mutual protection, touching, and greeting in a two-way relation. And yet, Rilke falls short of envisaging a poetic union. In Cogswell's poem, also on human relationship, speech is initially less emphasised than silence and touch:

I am glad of this, for it is well that
Both you and I can keep a separate sense
Of selves, although, no matter what we say,
It jars us both that unity we took
Such a joy in does not encompass sound
Till silence sends us back again to touch.

I think that Blake was right to claim that touch
For human beings flung wide the doors that
Led to eternity. There is in sound
Always a gap between sense given and sense
Received, but when we touch, who gave or took
Or which of us was which no one can say.

One of Rilke's means of communication – greeting – can be renamed in terms of sound, and sound is excluded here by Cogswell – indeed negated – as an ineffective means; silence and touch are what bridges the gap and joins the two in “unity”. At the end, however, the poet arrives at a realization, through reconciliation or even resignation, that without words, one simply cannot sufficiently express one's feelings and thoughts. A Daoist-Blakean realization of the paradox inherently in language is conveyed, and rounds off the twists and turns of human relationships.⁹

⁹Since this article intends to leave behind a more detailed comparison of Blake's and Lao Tzu's philosophy and Cogswell's poetics for another project, we refer readers to the following similarities between Blake and Lao Tzu as articulated by Arthur Waley: the fond use of paradoxes (Waley 361); the union of opposites or “the identity of contraries” (Waley 358); “distrust of purely intellectual process and of those who exalted such process at the expense of Imagination” (Waley 360);

For language is the best possible medium of expression at our disposal even when we are fully aware of its limits:

And yet it took these words to say that touch,
Taste, and smell mean more to me than thoughts that
Sense our difference even while they sound. (BAWT 54)

The three-line envoy encapsulates the functions of five senses in relation to thought, and thus, human relations in a most succinct manner; but present, or even pervasive, is a sense of intuition and instinct, accompanied by the by now subdued attempt to relegate language and thought to the margins.

Two points can be proffered here. First, whereas the haiku succinctly encapsulates his poetics of suggestive silence, it is by no means true that Cogswell excels only in brief verse forms.¹⁰ In other words, what seems to be the hallmarks of his brief poems lies in the paradox of speaking or not speaking – the Dao-ing or not in the original Daoist canon – the *Daodejing*. And at those poetic moments he elects to employ short forms. At other times, he cannot resist exploring the Dao in more extended poetic discourse, much like the articulate, even verbose and grandiose Chuang Tzu, in contrast with the terse to laconic Lao Tzu. Indeed, the last poem we analyse above already adumbrates Cogswell's more elaborate and meditative mode of writing and thinking, rather than the sudden enlightenment and brief observations typical of haiku and short poems.

Second, one should not suggest that Cogswell exploits (he might not harbour the intention) the rich Japanese allusiveness within that particular literary tradition, in which, Kawamoto (1989) and Stewart (1969) suggest, haiku written in the Japanese language partake necessarily. Nor has Cogswell tapped the potentials of Chinese short poetic forms intimated in the *Daode Jing*,¹¹ those that inspired the Imagist movement and are perfected by the Chinese, according to Robert Kroetsch and Adele Wiseman (Hancock 1982, 157).¹² To claim either would be to overstate the case. And yet, through decades of practice, Cogswell has established his own system of imagery within his private and unique poetic world, and the flashes of insight are often Daoist in origin. This leads us, in a somewhat circular fashion characteristic of the Dao's movement and trajectory, to the Dao as imbibed and played out in Cogswell's longer, well sustained and balanced poetry.

against “the stones of Law” and morality (Waley 360); “getting behind and getting underneath” (362). Cogswell's allusions or references to Blake are quite frequent; see for instance, “A Commentary” in *Watching an Eagle*, 22.

¹⁰The haiku is the original opening lines of a much longer poem in the Japanese literary tradition, which is rich in its allusiveness that often or eventually harks back to classical Chinese poetry; see Kawamoto (1989).

¹¹Such as the *juēju* (a quatrain of five or seven-word line) or *lushi* (a poem of eight lines, each line of five or seven words).

¹²For an enlightening discussion of short Chinese poems, or suites of them, see Joseph Ellen (1993).

3.2 Dao-ing (In/And), Circles/Cycles/Return

Let us give up the failed enterprise of seeking to “understand” any single poem as an entity in itself. Let us pursue instead the quest of learning to read any poem as its poet’s deliberate misinterpretation, *as a poet*, of a precursor poem or of poetry in general.

–Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (43)

[P]roductivity ... is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another.

–Julia Kristeva, “The Bounded Text” (36)

Cogswell has written a number of poems directly expounding the concepts of Dao (and *Chan/Zen* less frequently) in its multifarious manifestations, but most remarkable about his poetics remains the perfect matching or collapsing of content and form.¹³ True to Daoist tenets of circularity and cyclicity, he wisely selects demanding poetic forms – in particular, the villanelle and the sestina – that require repetition of words or phrases, recurrent images and symbols, and regurgitation, and hence, re-circulation or recycling of ideas, images, and symbols; that emphasize, in its totality, circularity of temporal relationships or spatial movements. Most notable and pertinent to my project is his outright poetic “play” with defining the Dao and exploring its connotations. This, one should note, constitutes an altogether impossible yet very tantalizing task that has tempted numerous aspiring and ambitious thinkers and poets alike.¹⁴ However, by doing this, he joins the company of all those who consciously or not, “misinterpret” (in Bloom’s paradigm) and intertextualize (in Kristeva’s parlance) the very first (the *Daodejing*) and a host of subsequent Daoist works.¹⁵

Since Cogswell’s “Tao” was written some 20 years ago and bears a seminal significance to his subsequent absorption of the Dao and his contribution to our understanding of it, we would cite the poem in full:

Tao
 Five players in an endless game
 That move together to one end --
 Charm, Zest, Rhythm, Grace, and Glame –
 They wind inside and out a frame
 Of matter which our senses tend,
 Five players in an endless game.

¹³For instance, “Zen”, “Tumbling Water”, and “Mental Monism” (*Meditations: 50 Sestinas*) are composed in the sestina, and “Tao” (*A Long Apprenticeship*) in the villanelle.

¹⁴Lao Tze has the modesty and humility to inscribe its ineffability through paradoxical statements right in the initial lines of the long philosophical poem, the *Tao Te Ching* or *Daodejing*. For an informed discussion of sinologists’ and Chinese scholars’ take on this, see A.C. Graham (1989, 1992); for creative writers’ serious play or flirtations with the Tao, the most recent, and perhaps most influential work, remains *TAO: Reception in East and West* (Peter Lang euro-sinica series 1994) edited by Adrian Hsia, with contributions from many an illustrious comparatist and specialist; for recent major scholarship on Daoism since the new millennium, see *Daoism Handbook* edited by Livia Kohn.

¹⁵Kristeva’s employment of Daoism in *Des chinoises* is central and extensive, as are her uses of Chinese sources meticulous and accurate in “The Bounded Text”, from which the epigraph emerges.

Charm is a pool of waters tame
 Where reeds of Grace may smoothly bend
 To winds whose morning breath is Glame

On Rhythm of the sunlight's flame,
 With Zest the magic of the blend.
 Five players in an endless game

That move as one: Life, Way, and Name
 of God, the Source alike and End:
 Charm, Zest, Rhythm, Grace, and Glame.

–So sang Lao Tze, who saw the same
 And in one brush-stroked sign did blend
 Charm, Zest, Rhythm, Grace, and Glame,
 Five players in an endless game.
 (*A Long Apprenticeship* 172)

One can examine the villanelle on several levels. First, key Daoist concepts abound: circularity, oneness or monism, natural rhythms, and fusion of opposites or more appropriately, complementaries; in a Bloomian fashion, they necessarily echo and interplay with the Daoist texts Cogswell read. Second, the language, while repetitive (not repetitious) and fairly simple, is at once poetic and philosophical, much like that in the *Daodejing*. Third, the skilful unity of form and content invites an allegorical or metaphysical reading, and may serve as an eloquent rebuttal or reply to those who challenge the employment of traditional forms and old wisdom.¹⁶

On the first level, Cogswell's dexterity lies in poetizing abstract philosophical concepts, which are in turn adroitly couched in sharp and rich imagery and purposefully re-used vocabulary. Thus, he continues and, of course, reinvigorates the time-honoured Daoist tradition in another language – English. In the spirit of Bloom's passage cited above, we may intertextualize a selective few of pertinent lines from the *Daodejing* and unfold the discussion of Oneness (the One in/and the Dao) and harmonizing or blending of all:

Chapter 39
 Of old, these came to be in possession of the One:
 Heaven in virtue of the One is limpid;
 Earth in virtue of the One is settled;
 Gods in virtue of the One have their potencies;
 The valley in virtue of the One is full;
 The myriad creatures in virtue of the One are alive... (Lau xvi, 59)¹⁷

¹⁶This point can never be over-emphasized, given that Cogswell self-consciously goes against the trend of free verse, cherishes old values, dislikes machinery or “the mechanical age” (Benjamin's shocking expression) and adopts Eastern philosophy which is ancient, not just old. Poems such as these and the title, *In Praise of Old Music*, are but the most obvious examples.

¹⁷The classical Chinese text of the *Tao Te Ching* defies translation even into modern Chinese, let alone modern English, and Atwood as cited in the epigraph to my whole article pinpoints the problem. Even though there has been a steady stream of new English renderings recently, controversy is still rife as to the interpretation of the text. Hence, a completely satisfactory one is not yet in the offing, and we have selected passages from different English versions (all considered standard).

Chapter 42

Tao gives birth to one,

One gives birth to two,

Two gives birth to three,

Three gives birth to ten thousand beings.

Ten thousand things carry yin on their backs and embrace yang in their front,

Blending these two vital breaths (ch'i) to attain harmony (ho).

(Chen 157)

In the *Daodejing*, the One is sometimes equated with the Dao, and vice versa, and scholars have discussed the meaning of the multiplication from one to many elsewhere. What is creative in Cogswell's poem, then? Not only do the linguistic registers in his "Tao" – "to one end", "one brush-stroked" – resonate well with the many "One's" in Lao Tzu's text; the initial issuing of One to the many and the many's eventual going back to the One are also recreated in Cogswell's "endless game" with five players: the one Tao now transforms into five key qualities personified by the capitalization. Furthermore, Cogswell's terms, "blend" and "blending", hark back to the last few lines of Chapter 42 cited above and reinforce the notion of ultimate unity of myriads of things, and hence, the inevitability of harmony. It is no surprise that one finds a wealth of pleasant and positive diction – "Glame", "Zest", "Charm", and so on – in a harmonized but endless game.

The image and topos of the game lead naturally to another dimension of Cogswell's "Tao": the concept of circularity and cyclicity. How can the "game" be endless? Or by extension, how can the Dao play forever this game? The solution is at once simple and viable: by circularity and cyclicity. Cogswell boldly concretizes and embodies the answer in poetic and philosophical language and images. Again, some lines from the *Taodejing* would facilitate our appreciation of Cogswell's intertextual mind and creative use of Daoism:

Circularity is the movement of Tao (Chapter 11, Ch'en 13)

It [Tao] revolves without pause.

...

And "distance" means "returning." (Chapter 25, Ch'en 142)

Now, of the myriad things in all of their profusion each again returns to its root.

Returning to the root is called "tranquillity,"

And "tranquillity" is called "restoring the original nature."

(Chapter 16, Ch'en 110)

According to the *Daodejing*, the Dao's movement is circular and constant; it returns to the place of origins of peace and starts anew and with renewed energy. Likewise, Cogswell's "Tao" is sufficiently circular that it returns and "gathers up", as it were, all the five players into its orbit, and the oneness guarantees "tranquillity". At this juncture, one may mention in passing Dylan Thomas's memorable and exemplary use of the villanelle in "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night" with Cogswell's. Thomas literally exhorts the reader to yell before the metaphorical "night" approaches, and the refrain accumulates its resonance along the way, increasing the heaviness of death. The underlying mode of thought can be described as linear: death is just death; it constitutes a point of no return that Christian culture

dreads and. Hence the necessity of “rage, rage against the dying of the light”. In contrast, Cogswell’s poem places a genuine and great store by circularity (e.g., “the endless game”), and no wonder it is suffused with a quiet, peaceful, and graceful mood. Indeed, Daoism as a quietist philosophy not only attempts to rid humanity of activist desires, but also underscores the route to what Canadian literary and cultural critic and theorist Northrop Frye has poetically called the “peaceable kingdom” (Chen and Xie 1993): the way, or Dao – here a symbol of life (cf. “Life” in Cogswell’s poems) – to move in an unhurried but sure way back to eternal peace.¹⁸ Barry Wood, in commenting upon the impact of Daoism on Malcolm Lowry’s work, has not only characterized the Tao/Dao as a unifying force, but also emphasizes its importance in Lowry’s voyage circle (1980, 190–93). We believe that this brilliant and perhaps unsurpassable summation holds equally true for Cogswell’s appropriation of the Dao.

To understand further Cogswell’s poetization of the Dao and its laws of circularity/cyclicity and of return to the origins of simplicity, we could do no better than cite the poet’s manifestation-like “The Sestina/for Alison McAhpine/”, composed in yet another challenging and circular form – sestina:

You ask me why I write sestinas now
 The form is out of fashion and it makes
 Another barrier to the flow of thought.
 Why not write free verse? Surely images
 And the natural rhythms of our speech
 Are enough to suit the needs of poesy.
 ...
 This sestina its own exemplar makes
 Now with respect to thought and images.
 The speech is mine; the rest is poesy.
 (*Meditations: 50 Sestinas* 7)

Unequivocally, the poem exerts and bodies forth the paramount importance of circular poetic forms and thought, against analytical and linear, though seemingly “modern” or contemporary mode of thinking and of writing poetry. One hears the whole poem as a humming and humming of a prolonged and variegated refrain, not loud, but persistent and echoing: like a recurring theme in a piece of music, or a haunting theme song in a movie; it eventually hypnotizes the reader into agreeing with Cogswell. Since the circularity and the flow of words or argument in his reply exist in a self-contained and self-sufficient system, the poetic form makes sense by itself. Consequently, and the reader is left sweetly and gently touched and convinced.

On the last, but not the least level, Cogswell’s expert utilization of a poetic form that thrives on circularity and cyclicity is not only consonant with but also illustrative of Daoist credos of movements in/and circles. If one may paraphrase (Frank Davey’s bugbear) Marshall McLuhan, or challenge the orthodox Marxist dichotomy of form and content, the form in Cogswell’s “Tao” is the message, “always already”,

¹⁸We deal with this aspect in a separate paper, “In Search of ‘The Peaceable Kingdom’ (Frye) of Daoism: Cogswell’s Naturalism and Ecological Poetics.”

or right from the moment of its conception. It is as if Cogswell intended to reveal to us by the form itself that the very nature and movement of the Dao – circularity – that the poem could not have been written otherwise or in other forms. The germs are sowed here of circularity, of speaking of or discoursing on the Dao in circles. It may also be true that no other English Canadian poets have such an adroit command of conventional poetic forms, according to W.J. Keith (1985, 103).

If “Tao” and “Sestina” capitalize on the villanelle and sestina to good effect, “Full Circle” poetically plays not only on word order and syntax, but also imagery and symbolism to produce yet another superb and subtle poem on the Dao. New Daoist elements – pristine simplicity and innocence, the triad of heaven, earth, and humanity and the interconnectedness of things, non-action (*wuwei* in pinyin), the stress on softness and femininity – are introduced, again with consummate skills.

Full Circle

A little boy holds one end of a string.
 The other end is tied to his pulltoy.
 The pulltoy's wheels rest on the grass.
 The grass is rooted to the earth.
 The earth touches the water of the sea.
 The sunlight strikes the water and draws it up.
 The water vaporized becomes a cloud.
 The cloud bursts and falls as rain.
 The rain falls on the little boy holding a string.
 (*A Long Apprenticeship* 203)

The poem shows Cogswell at his most liberal in adopting poetic forms. For, unlike “Tao” and many others written in traditional and fixed forms (e.g., the haiku, the sonnet, and the villanelle),¹⁹ “Full Circle” runs freely and ends where it begins. Nonetheless, the poem is pregnant with multi-layered meanings, however deceptively simple on the surface. Indeed, simplicity of language and simplicity of imagery enhance one another; and the haunting echoing of repeated, significant Daoist phrases multiplies and harmonizes with the whole Daoist polyphony joined by other Daoist poets.

Now we will concentrate on salient and highly concentrated Daoist aspects not yet discussed previously in this study: the archetypal images of the child, of the cosmic circle, and of water; the triad of heaven, earth, and humanity and the concept of interconnectedness; and poetic devices – simple syntax and the employment of anaphora (certainly) and quazi-chiasmus.

From a Daoist perspective, the image of the child (or infant) is and represents the supreme and ideal state of innocence, the lost but hopefully, retainable quality; Cogswell's creativity lies precisely in rendering this image memorable and continuous with previous Daoist images of the infant. The very first book Cogswell read about Daoism, we need only to point out, is *The Sayings of the Old Boy* by Tom McInnes.²⁰ “Old Boy”, an altogether oxymoronic or contradictory term, has fired

¹⁹ See Keith 1985, 103, 105.

²⁰ To Cogswell we owe this useful information. Our thanks here.

the imagination of many a creative writer and the hermeneutic and inquisitive attention of scholars, though North American literature may have its approximate counterparts.²¹

Of course, Western civilization has, in the past century at least, produced two giants who were both fond of and famous for the images of infants or infancy: Hegel and Karl Marx, respectively founders of philosophical idealism and dialectical/historical materialism, the latter standing the former on its head. What interests us is not Hegel's infamous and euro-centric view of the Chinese language as undeveloped or forever staying still and young (like a stunted child),²² nor Marx's higher but certainly idealized communism (as a re-vamped infancy, so to speak, of a supposedly anterior and once existent human society – primitive communism) as an over-used concept in China and the former Soviet Union. Rather, our concern bears directly on aesthetics and poetics. Hegel, who expounded on Daoism as a philosophy (Chang 1970, 4 and Chen 1993 *passim*,) also relied on images of a young child in terms of expressing simplicity and innocence, the forever lost qualities. Similarly, Marx romanticized Greek mythology as the infancy of Western culture and literature, and lamented the loss of humanity's harmony with nature, believed to have existed in ancient time, in his reworking of Hegel's concept of alienation. It seems that Cogswell has not been impressed by these western versions of "child play" and that he so far finds no use for them before his departure.

What is it in the child that captures Lao Tzu's, and subsequently, Cogswell's philosophic-poetic attention? Besides the innocence and outspokenness remindful of the child (or even the infant in the *Daodejing*, Chapter 20) in the western story, "The Emperor's Clothes," Lao Tzu perceives, first of all, the suppleness and softness in her/him as a sign of life (the *Daodejing*, Chapter 10), rigidity being an indication of death, as observable in dead bodies of humans or animals (the *Daodejing*, Chapter 76). Next come the youthfulness and the pristine simplicity couched in the metaphor of the uncarved block (pu in pinyin). It would seem that Cogswell condenses and compresses these images and ideas in his "Full Circles". True to his particular ways of expression – suggestion and allusion, not direct references – Cogswell never makes a single explicit reference in his poems to the *Daodejing*. But the image of a little boy, together with the cosmic and human circles – as we will demonstrate – certainly possesses identifiable Daoist character traits.

A related concept is non-action (*wuwei* in pinyin), which is incarnated in the child's non-interference (whether conscious or not) with nature's law, seen here as the Dao, working thorough him/her. Indeed, it takes Cogswell's Dao-inspired sensi-

²¹ An English Canadian equivalent would be Robertson Davies' play with the name of Boy(d) Staunton in *Fifth Business*, incurring much moral and physical ambiguity. This fascination may start with his thesis, *Shakespeare's Boy Actors* (1939), though no critics have made this point. Jungian criticism in terms of the animas and anima has been employed on *Fifth Business* and in particular, on *The Manticore*, but perhaps not many scholars know that Daoism has impacted Jung to an appreciable extent (cf., Chang 1963, 5–6 and Xie and Chen 1992, 363). *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* are also comparable pieces.

²² See Rey Chow 1991, 174 n. 11 and Dawson 1967, chapter 4.

tivity to perceive and re-inscribe the boy's non-action in action, if we may indulge in word play. The child is ostensibly doing nothing, and paradoxically, doing everything possible: he lets nature take its course, and the result proves to be a perfect balance of yin/yang forces, of the natural and human worlds unified as one.

We have addressed the concept of circularity/cyclicity above in terms of "the endless game" in "Tao", but entirely new is the idea of return in Cogswell's "Full Circle": a return to the state of the child, that ideal state untainted as yet by societal and necessarily, adult influence; it constitutes a symbol of a natural being, rather than a social being, and there is no more appropriate image than that of a little child. The simplicity of the child is thus re-covered at the end of the whole poem, just as the repetitive and echoing words and phrases circle meaningfully back to the "little boy holding a string." Everything starts anew. What needs to be emphasized is this: the poet, like the little boy in all his simplicity and innocence and non-action, does not use subjective and logical language to infer and converse on the laws of nature.

Also key to the appreciation of Cogswell's Daoism are the images of water and the triad of heaven, earth, and humanity. On one level, his consistent representation of the movement of the Dao through the image of water in constant motion carries over to his poetic vision of human beings (in the figure of the child) as part and parcel of the universal or cosmic scheme subject to the Daoist law of movement-in-stillness, or vice versa. The boy is stationary, yet the Dao works on and through him. On a higher level, though, yet another archetypal image lies in the triad of heaven, earth, and humanity. One hears Lao Zi announcing remotely, in his typically tautological and hence circular way, a way that Cogswell's repetition and stringing of words and phrases recreate in English so admirably, and yet so simply:

[Humans] models [themselves] on earth,
 Earth on heaven,
 Heaven on the way [Tao]
 And the way [Tao] on that which is naturally so.
 (the *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 25, D.C. Lau, 39)

A scrutinizing comparison would disclose, of course, Cogswell's intertextual mind, and more importantly, his poetic creativity: the original tripartite structure is re-structured through a replacement of what was originally "humans" or "man" (ren in Chinese) in general²³ with the child in particular. The substitution then, constructs more attributes of innocence and simplicity in the figure of the child than in an adult man; consequently, the reversal or return to a child-like, not childish, simplicity and non-interfering attitude in regard to natural laws grace Cogswell's entire poem right from the start. Taken as a whole, the poem emphasizes the organic wholeness of the Daoist universe and the interconnectedness of all things therein: the world is perceived as a veritable "living system" (Overmyer 1986). The Dao personified in the figure of water further links up and runs through everything, in the sky and on earth. One might cite W.J. Keith in conclusion: "Cogswell almost invariably manages to

²³ Some English versions have it as humans (ren in pinyin, as in Ellen M. Chen's *Tao Te Ching*, 117); others, as man (as in D.C. Lau's *Tao Te Ching* 39). For "*The Daodejing* and its tradition," see Allan T. Chan (2000, 1–29).

redeem the quotidian, the convert the trivial and ephemeral into the valid and universal” (1985, 103).

This earthly dimension constitutes the immanent and monistic aspect of Daoism, and brings me naturally to a point of distinction about the circularity of things. Perhaps it would be useful to contrast Cogswell’s “Full Circle” with Earle Birney’s “A Walk in Kyoto,” since a demonstrably Eastern influence is present. Textual references to “Zen” and “Lord Buddha” on Boy’s Day and Man’s Day in Birney’s poem would of course join Cogswell and Birney in terms of subject matter (boys) and Eastern philosophy (Chan or Zen Buddhism and Taoism), but the ending images in their poems underscore different aesthetics, significant to both, at work.

a carp is rising golden and fighting
 thrusting its paper body up from the fist
 of a small boy on an empty roof higher
 and higher into the endless winds of the world
 (15 *Canadian Poets X 2*, 59)

In Birney’s relatively long poem, days of wandering and wondering in Kyoto have their finale in the epiphanies of “closed lotus” opening and a small boy flying (read: symbolically), two images of both genders seen through a Western eye. Birney’s self-consciously and culturally ambivalent feelings notwithstanding, a sort of feminisation of the East and festishization of Eastern girls and ladies, like Patrick Lane’s “Lotus” after a China trip, certainly creep in.²⁴ Moreover, from a Daoist perspective, Birney never quite completes the circle; the carp flies up and up, vertically, symbolically transcending this life and ascending to the sky or heaven in the Western sense of the word. And the upward movement of the kite, never to return to earth, eventually betrays a linear and vertical vision, a transcendence of earthly life: this perspective, according to Jackson (1989, 1990), bears the trademark of Western poetics. Birney is still Birney the Western traveller/poet.

Compared with “A Walk in Kyoto,” Cogswell’s poem seems to have imbibed the true essence of Daoism. As we have discussed above, some of Cogswell’s briefer pieces are also shot through with Zen simplicity and spirit, much as Birney’s poem on this score. No doubt, Birney’s kite in the shape of a carp is linked to the earth by something like a string, but there is no more re-connection and/or return after its flight is achieved. “Higher higher” are indexes of an “Endless” ascension. Only in Cogswell’s “Full Circle” is the connecting point re-made and, re-made earthwards. Obviously, the ending point is on earth, back to where the poets starts, and this trajectory constitutes yet another hallmark of Dao’s rhythm – a celebration of life on earth and “making this life significant”, to cite Roger Ames and David Hall (2003). Thus, a related feature of Daoist poetics is reasserted: its earth-boundness and immanent nature; the Dao is ubiquitous *in* all things; here (earth) is as good as there (heaven).

²⁴ See Thomas Hastings’ cross-cultural reading of Birney’s much anthologized “The Bear on the Delhi Road.” No one has critiqued Patrick Lane’s Westernized version of the East or China; but Keith Harrison’s Barthesian study (1994) is useful, even though Barthes himself has been accused of Orientalism (Chow 1991, 174).

The extent of Cogswell's absorption and innovative play with the Dao can also be gauged by (re-)examining circularity from (an)other angle: the function of the yin and yang in the circularity/cyclicality of the Dao. After all, one cannot resist posing questions like these: what causes the circularity? What sustains the endless movement, or the new endless game on a cosmic scale? Integral to the Daoist notion of movement is the yin/yang cardinal principle, poetized in Cogswell's subtle and creative images of the earth/heaven, rain/sun, stillness/movement complementaries. As is well known, the *Daodejing* has these poetic-philosophical lines:

Chapter 42

Ten thousand things carry yin on their backs and embrace yang in their front,

Blending these two vital breaths (ch'i) to attain harmony (ho).

(The *Tao Te Ching*, Ellen Maria Chen, 157)

In the Daoist paradigm then, the yin and the yang reside in everything, and in its changes and movements; and the interfusion and interpenetration of one another guarantees an equilibrium that has to be renewed in an ever-lasting dynamic interplay. In Cogswell's newly constructed Daoist scheme, the two notions – circularity and returning to the origins as well as the yin/yang balancing and blending – are so naturally (in two senses: skillfully and in the manner as nature devises it) interwoven as to warrant analysing another Cogswell poem, “Haiku”, in conjunction with “Full Circle”.

We submit that “Full Circles” and “Haiku” extends considerably the Daoist metaphoric and metaphysical intent and the Daoist discourse on the functions and nature of circles and round shapes, by unfolding the primal or primordial forces – the sun (yang), and water (yin) – together with movement and stillness. Cogswell has been fascinated by images of circles and round shapes, of course²⁵:

Thoughts Like Sun-rays

... thoughts like sun-rays flow

till through the poet's prised brain

they form a rain-bow...

(*IPOOM* 51)

Like “Full Circle”, there is much to recommend “Thoughts Like Sun-rays”. In these two poems, not only are images of round shapes and (semi-)circles abundant (the sun, the brain, the rain-bow); the organic blending of sun or sun-rays (yang element) and rain or rain-bow (yin element); of the grass and the string (soft and yin element) and the earth and the pulltoy (hard, solid, and yang) also achieves a perfect balance, resulting in a beauty of a most natural description. Finally, true to the yin-first principle implied in Daoism, both poems culminate in an authentically yin image – “a string” in one and “rain-bow” in another. Soft, flexible, and curvy, the string is not a stick or hard handle nor taut, and the “thoughts” have not hardened into something solid like a “well-formulated” idea, or intellectual products hammered into final, and thus rigid and unchangeable shapes.

²⁵Other poems saturated with images of round shapes and circles can be found in “Haiku” (103) and “Haiku” (195) in *A Long Apprenticeship*.

An ingenuous master of blending and/or of mixing and matching, Cogswell pulls together archetypal Daoist images and ideas of the yin and the yang and commingles them throughout the poem. On a deeper level, however, it might be safe to conclude thus: the ultimate beauty and quietude of his poems come from Cogswell's deft resolving of the yin and the yang elements in chiefly yin imagery. Furthermore, since "Full Circle" not only challenges and breaks away from this Western mind set, but also flows out of the fixed conventional forms such as the villanelle and sestina to approximate the Dao's movement and rhythms, it is little wonder that Cogswell's favourite is this simple yet profound poem, of all he has ever written.²⁶

In conclusion, the significance of Cogswell's poems under discussion, exploring and disseminating the Dao and manifesting its movement and nature's rhythms in beautiful circles and ever-regenerating cycles set in motion by the yin/yang dynamics, can now be measured in terms of T.S. Eliot's standards in "Tradition and the Individual Talents". Western history and philosophy have been obsessed with "linearity", according to Michel Foucault (1976); similarly, as Helen Cixous and Lucy Irigaray have argued so poetically, Western sexuality, especially male, has also been characterized by the same feature.²⁷ Furthermore, the same holds true of much Western poetry. One needs only to think of the Yeatsian fear of the falcon's turning in circles in "The Second Coming", Margaret Atwood's *The Circle Game*, or the popular nursery rhyme in terms of a deadly game (remember "Ring-a-ring round the roses"?). In these poems, anything that moves in circles, spirals, or cycles scares the poet/speaker, and fills him/her with endless anxiety about "progress", "development", or simply forging ahead (linear movement).²⁸ Cogswell's Dao-inspired poems can be read as a counter-cultural act in the Western context. In doing so, he carries on the sceptical tradition of Daoism in the time of its inception.²⁹ In sum, his poetic output to date has shown amply a hankering for things of the past, such as old poetic forms and time-tested Daoist philosophy, and for traditional life of harmony and balance; correspondingly, it also enshrines his dislike or even hatred for industrialization and technology for its own sake. Furthermore, it registers a mode or line of thinking whose trajectory parallels and inscribes the circular movement of the Dao. Finally, his Dao-related poetry keeps, and would continue to keep alive, the vigorous intertextual play with other Daoist texts, ancient and contemporary.

²⁶ Cogswell declared this in his letter in 1994 to John M. Chen.

²⁷ We thank John Lepage for alerting the first writer to the possible "stereotypical" view that all Western philosophies are linear; the Judeo-Christian vision of history is ultimately circular: a return to God or Christ second coming are ready instances; see for example, Rivers's two chapters, "Views of History" and "Cosmology" in *Classical and Christian ideas in English Renaissance Poetry*.

²⁸ For an enlightening discussion of how "progress" has changed its meaning, see John Ralston Saul's *The Doubter's Companion*; we thank Curtis and Josie Dams for alerting the first writer to this work and for a very useful discussion. For another equally skeptical view about "development" in the West, see Malcolm Lowry's "The Forest Path to the Spring", and Chen and Xie (1993).

²⁹ See Xie and Chen (1992).

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Chapter 4

Lu Fo: Fusing Western and Daoist Poetics

*When did the poets
Begin to add a
Spoonful of philosophy into their coffee? (Lo Fu, Driftwood 67)*

4.1 Preamble

Taiwanese immigrant and Chinese Canadian diasporic poet and critic Lo Fu (洛夫) needs little introduction in the Chinese and English mass media. He is, deservedly, a Nobel Prize nominee known for having to his credit some 12 volumes of poetry and “an equal number of personal anthologies published in Taiwan”, Hong Kong, and mainland China, and for garnering practically all major literary prizes in Taiwan (Balcom 2007: back cover). He has also been studied in Chinese by several renowned critics and theorists in Taiwan and China—for instance, Jian Zhengzhen, Ye Lu, Long Bide, and Cai Sufen—to whom we defer and will refer below. At the dawn of this millennium Lo Fu pleasantly surprised most but a very few with a *dour de force*: an epic of some 3000 lines: *Driftwood*. It was duly translated by John Balcom and nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2002. Nonetheless, despite these critics’ studies, an untapped area remains—Daoist, and to a lesser extent, Confucian, poetics and philosophy in Lo Fu’s poetry.

Likewise, in the field of English or Chinese Canadian studies published in English, Lo Fu has not received due critical attention beyond the sketchy introductions prefacing various editions or collections of Lu Fu’s poetry in English translations. There is a saving grace, though. Of all scholars publishing in the English-speaking world, John Balcom has performed the bulk of the laudable translation as a translator of Lu Fu’s two longest extant Chinese poems: *Death of a Stone Cell* (《石室之死亡》 1965 Chinese; 1993 English) and *Driftwood* (《漂木》 2001 Chinese; 2007 English). Also notable is this fact: Balcom remains the very first in the English language to pinpoint “Taoism” in Lo Fu’s works that include *Death of a Stone Cell* (“Introduction” 1993, 1), though he has not delved into the subject to this date.

We need to realize that the word “Taoism” has changed to “Daoism” in recent years in the English-speaking academic discourse; likewise, Daoism as a philosophy or religion has gained much currency over the past decades, or since Balcom singles

it out in his 1993 introduction to Lo Fu's *Death of a Stone Cell*. For instance, John Z. Ming Chen's monograph, *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers* (2008), remains a ground-breaking study that examines thoroughly the influence of a quintessentially Chinese philosophy—Daoism—on diasporic writers of Asian Canadian origins publishing in English. Notably, the interest in Daoist studies has been revitalized by Wei and Chen in their co-authored 2011 monograph, *A Study of Canadian Social Realist Literature: A Neo-Marxist, Confucian, and Daoist Perspectives*, and their 2011 co-authored essay on Fred Cogswell's Daoist paradoxical poetics suggested silence and elaboration. It is a natural corollary, then, that this essay carries the torch forward and expands on the main drift of Wei's and Chen's arguments and ideas advanced in their trail-blazers, while treating specific themes and motifs of Daoist philosophy and poetics in Lo Fu's poetry and in his personal observations published thus far.

Several critics have commented upon the remarkable features that have made Lo Fu's *Driftwood* unique among its contemporaries. This chapter argues this point: more than anything else, Daoist metaphysics (including ontology, cosmology, and epistemology), Daoist imagery, and Daoist vision of life pervade the entirety of this, probably Lo Fu's last, long poem of epic proportions. Simply put, in an extensive text rich in images and symbols of the Daoist philosophy, expounded most recently by John Z. Ming Chen's 2008 *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers*, Lo Fu has reinvented or "trans-created" (Fred Wah via Larissa Lai) a new Daoist poetics and metaphysics of and for the twenty-first century and beyond.

4.2 Critical Deficiencies in the Study of Daoist Elements and Poetics in Lo Fu's Poetry

A combination of several factors has led to a missed opportunity for a focused Daoist study on Lo Fu. First, John Balcom, having identified the philosophical "Taoism" in *Death of a Stone Cell* some 20 years ago, glances over the recurrent and glaring Daoist presence in his 2007 "Introduction" to his translation of Lo Fu's *Piaomu* 《漂木》 into *Driftwood*. Additionally, in Balcom's translation the omission of an important appendix, written in Chinese prose, of Lo Fu's personal and shocking experience with the salmon rush, death, and rebirth in British Columbia, Canada, unwittingly deprives both the translation and its English readers of a good chance to obtain a sense of the integrity of Lo Fu's original Chinese version, and hence, its philosophical Daoism, in face of death and life as a cycle. Finally, the absence in Balcom's translation of Lo Fu's own Chinese note to Zhuangzi's work (2006, 194) about the typical Daoist "sitting-and-forgetting" motif contributes, again unfortunately, to the obfuscation and even erasure of the relevance of Daoism to Lo Fu's most recent 2001 epic masterpiece.

This insufficiency of Lo Fu studies in English is further compounded by the fact that Lo Fu is a virtuoso poet skilled in sophisticated techniques used classical

Chinese literary devices and Western-styled free verse, and schooled in classical Daoist poetry and classical Daoist philosophy. As a result, any English translation, even with copious annotations, risks losing the multi-layered, rich literary and cultural symbolism accrued and deposited in the Chinese language and culture over 5000 years of recorded history. At any rate, exhaustion of the highly suggestive and contemplative meanings of Lo Fu's imagery and symbolism is well nigh impossible. In this sense, we can only hope to approach Lo Fu's poems from a particular angle with a sharp focus. With space constraints, we feel compelled to focus on several salient Daoist features not yet examined either in Chinese or English.

As happens in any cross-cultural and cross-linguistic translation, the English translations of Lo Fu's two masterpieces must of necessity lose much of the flavour and resonance of the original Chinese poem. This is further compounded by the gaps among classical, semi-classical, and vernacular Chinese that exist in the Chinese verse, the gaps that have been filled in or levelled off further by the uniform or standard modern English in which Lo Fu's poems have been rendered. With this in mind, for the integrity and richness of the Lo Fu canon we are compelled to restore what has been erased or elided during this inevitable double translation. Finally, we need to blaze a new trail in critical approaches to unravelling something never explored by openly and unequivocally embracing Daoist philosophy and poetics as a primary subject of investigation.

Granted that Lo Fu's longest poem as yet is not a philosophical discourse in a strict sense of the word, it is, however, an epic that the poet himself has openly declared to be "metaphysical" (translation ours). As at least one critic has rightly pointed out, *Driftwood* works largely by imagery buttressed by a heavy and healthy dose of philosophical questioning (Jian Zhengzhen, 简政珍 "Preface," 2006). Regrettably, Jian never names the specific philosophy as Daoist, Confucian, or otherwise. We argue that above all, Daoist philosophy turns into Lo Fu's dominant mode of thinking and poetizing, followed by a lesser dose of ethical philosophy of Confucian-Mencian thought, though Western thought and poetics also figure on his poetic landscape. In a nutshell, many strands of metaphysics—including some western—exist, but Daoist metaphysics and Confucian philosophy stand out in Lo Fu's *Driftwood* by virtue of the recurrent Daoist images, symbols, and sayings lifted straight from the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* on the one hand, and, one the other, from *The Analects of Confucius*. In general, while the epic poem seems reminiscent of Laozi's the *Daodejing* in its epigrammatic and short lines, the free-flowing, wandering, and independent spirit in *Driftwood* recalls Zhuangzi's similar spirit exhibited in the *Zhuangzi*.

Nevertheless, John Balcom remains perhaps the very first in the English-speaking world to have commented on Lo Fu's works, not least *Death of a Stone Cell* that catapulted Lo Fu onto the center of critical attention in Taiwan. Thus, some citation is necessary as follows: "A product of its time, Lo Fu's *Death of a Stone Cell* is the representative work of Taiwan's modernist movement. It was published on January 1, 1965, after 5 years of composition and revision. Unique in the annals of modern Chinese literature, it has been subject to a wide variety of interpretations, and has been praised as a ground-breaking, revolutionary work and lambasted as nihilistic,

incomprehensible, and a mere imitation of Western modernist writing” (Balcom 1993, “Introduction,” [1])

In spite of the modernist pursuits mentioned above, we note, in terms of literary isms, that social realism and surrealism continue to be Lo Fu’s perennial concerns (*Driftwood* 18, 50). The poet has posed questions such as what is reality and what is the real and the unreal, referring directly or alluding indirectly to Zhuangzi’s butterfly and his self-doubt about identity. And Ye Lu is correct in pointing out, in Chinese, that Lo Fu has to face, willy-nilly, “the daily complicating state of existence” as a poet (2006, 210; translation ours). We venture that Lo Fu ultimately approaches contemporary reality, history, and poetics from a Daoist metaphysical perspective in his recent masterpiece, *Driftwood*, a major work that, in our view, exceeds *Death of a Stone Cell* in artistic mastery and Daoist metaphysical depth that Balcom has singled out nearly two decades before in his 1993 “Introduction.”

A note is in order about Lo Fu’s conventional Chinese methods of documenting sources while composing poetry, methods which have resulted in inadvertent collapsing of his own and others’ Daoist writings, among other things. Lo Fu, writing his second Chinese epic, does not adhere consistently to the rules about citations generally followed in English studies in North America. Put in the English-speaking context, then, the Harold Bloomian anxiety of influence never hangs over Lo Fu’s works. Rather, Lo Fu usually resorts to citing a litany of lines and sentences from classical Chinese literature and Chinese philosophical writings, including the Daoist, sometimes *verbatim*, other times, not, without using double quotation marks, nor any other indicators to suggest the sources of citations. This method, however, is consistent with Chinese creative writers’ and poets’ methods in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. In the English academia outside China, this practice may be dubbed by some not in the know as loose plagiarism or intellectual stealing. In view of the Chinese poetic tradition, however, Lo Fu’s blending myriads of others’ intertexts into his own text in a seamless fashion does result in a new product as an organic whole. At times, though, Lo Fu identifies his sources, as when he makes annotations on the Bible (2006, 155) and the *Zhuangzi* (2006, 194), offering due credits in the epigraphs in different sections and chapters of *Driftwood*.

Related to the issue of authorship or self-referentially, another traditional Chinese way of writing classical poetry bears some discussion. In this connection, an earlier essay is worth mentioning. While commenting on Lu Hsun’s creative or innovative borrowing of Japanese writer Kuriyakawa’s and Russian writer Turgnev’s techniques of composing prose poems, Zhongming Chen (1991) points out traditional Chinese ways of erasing the first-person pronouns and of omitting sources of citations from others. For one thing, the poet’s own voice and what in the West is called the I-speaker are often mixed. For another, multiple intertextuality with no marked signs of citations would result. Considered in this light, we should give full allowance to Lo Fu’s practice in following these specific Chinese traditions. In sum, the composite effect of all these factors is that Daoist poetic elements and Daoist metaphysics embedded in many of the citations often lie hidden, much in the same manner as the Dao existing in things, in Lo Fu’s long poem.

As a result, in spite of all of Lo Fu's Daoist intertextual efforts, an inevitable problem with translation across languages and cultures arises. That is, the otherwise skilled and experienced English translator such as John Balcom did miss several of the philosophical or metaphysical meanings by producing the surface or literal English translation, or by making commonsensical interpretation of the verses or sayings cited by Lo Fu from the *Daodejing* or the *Zhuangzi*. As a matter of fact, Zhongming Chen and Shaobo Xie (1993) have presented the complex issue of translation from modern Chinese into modern English, citing Michael Duke's authoritative essay on Chinese-English translation published before. This thorny issue of Chinese-English translation is further aggravated by the unavoidable act of translating classical Chinese phrases and sentences from Lo Fu's *Driftwood* into modern English, for Lo Fu quotes liberally from what has been termed the mystical, arcane, obscure, and long philosophical poem, the *Daodejing*, on the one hand, and, on the hand, from the equally challenging but literarily more significant *Zhuangzi* written in prose, a text that attempts, in part, to explicate the *Daodejing*. Indeed, we have come to this conclusion: textual evidence shows that Balcom is insufficiently aware of the intricate issues in translating classical Daoist texts, and that he fails to comprehend the philosophical meanings of many key phrases, lines, and sentences from the above-mentioned Daoist classics.

Consequently, this pivotal point can never be overemphasized. Traditional Chinese culture is one that demands respect for traditions, for ancient wisdom, and for old age per se. Lo Fu at his 70 was no exception to the conventional Chinese rules, though he did strive to make innovations and revolutions in poetic styles and metaphysical modes. One may go so far as to argue that the strong, if not irresistible, pull of literary conventions and philosophical traditions became a source of productive tension. In reality, Lo Fu has chosen wisely what to include and exclude, what to uphold and discard, in his paring down life's and writing's unnecessary parts. At the end of this process lies the crown jewel of his epic poetry and revamped Daoist metaphysics.

In the final analysis, Balcom summarizes the themes of *Driftwood* "simply as the sense of helplessness and transience of life" ("Introduction," 2007, xi). Much as we would like to applaud Balcom's thematic summary, we feel, however, that specific analysis and examination are very much in need of Lo Fu's particular Daoist metaphysical stance, as well as poetic devices and visions. We further tender that such a Daoist focus would re-orient the direction of Lo Fu study and re-evaluate his substantial contribution to the meaning of life and poetry as immeasurably rich and affirming, rather than "helpless" and "transient." The crucial issue rests with the perspective we take: A Daoist one. Daoist poetics and philosophy have been invariably characterized by noted scholars such as Li Binghai (1991) and William Yip (2006) as highly paradoxical and suggestive.

4.3 Our Approach, New Findings, Biographical Notes, and Textual Analysis of *Driftwood*

Similarly, other critics and theorists of late have expounded, in Chinese, on a variety of poetic and philosophical concepts and motifs in Lo Fu's two longest poems published so far. Nevertheless, their various but valid approaches have not led them to a full-blown or focused study on any of the properly defined Daoist elements. However, this phenomenon must be taken into account: the Chinese characters of Dao 道, and Laozi 老子, Zhuangzi 庄子, have recurred numerous times in *Driftwood*, just as has a rich and complex lexicon centering on western and Chinese poetics, metaphysics, and philosophy (Long Bide 2006: 227). That the names, mentioned already of many eminent Daoist poets from the Tang and Song Dynasties have not led to a Daoist study seems to be unusual on the surface. Yet, given a general lack of silence surrounding Daoism in relation to literature and arts (Livia Kohn 2009)—a silence that was broken only recently by John Z. Ming Chen's groundbreaking *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers* in 2008—this phenomenon should not come as a surprise. Here as elsewhere, Daoist poetics, metaphysics, and philosophy in Lo Fu's poetry have so far gone unexamined.

Indeed, we are completely justified in taking this new, Daoist perspective, for both biographical and textual evidence strongly suggest itself for such a focus on Daoist philosophy and poetics in Lo Fu's works since at least the mid-1960s. In fact, references abound to such recognized poets, prose writers, and critics as Qu Yuan 屈原, Li Bai (Li Po) 李白, Su Shi 苏东坡, Tao Qian 陶潜, Yuan Ji 阮籍, and Ji Kang 嵇康 (Ye Lu 叶橹 2007: 200, 2006: 005; Long Bide 龙彼德 2006: 227), but the word "Daoist" has not entered the picture in most Lo Fu critics' vocabulary to characterize the common philosophical proclivities of these literary figures, nor has a Daoist study been undertaken on Lo Fu as a whole. Ye's focus is squarely on exiled intellectuals or creative writers; ours will be strictly on Daoist philosophical and poetic connections across languages and cultures. While the galaxy of Chinese poets mentioned above share an affinity of being exiled, by force or by choice, one dominant feature should be mentioned. Ye and Long have failed to take notice that these poets and prose writers were all well-known kindred spirits in Daoism as traditionally defined in Chinese literary history as well. As a matter of fact, Lo Fu himself draws attention to several of these poets, cites from, and comments on them, in *Driftwood*. Indeed, this latter work, with a large number of references and allusions to Daoist poets and poetry, and to classical foundational Daoist texts, can be best construed as a culmination or consummation of Lo Fu's lifelong pursuit of Daoist aesthetics and metaphysics. Following this line of thinking, we would argue further that few other poets can, or have been able to, condense the gist or essence of Daoist metaphysics and poetics and house it in a single extensive masterpiece of poetry such as *Driftwood*.

Adoption of the Daoist approach or angle can lay bare multiple layers of poetic and metaphysical meanings accrued over 2000 years of classical and modern Chinese poetry on the one hand, and of the evolution of Daoist metaphysics over an

equal span of time, on the other. However, a caveat is due regarding the Daoism under discussion. Put briefly, Lo Fu's new and fully developed Daoist perspective, which relies heavily on the canonical texts by Laozi and Zhuangzi, has been termed proto-Daoism or classical Daoism, respectively by Russell Kirkland (2000), James Miller (2003), and Livia Kohn (2009). Interestingly, it is to the Daoism and Confucianism of what Karl Casper has called "the axial age" (Yuhua Ji, "Preface," in Chen 2008) of China that Lo Fu has returned, for wisdom, for poetic inspiration, and for metaphysics in his refreshing 2001 epical endeavour. Thus, there exists, for the poet, an intellectual and poetic continuum stretching from the long gone past of recorded human history of China right to the third millennium of our times. It is Daoist philosophy and the accompanying poetic traditions that Lo Fu seeks to assess and revive. His cross-Pacific movement from Taiwan to Canada has not diminished the rich Daoist poetic and philosophical legacy in the slightest. If anything, it is this major geographical and global movement that has provided the impetus for Lo Fu to re-think, re-examine, and re-poetize the old—indeed, classical—Chinese Daoist traditions from a new angle on a global scale.

Lo Fu's personal and social life, as well as intellectual and artistic hobbies, has also suggested a clear Daoist propensity and pursuit. Relevant recent events include several private conversations and telephone calls between Lo Fu and John Z. Ming Chen, a public seminar on poetry given by Lo Fu the poet and critic himself at the Chinese Cultural Center of Greater Vancouver on February 5, 2011, and an artistic-poetic gathering of the Driftwood Poetry Society in Burnaby on February 20, 2011, together with Ya Yin and Chen Haoquan, two other famed writers of the Vancouver-Richmond literary cohort in the Greater Vancouver area (Wei and Chen 2011). In the February 20 benefit concert and dance for the Chinese New Year of the Rabbit, Lo Fu was graceful in giving away as a gift an exquisitely penned scroll of Chinese calligraphy, on which Zhuangzi's much-cited line was cited in black ink: "Communicating exclusively with the spirit of Heaven and Earth' like an eagle perched on a overhanging rock" (cf., *Driftwood* 56; Wei and Chen 2011). As we later come to know, through the personified eagle in the epic, the I-speaker has virtually transformed himself into Zhuangzi's legendary *Peng* bird in spirit. In conclusion, these private and social moments have revealed Lo Fu an avid disseminator of, and card-carrying adherent to, classical Chinese poetics and Daoist philosophy.

We now turn to a close textual analysis of the Daoist-Confucian elements in *Driftwood*. Right in the early part of his epic, Lo Fu raises the issue of philosophy, offers Daoist and Confucian philosophy or Dao as a preferred choice through the use of a metaphoric piece of driftwood and the figure of an old professor, and sets out to explore the metaphysics of poetry and of the world. Lo Fu's over-arching image of driftwood symbolizes an aged professor's soul-searching voyage for a philosophy that may become his for life, after admitting to the weakening or poverty of philosophy at the dawn of the twenty-first century:

1

At times the driftwood draws near / Butting the professor's spine / Embedding itself in
his flesh / Suddenly heaven and earth merge as one / He discovers his body has an extra
bone / A stiff / Organ, a flagpole in the square / When aroused / His metaphysical face /

Flaps noisily in the wind / But philosophy tends toward impotence / So he raises that flagpole and strikes wildly / Toppling heaven's hall, felling the stars / A horde of logic-eating silverfish / Spirals out of his thick tome on metaphysics / Time and the insects / Display their white fangs / In the cracks between the pages / Biting the professor until he raises his arms and shouts: / Discard ...wisdom / Eliminate ...sagacity / And the wood inside him struggles for release / A hopeless pain / That has nothing to do with birth / It calls out softly time and again; / Providing aid and relief in lean times / Is not as good as / Forgetting each other on / the rivers and lakes (*Driftwood*, 6)

In the above-cited stanza, the two lines, “Discard ...wisdom / Eliminate ... sagacity,” are taken from the *Daodejing*, as are the last three lines quoted above from the *Zhuangzi*, and these lines appear again under different disguises subsequently. By citing the two founders of classical Daoism at rather short intervals, Lu Fu leaves the reader in doubt about his metaphysical grounding: Daoist philosophy. Looking forward to stanza 2 cited below, we can establish a parallel between Laozi and Zhuangzi on the one hand, and Lu Fu, on the other, with Confucius and Mencius tagging along. At the outset of his epic then, Lu Fu makes no bone about trimming down his own learning and life experience in accordance with Laozi's advice: unlearn what you've learned, or in other words, unload what one has packed along the way of life. Whereas the majority of the population desires to accumulate learning in a conventional sense and material possessions in large quantity, Laozi counsels decreasing both. But only the critically unthinking would take Laozi's words at face value. What Laozi means is always already something different in a historical context, and historians and philosophers subsequent to Laozi and Zhuangzi are still deeply engaged in interpreting or unravelling what these two earliest founders of proto-Daoism had in mind. For Lu Fu in the twenty-first century, social reality forces him to make a choice. By implication, Lu Fu's epic, long as it is, promises to give readers the bare necessity of life's wisdom and guidance, as advised by Laozi, cited twice by Lu Fu above and elsewhere. Similarly, Lu Fu appropriates Zhuangzi's saying about “forgetting” as a means of whittling down useless or dispensable details of life and possessions to reach for the essentials. Considered in this light, the long epic as a whole can be interpreted as an arduous task of shedding unnecessary and trivial things along the way, until the speaker/poet reaches the absolute basics of poetry and metaphysics.

In the same endeavour to rally the classical Chinese philosophical vigour and rigour of Daoism and Confucianism to bear upon twentieth-and-twenty-first-century social reality, Lu Fu conjures up Confucius as well, complete with the sea image and with the spreading of the Dao—albeit a Confucian Dao—overseas. With both Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Confucius called into being within two pages by his swift though brief citations, Lu Fu sets up the stage and tone for the entire epic: the speaker is to spread Daoist and even Confucian philosophy or the Dao abroad, against all odds, as part of his mission in life and in poetry composition. Readers familiar with *The Analects of Confucius* would identify the first line below as from the very mouth of Confucius:

2

Riding a raft / Adrift on the sea / What drifts are wind and clouds ... / Riding a raft / Drifting / on the vast sea...(*Driftwood*, 7)

The first two lines form part of Confucius' saying, gleaned from *The Analects of Confucius*, regarding his intent to promulgate his Dao beyond the four seas if it fails to find a proper place for it within China. The same phrases are repeated three times on as many pages to follow immediately. Given the citations from the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi*, and *The Analects of Confucius* in quick succession within two pages, the entire epic can probably be construed as a herculean endeavour to combine the best of classical Chinese philosophies of Daoism and Confucianism for contemporary, twenty-first-century enlightenment and employment. After all, the gap between Daoism and Confucianism was not large initially in Chinese history (Guan 2006, 116–117), and we can justifiably combine these two philosophies into a Daoist-Confucian perspective for the sake of this study, as dictated by Lo Fu's newly fashioned poetics and metaphysics.

It would seem that Lo Fu is definitely confident about the worth of his own philosophical cultural heritage, its relevance to current social reality, and the direction it may lead him in the world beyond China. Against an industrialized, materialistic, commercialized postmodern world, Lo Fu resorts readily to classical Daoist-Confucian tenets and principles. Indeed, the Daoist and Confucian clues Lo Fu drops above provide the reader with a compass to navigate through the uncharted waters that is the social reality examined, aestheticized, and philosophized in his extended epic. It is therefore not far-fetched to suggest that a Daoist-Confucian perspective on his long poem is as valid as any. One direct way in which we may approach Lo Fu's poem is, interestingly, through his sustained and protracted searching for and finding of the Way or Dao, as a first step:

Sometimes emptiness is a kind of fullness / Why, when the earth becomes fecund again / Does it produces so many freaks?... Without desire there can be no listening to the Way / ...As to life and death / Zhuangzi and the butterfly and the Great Compassion Mantra take turns speaking / Each has its own way. Without foolishness / The stones will not become pregnant / ... (21–22)

We will leave aside the paradoxical truth about “emptiness” and “fullness” mentioned in the first line for later examination. In the rest of the following lines, one theme appears transparent: combining Laozi's Dao/Way with Zhuangzi's and Confucius', Lo Fu's newly minted poetic metaphysics is blessed with a solid philosophical foundation.

In “III. Letters in Bottles,” but in a different part, “Section 4. To the Gods,” Lo Fu continues to explore the implications of the interrelationships between Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, as well as the whereabouts of gods. His typical pantheism aside, Lo Fu injects into his own poetic search Zhuangzi's sometimes blasphemous or sacrilegious, and other times, sacred or eulogistic, comments on the ubiquitous existence of the Dao as Lo Fu's ever-present gods. The myriads of specific objects turned images in Lo Fu's long epic poem thus vivify and concretize the otherwise abstract philosophical principle of the Dao's omnipresence from Zhuangzi's perspective. Listen, for example, to the I-speaker addressing directly the gods of poetry, or the Muse in the west:

2

I know where thou art / In the cry of the cicada / In the silence of the cicada's call / In the thick boundless fog, empty and indistinct / Among the falling leaves of late autumn / In

the humility of the falling leaves / Among the pigeons / In the kindness dispersed by the wings of the pigeons / In the eyes of a blind person / In the piercing brightness of a blind person's eyes (87)

O Lord, I know where thou art / Thou art in the unfathomable depths / Of all things / Seemingly nonexistent / But omnipresent / Seemingly beyond reach / But everywhere at hand (90)

Whereas the above-cited stanzas and lines converge on Zhuangzi and his famed images of the butterfly, here comes Lo Fu's creative use of Zhuangzi's seeing the Dao everywhere and transforming Zhuangzi's vision of the Dao into Lo Fu's of the gods. In an age of high-tech and high consumerism, Lo Fu identifies the divineness in what appears to be, diurnal, every-day objects. Lo Fu thus offers twenty-first-century reader a refreshing doze of spirituality. Indeed, Lo Fu persists in exploring the Dao throughout the epic, and eventually locates the Dao's existence in everything under the sun, as if the Dao had become the many gods in myriads of things; the following example is relevant:

35

Where is the Way? / Among the mole crickets and ants, weeds and grass, tiles and bricks, piss and shit / Some say it is everywhere

Actually it's in the fire and the ashes / In burnt skin and hair / In a cocoon that never becomes a butterfly / In the hands of our forebears (108)

From these lines, it is more than clear that Lo Fu's search for the Dao, or the Way in capitalization, keeps on and on. It is not until near the end of his long epic that we finds Zhuangzi's pantheistic and naturalist solution re-created in Lo Fu's concrete and infinitely universal objects everywhere and anywhere. Lo Fu's new metaphysics suggests that humanity needs to respect all lives equally because of the Dao immanent in them. There is that divinity or sacredness about things in classical Daoism.

Laozi's and Zhuangzi's Daos vary at times, and Lo Fu remains an adept at distinguishing between their respective Daos defined and advocated by the two Daoist philosophers. But with Zhuangzi, a playful tone and a travelling spirit often preside. As befitting such a tone and spirit, in Lo Fu's epic the images of Zhuangzi's butterfly, and of his spirit hovering over the mundane world, recur sufficient times with a secondary meaning to become symbols for two basic levels of meaning. The first suggests the unstable and transformative nature of life; the second, the thinking being aloof from yet concerned about natural and social life versus death, paradoxically. Examine, for instance, the following short stanzas:

5

As to life and death / Zhuangzi and the butterfly and the Great Compassion Mantra / takes turns speaking / Each has its own say (p. 22)

67 On his way Zhuangzi encountered a pretty and coquettish butterfly / There was no need to happily follow it to the graveyard (65)

42

Is a cocoon a preface? Or a conclusion? / Scholar Zhang smiles but does not answer / At the appropriate time, a butterfly flies over the wall / Ah-ha / A bewitching flower blossoms in a skeleton (82).

In all of these lines, Lo Fu employs, or rather re-creates, a Daoist metaphysics of change and transformation in his new epic in the context of cross-cultural changing and transforming identities. In the context of diasporic Chinese literature, Lo Fu opens up a new vista for fresh starts and fresh identity formation in another country.

In terms of this intertext of the butterfly, we can also situate the importance of Lo Fu's Daoist metaphysics and poetics in a global literary and philosophical context. The repeated references or allusions to the butterfly link Lo Fu to, organically and inevitably, an "unbroken chain" (J. A. Hsia) of international Daoist intertextuality that John Z. Ming Chen has identified and examined convincingly by joining the many dots into a long line of cross-cultural Daoist influence in Asian-Canadian—specifically—Chinese-Canadian writers (2008; Timothy Yu 2010). As a Chinese diasporic poet, Lo Fu has made his own unique and tremendous contribution to both Chinese and English poetics on an international stage.

Thus, we assert all of the above-mentioned enduring but transforming traditions, in spite of, not because of, recent Western culturally nihilistic and deconstructionist attacks in the name of anti-essentialism, on any attempts to locate and identify with the origins and essence of a given cultural, literary, and philosophical tradition. This westernized and otherized gaze is evident in Timothy Yu's literal misidentification of the *Daodejing* as the *Book of Changes*, and in his garbled, cultural misreading of John Z. Ming Chen's work as "essentializing" (2010, 455), whereas Chen's entire work aims to assert a culturally specific and authentic tradition precisely for the purpose of reconstructing a Daoist philosophical tradition in Chinese Canadian literature, culture, and history against an academic environment and convention of western intellectuals' blindness and their much culturally myopic and narrowing horizons.

Lo Fu also takes aim at Western poets who fail to know the Dao. Much in the manner of the *Daodejing*, *Driftwood* critiques, via the mouth of Mallarme, Kafka for missing the Dao or Way (*Driftwood* 66). Lo Fu attacks "Mallame's circle" as well, and critiques him for not following the whole, uncorrupted Way:

He also adhered to the Way / the Way / Hollowed out by bugs / His poetry is an old broken
down car / What philosophy can it convey? / (68)

The metaphor of "bugs" points to Mallame's less than wholesome understanding of the Dao. Lo Fu dismisses Mallame's efforts at a new Daoist metaphysics and offers his own version: it proves more convincing and authentic.

So much for Lo Fu's re-invented metaphysics of the Dao. But we might be amiss if we fail to discern the Dao's multiple connections to "ten thousand things," for the Daoist triad below presents precisely such a case in point. The Dao in various forms, or even in non-form, non-sound, and non-shape, shows its face in Lo Fu's refreshing images, symbols, and structures of a tripartite nature.

In his poetic construction of a new metaphysics, Lo Fu also posits a traditional Chinese triad, Heaven-Earth-Humanity—rather than the Christian trinity of Holy Spirit, Holy Father, and Holy Son, all male-oriented—based on a classical Daoist metaphysical paradigm, as an old made new solution in and for the twenty-first

century. As a matter of fact, critic Long Bide has exclaimed thus, in Chinese, about Lo Fu's epic: "What a pantheism and unification of heaven and humanity" (Long Bide 龙彼德 2006: 225; translation ours). In reality, Lo Fu has also articulated in general terms what his 3000-line epic has accomplished, as translated by John Balcom this way: "It sums up my experience of exile, my artistic explorations, and my metaphysics. I consider it a personal epic, the greatest achievement of my old age, and a landmark of my career" (2007, x). The triple poetic preoccupations sound all very grand and worth pursuing, and it is incumbent upon us to explore them in greater detail.

We tender this point: Lo Fu repeatedly employs this Chinese triad in conjunction with the Dao and its manifested images and symbols to challenge and replace resolutely the binary oppositions prevalent in the west, binary oppositions having been challenged, perhaps most vigorously, by Jacques Derrida in the last century (cf., John Z. Ming Chen 2008). Another of Lo Fu's philosophical-poetic triad, as Ye Lu pinpoints in particular (2007, 053) and Hu Fuchen suggests in general (2009, 45), and as Lo Fu himself puts forward poetically and philosophically, is the triad of time, life, and gods. In brief, Lo Fu succeeds in employing this classical Daoist triad and a newly formed triad to challenge and deconstruct binary oppositions prevalent in Western metaphysics.

In *Driftwood* Lo Fu explores yet another key Daoist motif: the motif of return as revival and rebirth in face of death and destruction. Daoist metaphysics has been characterized previously as capitalizing on significant ways of reversals/renewals/returns (Chen and Xie 1993; Chen 1994, 2008, 2010; Chen and Wei 2010). Indeed, both Lo Fu's appendix of an exquisite, 3-page piece of prose writing in Chinese (77–79), omitted by translator John Balcom, and the verse portion, "II. The Salmon's Encounter with Death" (23–43) in *Driftwood*, are typical of Zhuangzi's ruminations on nature's and life's self-regulating, self-regenerative process epitomized by the salmon. In a similar way, Lo Fu senses and expresses such a Daoist epiphany in the return of the salmon to the place of birth in British Columbia, Canada, a return that gives birth to a new generation of millions of salmon and starts another cycle of life in an emblematic Daoist fashion. Lo Fu's Daoist poetics and metaphysics exhibited here recall, not too distantly, John Z. Ming Chen and Shaobo Xie's 1993 essay, "Malcolm Lowry and the Dao," on Lowry's Daoist imagery and symbolism of the workings, rhythms, patterns, and principles of Nature in Vancouver's Burrard Inlet depicted in Lowry's *Hear us O Lord*.

Indeed, metaphorically, Lo Fu's two pieces about the salmon run, in prose as in verse, amount to Lo Fu's own spiritual and philosophical returning to the real roots of his own culture, and to his taking stock of the lived experiences and the literary and cultural heritage of the times and places of his early days in China and Taiwan. Above all, for his metaphysical exploration, he returns as far back as humanly possible—*pace* any western deconstructionists' denial of or doubt about "origins" and "foundations"—to the philosophical fountainheads of Laozi, Zhuangzi, Confucius, and Mencius, by direct references and by indirect allusions, for intellectual engagement and spiritual revival. The result is Lo Fu's total reckoning with these four greats in Chinese intellectual history by using poetry as his means of expression and

of resurrecting old philosophers in the new age. Lo Fu's epic is thus the distilled and condensed product of several decades' contemplation and writing about this matter of return, rebirth, and revitalization.

In terms of this return motif, Ye Lu 叶橹 as a critic has also proffered views that we can examine and expand from a Daoist perspective. With all due respect to Ye's characterization of Lo Fu as a wanderer and an exiled writer, we offer a different interpretation by positing this argument instead: It is only on the surface of words that Lo Fu is in exile, for behind the wandering spirit and searching words lies a gradually worked out metaphysics—a Daoist one, that stands Lo Fu in good stead. Put differently, Lo Fu is sure-footed and well-planted in classical Daoist philosophy found by Laozi and Zhuangzi, and in Daoist poetics exemplified in the works of recognized Daoist poets ranging from Tao Yuanming, Qu Yuan, through Li Bai and Li Shangyin, to Su Dongpo and others. Following this vein we can see beyond the words and reach to the depth and grounding of Lo Fu's own newly fashioned Daoist poetics and philosophy in *Driftwood*.

We submit another point: not only has Lo Fu the poet finally found a geographical and spiritual home in Canada's Vancouver, he has re-invented and revitalized Daoist metaphysics and poetics in a new poetic adventure of the twenty-first century. Consequently, the twice self-exiled poet has gained an aesthetic and critical distance that enables him to contemplate on and critique modern social life in a refreshing way: the Daoist way. More than anything else, Lo Fu has worked out a philosophical or metaphysical poetics that feeds and expands on a long, time-honoured intellectual and poetic traditions initiated by Laozi and Zhuangzi at the very beginning, and varied, developed, and enriched by a galaxy of shining literary stars named above. The sweep of Lo Fu's epic form is equal to such a grand task of scanning and telescoping the panoramic vista of several motifs recurrent throughout Chinese Daoist literature from the ancient to the contemporary. However, this long epic form alone is without specific cultural meanings if not shot through with a certain Daoist spirit and embodied with a certain Daoist soul. In addition, the rich and dense intertextuality of Daoist philosophical and poetic references and allusions distinguishes markedly *Driftwood* from its epic predecessor, *Death of a Stone Cell*, reputedly a modernist piece that bears the mark of its age. By enacting the Daoist metaphysics of return as revival and renewal, Lo Fu has effectively turned or returned the reader's gaze back to the "sources of enlightenment" (Gayatri Spivak 1993) in the land of China.

There exists Lo Fu's reworked Daoist aesthetics of the void, the quiet, and emptiness: unlearning what is learned already, forgetting much to retain the less that is more in a Daoist metaphysical paradigm. The repeated use of "quietly" stress the Daoist poetics of stillness and quiet as a preferred state and a time to reflect. It is also this seemingly quietist philosophy that provides him at his advanced age the mental steadiness to collect his thoughts about his whole life and that of his mother's in particular, as evidenced in "III. Letters in Bottles," 1. To My Mother." A Daoist poetic metaphysics of the empty, the void, and the silent unique to the Chinese operates here: Out of nothing comes something. Lo Fu's numerous uses of words such as silence, silent, quietly, nothing, recall, forever backward, the Daoist

metaphysical poetics of the sound in the soundless, the cloud-like, water-like quality of things identified by John Z. Ming Chen (2008). Lo Fu's poetics falls into the same category. We find, almost at every turn in Lo Fu's long epic, a quietist philosophy or metaphysics that shows something in nothing, life in non-life, sight and sound in silence, fullness of life in emptiness, or what seems to be emptiness to the common eye. Thus, a salient feature of Lo Fu's metaphysics embodied in his thickly piled-up and dense poetic imagery and symbolism lies in detecting the seething and bubbling life beneath what seems to be the void, the quiet, the motionless, and nothingness. Here are but some of the examples of evoking Tao Yuanming dwelling in tranquility and quietude, all in meaningful connection with Lo Fu's own mother in similar situations:

What is more startling than the temple bell at dusk / Nothing, absolutely nothing / Unless it is Tao Yuanming's generation and his / Faith in clouds and infatuation with water (*Driftwood* 51)

To perform an irrational religious practice / You waited quietly time after time in the delivery room / You waited quietly amid the blood / And today / In the dark, you wait quietly amid the clouds / In the mist, you wait quietly in the fog / In the cold, you wait quietly amid the ashes / In the void, you wait quietly on the horizon / Tonight, with the silence of a blank sheet of white paper / I keep watch over you and / Your empty room (*Driftwood* 52–53).

In Lo Fu's Daoist metaphysics, the I-speaker manages to reconstruct the mother's past in rich details and meanings out of the "empty" space, the void, the fog, and silence of the mother's "empty room." It is precisely the "empty" aspect of that room that allows Lo Fu to select vital and meaningful figments or fragments of bygone life and rebuild a poetized life for himself and for his mother. Of course, not everything from the past figures prominently in Lo Fu's creative process of writing something into being; his is a highly selective process of memorizing and committing to paper what is left of his mother's life according to the Daoist principle articulated by Laozi and cited twice by Lo Fu, and according to Zhuangzi's creed about and practice of "sitting-and-forgetting." Lo Fu thus re-invents and enriches both Lao's and Zhuangzi's metaphysical poetics encapsulated and expressed succinctly and enigmatically in four original Chinese words: The empty room or clear mind leads to the Dao, or 虚室生白 in Chinese. As stated before, the profound meanings of this pithy Daoist saying have, regrettably, eluded Balcom's otherwise nuanced and subtle rendering of Lo Fu's poetry into English.

Lo Fu has also proven to be sufficiently familiar with western philosophy and poetics, as has been demonstrated by Balcom (2007) and by Lo Fu's own poetry, commentaries, and interviews in Chinese (2006). Why, then, does he cling to Daoist philosophy and Daoist poetics? The answers are not too far to seek. As a poet and as a person for an extended life-span, Lo Fu has been deeply immersed in Daoist philosophy and classical Chinese poetry. He is, by all account, a much sought-after calligrapher who penned many exquisitely executed lines from Daoist classics such as the *Zhuangzi* on scrolls of rice paper and cloth. To anyone adequately familiar with Yu Dan's highly popular serialized CCTV lectures on Zhuangzi in China in 2006, this line may seem a touch too old: "Communicating exclusively with the

spirit of heaven and earth” (独与天地精神往来). As a matter of fact, Lo Fu’s focus on Zhuangzi’s metaphysics preceded Yu Dan’s lectures. Notably, Lo Fu’s poetics is affirmative and positive, even though there is no denying that Lo Fu’s poetry may prove difficult and even mystical at times. Like the Western God, Lo Fu the poet is very much a creator with words made flesh by reinventing Daoist, and to a much lesser extent, Confucian aesthetics and philosophy in his Canada-inspired poetry; thus he has ingeniously revived and enriched ancient Chinese literary and intellectual traditions in the new millennium of the twenty-first century. To the initiated readers, the millennial passion in Lo Fu’s epic is more than obvious, of course: it is in line with the authorial intent in Larissa Lai’s *When Fox Is a Thousand* (1995, 2004 rpt.); Lo Fu’s Daoist metaphysics and poetics with 2500 years of poetic and philosophical heritage, now re-evaluated rejuvenated in full scale, will no doubt bring about a renewed interest in classical Daoism and classical Chinese poetics that we believe will stand poised to last another thousand years.

In closing, we can recapitulate the foregoing points thus: Lo Fu has explored and articulated a Daoist metaphysics of speaking the unspeakable, seeing the invisible, from above; of getting into the thick of a multitude of social reality and getting out of it much wiser or clairvoyant from the overarching perspective of Daoist metaphysics. In a highly symbolic and condense sense, the driftwood is an epitome of the wandering and inquiring spirit of Zhuangzi—or the *peng* bird in the sky or over water.

We can also benefit from putting Lo Fu’s employment of Zhuangzi in an international perspective on the Chinese Canadian diaspora. Placed in the community of Chinese Canadian writers, Zhuangzi and his evocative and by now highly intertextualized image of the butterfly across languages in Lo Fu’s epic have become increasingly interrelated and multi-layered like a palimpsest. We can recall, not too distantly in terms of time and space, this image of the butterfly in connection with Zhuangzi in Larissa Lai and Rita Wong’s 2008 collaborative poetry collection, *sybil unrest*, written in the Japanese poetic form of *renga*, a poetic form that embodies the very spirit of collaboration of the Chinese Canadian community. But both Lo Fu’s Chinese and English versions predate Lai’s and Wong’s joint venture. As a matter of fact, Chinese Canadian writer Wayson Choy’s fond images of the butterfly in both *All That Matters* (2004) and in *Not Yet* (2009) are but other earlier examples.

Consistent and persistent in Lo Fu’s Daoist metaphysics is his offering of a third choice, out of the normal two options, as a real and feasible solution to western conventional wisdom and metaphysics of binary oppositions, thus avoiding the either/or position. In the verses cited below, Heaven, Earth, and the creatures in between, represented again and again in a trio, are forever present: the birds have a third wing, and the white, the yolk, and I become three, as much as do Li Bai (Li Po), his subject, and his poetry:

There is a white clam shell on the beach / It alone is in touch with the spirit of Heaven and Earth, / But it knows that there will come a day when / Pearls and suffering will be exhausted by people / You say: The smoke rises and the birds have a third wing

The fusing of Nature and myself / Is comparable to an egg / I am the shell / I am also the yolk and the white / It's all me / I am also what breaks / This explanation needs no logical support / Great beauty is silent (56)

... Melancholy ponds and melancholy lotuses / Melancholy Southern Mountain and melancholy Tao Qian / Melancholy jars of wine and melancholy chrysanthemums / .../ Melancholy works of history and melancholy wind and rain / Melancholy *Classic of Mountains and Seas* and melancholy bookworms ... (58)

You say you often ran into Li Bai in the bar around midnight / a chubby tippler / a clear-eyed poet with a flowing belt / A great word magician / He wrote life into a garden / He took flowers and wrote them into cups of wine / He took the moon and wrote it into a ship of glass sunk in a river (60)

In the citations above, while the one—two—three process is reminiscent of the way in which the Dao generates myriads of things in a numerical sequence, Lo Fu also maintains the focus on finding the forever elusive yet beckoning Dao throughout his epic. The above-cited lines feature, for the most part, two natural or naturalized objects for poets Tao Yuanming or Li Bai, who makes up the third party, to make sense of in a tripartite framework. We know that both Tao Yuanming and Li Bai have penned many a poem detailing a similar three-part situation. There are no binary oppositions to speak of, only comfortable, harmonious state existing between the poet and his two other companies.

While a preference for unspoiled nature and tranquility is obvious, Lo Fu's Daoist-naturalist interest and writing pristine nature into existence dominate these stanzas cited above. What is significant in Lo Fu's remoulding Daoist metaphysics into Daoist poetics lies also in his directly connecting the philosophical Way with the way of poetry writing, and with the fine poetic qualities in poetry. Note, for example, the following flowing lines, from "III. Letters in Bottles, 2. To the Poets, Section 5," where the I-speaker cannot resist pontificating ever so little to the readers:

I can't keep from talking to you about the magical elements in poetry / The Way in life / The Zen beyond life / The aesthetics of Zhuangzi's butterfly, eastern wisdom / The aesthetics of far corners of the earth / The transcendental aesthetics of the universe / are all but the fully stable and harmonious rhythms / Formed of the chaos in your eyes / And the disturbance / Ossified in your bones (65)

Similarly, Lo Fu also casts a triple gaze at the three matters of time, life, and humanity, or of Heaven, Earth, and Chen Ziang, in this tripartite way:

"Actually, time and life arise and disappear together. Confucius said, "It passes on just like this, not ceasing day and night." Chen Ziang said, "Considering the vastness of Heaven and Earth, I weep sadly all alone." I believe that the trinity of time, life, and God are one. This is the poet's ultimate faith, playfully fulfilling his function as messenger for all three." (70) With the Dao ever-present, and with the tripartite Heaven-Earth-Humanity in place, all things are equal and deserve respect. Lo Fu advocates the Chinese metaphysics for modern use.

In the long epic, Lo Fu formulates a Daoist poetics of the mirror as well. His recurrent uses of the mirror as a metaphor affirm what exists from a Daoist point of view; it enrich but also vary on what leading comparative scholar Yue Daiyun has formerly articulated as the Chinese philosophical-literary conventions. In most

cases of Lo Fu's employment of the mirror, the mirror image is not a negation of reality. Rather, through the mirror's flaccid face, the speaker sees himself and the world in a rare moment of tranquility and quietude otherwise impossible in the hustle and bustle of too much reality. The following lines offer a prime example:

Language / Is still our sacred temple / Salute the world made of Chinese characters / Salute feminism / Salute the angels injured by sexual desire / The bright mirror is not the mirror stand / The delights of the secular world are multifaceted / People are equally as crazy about getting online and into bed (69).

Pulling the Sixth Zen-Buddhist Patriarch Hui-neng's line—"The bright mirror is not the mirror stand"—on the mirror into his epic in the context of other two main teachings of China, Lo Fu shows that he is in good command of the tripartite, co-existent, and harmonious structure or state of three Chinese philosophies and religions as well. In other words, Lo Fu utilizes his knowledge about the "three teachings" or philosophies and religions of China as a new gesture to stave off western binary metaphysics in a broad stroke.

16

I am in the city, in a mirror / I see myself in a body of glass / My head and penis are as soft as a newly hatched worm / A beast is tied to a long leash / But the days I have bound fast are very short (74)

Zhuangzi also uses the mirror a great deal, and he sets the tone for the Daoist metaphor of the mirror for generations to come. Yue Daiyun, a renowned comparative literature scholar, has long studied western and Chinese employment of the mirror as metaphor (1992, 2004); her astute observations apply well here about the mirror being a metaphor for clarity and tranquility apply here regarding the functions of the mirror in classical Chinese literature. When the mirror is broken in Lo Fu's poem, so are tranquility and calmness:

31

So I woke up in a broken mirror / Pressing my ear to the ground I hear / The sun roar, breaking through the earth before dawn / It was in my mother's womb when I first heard the / Metallic clang made as time climbed over black hair (78-79).

Lo Fu also revives and revitalizes Laozi's poetic discourse or metaphysics on the least significant and marginalized as symbolized by the familiar figure of straw dogs. The following zero in on Laozi's metaphysical musings and poetic lines to re-invent and re-interpret Laozi's much-cited lines about "straw dogs" in face of twenty-first century social reality. While re-using the Heaven-Earth-Humanity triad, Lo Fu repeatedly evokes the image of the straw dogs, but ends with his creative "straw dogs of the straw dogs," thus reinforcing the message that the Daoist trinity holds true in Lo Fu's poetic imagination. On the surface, this may appear to be a mere repetition of words, but what proves to be innovative is Lo Fu's sleight of hand with the rigorously Daoist search for the ultimate: that is, in Lo Fu's poetic parlance: the straw dogs of the straw dogs, the last thing most of us may think of. Read the ensuing stanza, citing the *Daodejing* right at the beginning and at the very end of this section:

4

Heaven and earth are without benevolence / Treating all things like straw dogs / Laozi did you no wrong / Amid the ruins of history / The answer can be found in the mirror / A shady look .. (93) / ...I have no intention of betraying you / But you are unkind, taking me as a straw dog as / Filthy soil, broken bricks and tiles, mown grass, wastepaper, shit / As foul as dead fish as greedy gnats (94)

... O lord, I seek to redeem / I have always been paralyzed, one name / on the list in your hand of the dead and injured / And all of my friends who are waiting to be redeemed / As well as the straw dogs / Of the straw dogs (96)

Throughout three pages of poetic discourse, Lo Fu's strain of thought on what seems to be on the smallest and most insignificant creatures—e.g., the cockroaches that have appeared previously in this epic (p. 52)—continues, and is pushed to the extreme, as evidenced below some pages later:

15

It continues to display / Its humility to the ruins, and a bunch of cockroaches / In a drawer continues to nurture the neat generation on desolation

Pupating is a way of practicing death / In the deeper, darkest blackness / The Way is hidden, not lost (102)

We can comment thus: in this long epic cockroaches have surfaced before in connection with time immemorial, with the Dao that pre-exists, in Laozi's conceptualization, before time, before Heaven and Earth, or God, or the xiandi 先帝, any human emperor. Thus, Lo Fu's rumination on the ordinary way of life and death and on the great Way juxtaposes the ordinary with the extraordinary, or the peripheral the Dao with the central Dao, if we may cite Karyn Lai on Chinese, and in particular, Daoist, philosophy (*An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy* 2008). Lo Fu's poetic reckoning with contemporary life and social reality does not pull punches. His final line again affirms the hidden existence of Dao, or Way as translated by Balcom immediately above. In such a metaphysics, no one is to doubt the Dao. After undergoing several phases of recognizing and approaching the Dao, Lo Fu allows the reader glimpses of the Dao in its multiple manifestations.

Though he cites an elaborate Buddhist mantra on the surface of phenomena, Lu Fo's poetic method and metaphysics are actually and equally grounded in Zhuangzi's method of sitting-and-forgetting and on Laozi's premonition to rid oneself of useless things. What remains, after this long sitting-and-forgetting process devised and advised by Zhuangzi, with Laozi's saying about discarding wisdom ringing in the ears, is the solid gold from much sifting.

Lo Fu has also established a Daoist metaphysics and poetics of silence/sound that are dialectical, paradoxical, and enlightening. Where others hear utter silence, he hears thunderstorm, a line distantly reminiscent of Lu Xun's similar line about hearing a thunderstorm in what seems silence; where others hears nothing, Lo Fu's speaker hears the moon rustle; where others see an empty room, Lo Fu's speaker visualizes a room filled with memories of the mother in vivid details:

4

The metaphysical equivocality / Between the mayfly and God / Is the one thing that is incorruptible / Millions of years ago the cockroach / Had already discovered eternity / But

you, Mother! / Wait quietly for ages curled up in your rocking chair / The vitamin bottles are empty / The water faucet is dripping / The ways of the world are destitute, ...

I keep watch over you and / Your empty room (*Driftwood* 53)

For Lo Fu, the empty spaces in a bottle or a room are fecund images to suggest something else; there is nothing like pure emptiness. Following are lines about silence and emptiness combined. A similar metaphysics obtains: nothing is totally empty or silent; empty things and silence both speak or suggest something for those keen on sensing and listening attentively:

25

Immense silence is concealed in the thunderstorm / And later, the moonlight rustles / As it enters through the widow

There is a fickle mirror in the bedroom / She and the woman in the mirror look at each other in blank dismay / It takes no effort to overthrow a man (105)

28

That's the way things are, in a wooden box / Everything but the nails holding it together / Can rot away

You must have discovered long ago / That there is nothing inside me / It was all emptiness before the box was built (106).

In the lines cited above about the box or the empty self, we can hear Laozi talking about the usefulness of empty space as in the hub of wheels. Similarly, we also can hear Laozi's advice on discarding unnecessary leaning being rehearsed below:

30

I am dumb as a board but honest / Cut my limbs and I never cry out in pain / Dismiss my intelligence and I won't protest

Cast off form and eliminate intelligence / Return to me a box of absolute emptiness / Then I'll struggle to forget myself (107)

For Lo Fu the poet, reduction of life's unnecessary parts continues, and even self-reduction is called for until the self becomes "empty" or "emptied:"

34

It cares too much about being a dragonfly / Thank goodness it's not a butterfly / Thank goodness it forgot that damp dream

A dream can also catch fire / By the time it awakens, it is reduced to a pile of rubbish / Thank goodness I'm an empty house (108)

In all of the above-cited stanzas and lines, the multiple, concrete images and symbols, and the deliberately repeated word, "empty," convey the metaphysics of Lo Fu's keen sense about "empty" spaces being richly meaningful. Such a sense of emptiness holds true for space as much as for time. In the very last stanza at the close of his long epic, Lo Fu defies time, though saluting it, by penning the following lines:

70

But most importantly / I am here to salute time / It makes me conscious of existence and death

I am satisfied not a drop of water remains in my well / And although I have been reduced to ruins / I cannot forsake this modest dream of mine (*Driftwood*, 120)

Lo Fu's Daoist metaphysics of "emptiness" reaches its acme when in his last but two lines of the entire epic, the I-speaker is content with an utterly empty well

without a single drop of water. He has written much poetry, and even though time's well is running dry on him, or is turning into ruins, his by now firmly established Daoist metaphysics of emptiness will be able to recuperate what is lost or reduced to dusts.

We must make a distinction between the Buddhist sense of emptiness and the Daoist sense of it. In the last part of Lo Fu's epic, "Homage to the Ruins," the esoteric epigraph cited from a Buddhist classic fails to erase the Daoist metaphysics that Laozi and Zhuangzi initiated, nor can it cancel out the Daoist's ultimately positive stance on the "empty" side of existence in contrast with the Buddhist nihilist or negative position on everything being "empty," or "emptied out," or "emptied of something." On the contrary, Lo Fu reads into the ruins much that has been inspired by Daoist metaphysics of the silence, the void, and the empty. It is metaphysical, but not abstract to the point of incomprehension or obscurantism. In this, Lo Fu is at once a traditionalist and radical in the best sense of these two words.

Taking the philosophical bent and the literary style of Lu Fu's *Driftwood* into consideration, we offer this position: though written mainly as free verse in Chinese, the mode of thinking and writing in *Driftwood* nevertheless falls into the much-revered, time-tested, and ancient philosophic-poetic tradition of the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. Put in a different way, *Driftwood* deserves the name of a long philosophic-poetic epic in the very company of the *Daodejing* as a poem. If we might suggest that Gao Xinjian's *Soul Mountain* stands shoulder to shoulder with the *Zhuangzi* in its wandering spirit over land and seas, in its seemingly aimless search, and in its Daoist intent, now we find Lo Fu's 2001 *tour de force* singing a similar song to that of the *Daodejing*. In matters of literary concern, Lo Fu's multiple and creative uses of the *Zhuangzi* also recommend his work as approaching the depth and liveliness of the *Zhuangzi*. In short, there exists hardly any precedent in modern to contemporary Chinese poetry to compare *Driftwood* with, in its magnitude and metaphysical complexity.

In sum, what we have found in Lo Fu's philosophical-poetic *Driftwood* is not only the summation of his previous literary achievements, but also the consummation of the marriage of poetic genius and philosophical mind. We have also found him in a grip of an obvious gravitation towards Daoist metaphysics, as the steps of aging approach him relentlessly. Though the image of driftwood looms large and long throughout, it is effectively tempered with a solid anchorage in the solid bank of Daoist philosophy. This indigenous philosophy, lying latent in some of Lo Fu's earlier poetry, as has been advanced by Balcom (1993), bursts forth with a force and frequency never witnessed before in his entire poetic output. The reasons for such an intellectual and poetic explosion are not far to seek: in most traditional Chinese intellectuals' careers, the tendency in late life has been towards Daoism or Buddhism as a mode of life after a lifetime pursuit in the spirit of Confucianism or neo-Confucianism. Lu Fo is no exception. What is exceptional, however, are the dense Daoist imagery and symbolism, as well as intense and sombre metaphysical philosophizing throughout the 120-page epic in English translation from the original 179-page Chinese poetry.

Lo Fu remains, after all, a product of classical Chinese literature and philosophy, while being a re-maker or re-inventor of this literature and philosophy in modern Chinese and English in the new, third millennium. The imprint of this Daoist mode of philosophizing can hardly be transcended, much as the poet's earlier critics perhaps would rather see Lo Fu achieve it. If Lo Fu deconstructs conventional myths and realities about the self, as has been argued by Jian Zhengzhen (簡政珍 2006, 9–11), Lo Fu in fact deconstructs western metaphysics by reconstructing a positive Chinese Daoist deconstructive tradition that gives the reader something to hold onto. That is, Lo Fu's deconstruction leads to an affirmative, not totally iconoclastic deconstructionist stance. In other words, Lo Fu's is not a nihilistic deconstructionist position: he reverts to the classical, Daoist philosophical metaphysics that is affirmative and broad-minded. Such a conclusion as ours adds to, rather than detract from, Lo Fu's versatile poetic talents and forever inquisitive philosophical mind.

To suggest that Lo Fu has enlivened and enriched both Daoist metaphysics and Daoist poetics is, however, by no means to hint that he is derivative or imitative. Nothing is further from the truth. Lo Fu's epic is a long philosophical-poetic poem with unrivalled structural compactness and highly poetic images and symbolism of the modern, even twenty-first-century social reality; it also scans 2500 years of history of chief ideas about poetry, metaphysics, and the ways to find the Way of life and poetry. In conclusion, this much can be said: Lo Fu's epic can only be the product of a virtuoso poet of a long and profound philosophical tradition and an equally abiding and inspiring poetic lineage.

We may conclude safely that Lo Fu's coda to his lifelong writing career functions very much like Malcom Lowry's in the latter's never-ending global voyage for the Dao and China (John Z. Ming Chen 1994). Having found something valuable after his long searching, Lo Fu clings to it for dear life. Like Lowry, Lo Fu never rests content with what he has found: he keeps on exploring, believing in the possibility of new and precious findings. Contrary to commonsensical wisdom about fullness, speech, and new constructions and buildings, the emptiness, the silences, and the ruins in his epic all seem capable of yielding much of value.

Lo Fu's critically acclaimed 120-page epic is nothing short of a successful endeavour to make sense and order out of the chaos of the contemporary realities in China, Taiwan, and Canada, all wrapped up in the ever-speeding process of globalization. Lo Fu takes advantage of his new vantage point of being an international observer and émigré writer, and no geographical movement can obscure or obliterate his keen sense of Chinese language and of Chinese philosophies of Daoism and Confucianism born out of the cultural compost of China. If anything, his twice removal from his native and adopted homelands works to strengthen Lo Fu's Chinese cultural ties with his inherited mainly Daoist poetic and metaphysical traditions.

In a nutshell, the general philosophical drift of Lo Fu's 3000-line epic poem is towards, paradoxically, an aloofness from but also attachment to, simultaneously, a complex and changing contemporary social reality that Lo Fu faces, point-blank in Taiwan, China, Canada, and elsewhere. The individual spiritual or philosophical drifting he ponders over at an advanced age. In terms of old age and wisdom, Lo Fu

shares with Wayson Choy accumulated sagacity or wisdom in which many younger Chinese Canadian writers may very well find themselves lacking (Chen 2008; Chen and Wei 2011). That Lo Fu can rise above it all and provide the reader with his own spiritual or philosophical gains proves both admirable and enviable.

4.4 Conclusion: Back(ward) to the Future?

The significance of Lo Fu's and other Chinese diasporic writers' search for life's meaning and a philosophy behind it can be measured in a broader social and intellectual context. Since 2008 when Barack Obama swept to political power, philosophy, or the paucity of it, has been revealed an issue of serious concern in North America. Students have since flocked to courses in philosophy in American universities since the election. The same rang true after the Liberal Party under Michael Ignatief suffered a crushing defeat in Canada in the 2011 federal election that gave Stephen Harper's Conservative Party a majority government. The same lack of philosophy has made itself felt immediately. Lo Fu was prophetic when he embraced the task of locating and reviving a philosophy worthy of pursuing some 10 years ago in Canada. In *Driftwood*, Lo Fu, by re-inventing Daoist philosophy and poetics in his advanced years in a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic context, has to a great extent revitalized and rejuvenated not only an ancient Daoist metaphysical tradition, but also an equally old and revered Daoist poetic tradition. Both were arguably started by Laozi's the *Daodejing* and Zhuangzi's the *Zhungzi*, and continued by a long line of poets with proven Daoist inclinations ranging from Tao Qian to Su Dongpo and onwards. Since Lo Fu's epic has been rendered into English, all Chinese and English readers of both of Lo Fu's longest poems so far are invited to partake of the depth and richness of Daoism at the turn of the third millennium. As a result, Lo Fu's globally significant project heralds a new epoch in the making. As the preeminent Daoist scholar Hu Fuchen has perspicuously points out in his 506-page tome, Daoism might well prove to be the saving or salvaging religion and philosophy of humanity across the globe in the next thousand years to come (*General Introduction to Daoism* 《道学通论》 2009, 76). As a world-renowned poet, Lo Fu's strategies of employing Daoist imagery and poetics are somewhat reminiscent of Fred Wah's poetic intertextual flirtations with Tang poet Li Bai, alias Li Po, and with founding philosophers such as Laozi and Zhuangzi (Chen 2008; Chen and Wei 2011; Wei and Chen 2011). On the whole, Lo Fu has proven more firmly grounded in Daoist metaphysics than most others.

The literary and philosophical contributions of Lo Fu's ambitious endeavour can be gauged when contextualized in the international community of diasporic Chinese writers as well. Like Paul Yee and Wayson Choy in Canada, Gao Xingjian in France, Amy Tan and Maxine Kong Kingston in the United States, Lo Fu has resorted to Daoist and, to a lesser extent, Confucian philosophy in the past decade or so, on a large scale. The two philosophies of and for the future Lo Fu holds out to the reader are the ones that have been time-tested and, now, re-invented or re-fashioned in the

twenty-first century; and the Daoist poetics exhibited in his two longest epics to date, refreshing and renewed.

Whereas Paul Yee was probably the first in English Canadian literature to hint at, but never quite specifically name, Daoist elements, Larissa fully employs the term “Taoist” quite early in her 1995 *When Fox Is a Thousand* and depicts a Taoist poetess, Yu Hsuan-chi, in full blood and great detail. Lo Fu, we now are ready to add, is another Chinese Canadian writer to have specified the Dao unequivocally and pursued his version of the Daoist poetics and metaphysics to fruition. It proves that Daoist philosophy continues to provide inspiration for poets like Lo Fu at his advanced age. Leaning on such a rock-solid philosophy, even when in self-imposed exile, Lo Fu has found a spiritual home away from the homes of Taiwan and China. Moreover, he has striven to spread Daoist philosophy and poetics successfully.

Notes All English translations are ours unless indicated otherwise. Rendering of Chinese terms and proper names follows the *pinyin* system endorsed and used by the UN and the P.R.C. The only exception remains the poet’s name: Lo Fu, which has been in use for the past few decades in English; it would be Luo Fu in *pinyin*.

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Chapter 5

Paul Yee's Daoist and Confucian Ethics and Values

Chinese culture permeates the whole society. You do not need to read to know and deeply understand the principles of Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The thinking has been passed from generation to generation.

Di Guoyong, cited by Nick Scrima 2010, 54

Among all Chinese Canadian writers, Paul Yee is, deservedly, the second winner of the Governor General's Award, in 1996, with *Ghost Train*, after Fred Wah's in 1985, with *Waiting for Saskatchewan*. By the end of 2010, Yee has to his credit a steady stream of 22 published books, the latest being *Iron and Blood*, and a performed play, *Jade in the Coal*, whose script is yet to be released. Without doubt, Yee has firmly established a respectable literary and cultural status in the Canadian multicultural society, in the English-speaking world, and in many Chinese-speaking communities, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the multiple female characters in Yee's works have left an indelible impression on the readers. From his early products, *Teach me to Fly, Skyfighter! And Other Stories* (1983), "Prairie Widow" (1984), *The Curses of Third Uncle* (1986), *Tales from Gold Mountain* (1989), through his mid-career works, *Roses Sing on Fresh Snow* (1991), and his Governor General's Award winner, *Ghost Train* (1996), to his twenty-first century *Fly Away* (2001), *The Necklace* (2002), *Bamboo* (2005), *What Happened This Summer* (2006), *Shu-li and Tamara* (2007), and *Learning to Fly* (2008), an impressive array of female protagonists such as Sharon Fong, Gum-may Yee, Lillian Chong, Maylin Cheung, Choonyi, Yenyee, Ming, and Shu-li, have not only seriously challenged conventional stereotypes and demonization of Chinese females, but have also created new, vivid, and haunting images and characters on the Canadian literary and cultural landscape. In addition to being suffused with the strong presence of female characters, these works teach and inculcate a certain quintessentially Chinese system of values and explore their multiple implications in the New World.¹ Hence, the immediate focus of this study

¹We wish to thank Paul Yee amply for providing timely and invaluable information on his purpose of writing as "to instruct children and to provide them with a mirror of themselves and the world they know" ("Questionnaire," Sept. 20, 1993). To the question "do you consider yourself to be a feminist sympathizer, or supporter of women's cause," his answer is a definite "Yes."

is not purely literary; it is cultural. Yee's works thus have delved deep into and developed certain Chinese values, and explored their significance and feasibility in the New World; his works have also commanded the attention from the academia and the mass media, secured a place in Canadian literature at large, and staked out new territories in Chinese Canadian literature written in English and in Chinese Canadian culture and history.

We examine Yee's strategies of centring on and foregrounding Chinese-Canadian women, traditionally the persistently, ruthlessly marginalized and trivialized "second sex" (de Beauvoir) in Chinese society. Chief among the strategies is Yee's tactic of bursting Chinese-Canadian ghettoization by placing his heroines in a socially and culturally mixed and challenging milieu, rather than isolating them from intercultural exchange and communication. Also significant is Yee's cultural interpretation and historicization of women, in which he links them closely to the rich Chinese cultural heritage and studies female subjectivity in relation to women's historical role.

Furthermore, the integration into Canadian society coincides with the adoption of relatively progressive or individualist Canadian values; it entails, simultaneously, the questioning and modification of Confucian ethical codes and moral norms (e.g., filial piety or rituals), some of which denigrate and oppress women. On the other hand, the individualist tenets and practices of Daoism or Chinese Buddhism remain basically unchallenged. In Yee's fictional world, these forces – social, historical, cultural, ethical, and spiritual – shape his heroines' identities in diverse and complex ways. All of his strong heroines succeed, to varying degrees, in absorbing the best the two cultures have to offer; they particularly reject the debilitating and inhibiting elements of the Chinese culture.

5.1 The Individual and Social Milieu

To understand the identity formation of Yee's female characters, one must first come to grips with the familial and social relations in Chinese society. When Chinese immigrants settle down in Canada, particularly in Yee's Chinatown, they gradually re-establish or re-produce the same order and structure that has been entrenched for generations in the homeland. This repetitive scheme is characterized by two key features: it is not only strictly hierarchical but also ferociously

We have come up with some conclusions with which Yee may not be in total agreement. For this, see W.H. New's Editorial (6) on multiple interpretations. We also believe that Yee's works, along with those of Evelyn Lau, SKY Lee, Larissa Lai, Wayson Choy, and many other writings featured in *Many-Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians*, have partially invalidated Sheng-tai Chang's note about the dearth of Chinese-Canadian writing in his introduction to *The Tears of the Chinese Immigrants* (1990). However, critical in-depth studies on Chinese-Canadian writers are virtually nonexistent before 1990; our research yields only some reviews or introductions by Bennett Lee, Christine Dewar, Annette Goldsmith, Gernot Wieland, and Raymond E. Jones (see Works Cited for full publication information).

patriarchal or misogynist (Overmyer 91-2). One should also note the Confucian vision at work here: Chinese society is structured like the family. The ruler is to his subjects what the father is to the son: the former takes care of the latter, but at the same time commands absolute obedience. The hierarchy includes every member of society, and women are at the very bottom. If the latter are not stunted, they grow up, paradoxically, with doubled strength. As a Chinese Canadian historian and cultural activist, Yee has penned three well-researched and authentic monographs about Chinese Canadians and Chinatown histories. In particular, *Struggle and Hope* (1996, 10, 12), *Saltwater City* (1988, 2006, 10–12), and *Chinatown* (2006, 12), all discuss succinctly the enormous and long-lasting influence of Confucianism on the ethics and morality of the individual, the traditional Chinese family, and traditional Chinese society as a whole. These scholarly works have directly impacted quite a few Chinese Canadian writers, as, for instance, acknowledged by Wayson Choy in his two novels and two memoirs based mainly on Vancouver's Chinatown. We submit that Yee offers an authentic representation of traditional Chinese human relations transplanted to Canada. He refuses to allow his female characters to be swallowed by tradition. Both the Canadian environment and his heroines' inner resources contribute to their difficult but stubborn growth.

With a clear understanding of the Chinese vision of social relations, Yee's characterization of girls and women is typically concerned with the Chinese experience in Canada. His women mature not within the narrow confines of a mere Chinese household, nor even within the small Chinese community. They go beyond these two arenas and enter into the larger tapes-try of Canadian culture. A good example of this is Sharon, the third generation Chinese-Canadian in *Teach me to Fly*. Her contacts with Christine Thomas, a white female "soccer star," function to make her question the traditional role women play in the Chinese view, a role expressed through Samson, the new immigrant from Hong Kong. It is here that she earns the right to say loudly that "they [women] can so!" (92). The same is true of Lillian in *The Curses of Third Uncle*. In the absence of her father, she has to fight her exceedingly misogynist and bullying Third Uncle's attempt to send all women of the Chong family—her mother, herself, and two other girls—back to China. Yee makes it clear that when Lillian first fails to find work after a door-to-door search in Chinatown, she is rescued by Mrs. Bell, a white woman who employs her as a housemaid. The job legitimately transfers her from the tight Chinese family and community to a new, comparatively more open environment; further, it provides her with an opportunity to look for her father, who is secretly collecting funds for Dr. Sun's revolution. Here, the influence and help from the white people are crucial. The adult story, "Prairie Widow," goes the farthest in resisting the attraction of Chinatown in Vancouver. Wilfully defying her cousin's denigrating remark—"You are a woman, do you know that?" (7), Gum-may Yee, Gordon's widow, decides after intense inner struggle to stay in the prairies, where there are but few Chinese. All of these female characters manage to walk away from the Chinese families or, even more, the Chinese ghettos; they begin to integrate into the white culture. It is the Chinese family, and its concomitant male chauvinist attitude, that push the

Chinese women towards an adoption of the less blatantly misogynist Canadian values and practices.²

This does not mean that Yee paints an altogether rosy picture of intercultural mixing and integration in Canada. If the Chinese girl or woman fails to resist or oppose the strong father figure within the family, or a patriarch of an association of Chinese immigrants, tragedy inevitably results. There are certainly cases in which the white culture or people do not penetrate the Chinese one. "Forbidden Fruit" records unsentimentally Farmer Fong's strangulation of his daughter's love for farmhand Johnson. The isolation on the prairie and the lack of an influential Canadian community both contribute to her meekness and submission. It is true that in "Sons and Daughters," the upstart Merchant Moy is fearful of condemnation from the Canadian-Chinese; but, he manages to go back to China, secretly exchange his twin daughters born in Canada for twin boys, and bring the latter back to Vancouver's Chinatown as heirs to his business. His wife can do nothing but wail inwardly. Merchant Moy's return to China amounts to a return to its patriarchal values and misogynist practices: only there can he fulfill his wish for sons to carry on the family name. Yee seems to suggest that it is through sufficient interracial contacts that the Chinese system of male-centred values can be challenged. If Chinese-Canadian women remain forever within the boundaries of the Chinese family, the majority will find it difficult to succeed in their efforts to escape that system.

Yee's most stunning orchestration of scenarios certainly resides in a sudden public exhibition of the talents and abilities of his female characters. It usually begins with a denial of female ability, or simply a robbing of opportunities for women to display their abilities in the public domain. They are shut up in the house, or else silenced by a strong male voice, as evidenced in Sharon's elder brother, Lillian's Third Uncle, or in Maylin's restaurant-owner father. Before this disclosure, not even the heroine's most intimate family members realize or recognize her worth or value, not to mention others outside of the family. In "Teach me to Fly, Skyfighter!", Sharon is constantly annoyed not only by Samson, her foil, but also Eddy, her brother; their sneering and disparaging remarks invariably reek of young male chauvinism. Yet Yee devises the final scene of flying a kite to display her exquisite skill to ail kite watchers at Kitsilano Park.

Similarly, in *Roses Sing on New Snow*, the father's attempt to shut his daughter behind kitchen doors fails utterly, though he tries every means to ensure his two sons' usurpation of the glory that rightfully belongs to the daughter, Maylin. The recognition of the latter's talent comes with full force when the visiting Chinese Governor unwittingly allows the girl to display her surpassing *Roses Sing on New Snow* to every admiring eye. To send the message, Yee has Maylin declare to the Governor: "This is a dish of the New World. You cannot recreate it in the old" (23). Here, Yee's culturally synthetic hand is again at work. The dish is an apt metaphor: the public demonstration of her inimitable skill not only openly proves her unique

²Paul Yee repeatedly employs "white" or "whites" to refer to Canadians as a monolithic or homogeneous group, without specifying their nationalities.

talent, but also forcefully argues that the Canadian experience is an indispensable ingredient in the Chinese immigrants' process of assimilation.

In *The Curses of Third Uncle*, Yee's most developed novel featuring female protagonists to date, the acknowledgement and affirmation of the heroine's talents and militant strategies reaches its maximum degree. The Chinese community, Chinatown, and very probably through Dr. Sun, the whole of China, may come to know Lillian's name for her courageous deeds. Given the peculiarity of Chinese social and cultural structures, it is only those men in charge who grant, as it were, public recognition of women's role. No women are in positions powerful enough to take on that function. The swift recognition of her worth is made possible by the very agency that denies it. Since the Chinese are family and community-oriented, they are more likely to realize her role through constant and even interfering communal activities than, say, through the more individualistic activities characteristic of the white community.

One can draw two conclusions about Yee's fiction in terms of social relations and literary representation. First, the traditional Chinese family or community is indeed a super-stable social structure in which order and norms are largely fixed. It gives protection, stability, and prosperity to the Chinese family and the Chinese-Canadian neighbourhood; but, it also hierarchizes people and marginalizes women, with the result that women reside at the very bottom of society and are exploited and oppressed. However, the same community may, under certain circumstances, offer opportunities for women to show their talent to full public view almost instantly, simply because of the tightly related and inner-looking social structure. The revealing process in Yee's fiction is therefore entirely natural, logical and culturally authentic. In the cases of Lillian and Maylin in particular, Yee's female protagonists burst open any familial and communal enclosures and literally bask in the glory of personal achievements. Thrown in doubt is the entrenched traditional Chinese assumption that men are unquestionably superior to women.

Also, Yee's fictional characters are deeply rooted in specific social conditions. That Chinese Canadian women have been marginalized, exploited, and oppressed in patriarchal social and familial structures is a proven fact, well documented and vividly dramatized in biographies and historical books such as the award-winning *The Concubine's Children* by Denise Chong, *Gin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women* by the Canadian Chinese Women's Collective, and more recently, Lily Chow's *Sojourners in the North*. What makes Yee's work so unique then, are the parallels he draws between his literary prototypes and social reality. It is not surprising that in a recent interview, Yee confirms the vital role his deceased aunt played in his upbringing and stresses the need to "immortalize" her ("A Sense of Realism") and women like her. In this act of relating the social to the literary, Paul Yee joins the company of Yip Yuen Chung³ and SKY Lee, both in criticizing and in hoping to correct the ills of traditional Chinese Canadian society and its attendant patriarchal structure and misogynist attitudes; furthermore, as a creative writer, he offers the

³ See Sheng-Tai Chang's "Literary Realism and Social Idealism," and the Introduction to his translation of Yip's work, based on this article.

readers a salutary dose of realism against mainstream writers who indulge in post-modernism. Like most writers of colour, Yee sticks to and excels at social realism. A sense of social mission is palpable.

5.2 History and/or Her Story

In rethinking women's roles, Yee also fully appropriates useful Chinese stories, tales, legends, and historical data to reinforce the Chinese connection. In a culture that respects old age and wisdom, often an elderly and farsighted man serves as an educational agent instead of the heroine's father. These stories assume a particular importance when the heroines cannot afford to go to school, either English or Chinese. In *The Curse*, Blind-Eye narrates the story of the heroic building of the Great Wall to cultivate Lillian's feeling for things Chinese, whereas Cariboo Wing reels off the history of modern Chinese revolutions to help Lillian appreciate her father's selflessness and courage. In both cases, a necessary amount of information is given to the inquisitive Lillian; it links her intimately to the past of China. Similarly, in the title story of *Teach Me to Fly, Skyfighter*, it is chiefly by word-of-mouth that Sharon comes to know the distant land called China. Dai-bah is Skyfighter's intimate Cantonese name used by his juniors such as Sharon; his inspiring stories about his hobby and bachelor years in Canada; marked by homesickness and isolation, not only links Canada to China, but also fire Sharon's young imagination to attempt what is considered by many impossible. Only after his storytelling does Sharon come to a true and private understanding of the idiosyncratic old man and the ritualistic, symbolic meaning of kite flying in Chinese folk tradition: the rare moments of his joy and transportation away from his unbearable bachelor life in Canada are sanctified in the oral narrative act. It is apt, then, that Yee allows Sharon to experience vicariously, if only temporarily, a similar feeling (26) to make her an organic part of the Chinese culture. The genuine pathos of sympathy and empathy draws the readers deeply into the cultural and psychological reasons behind the mere physical act of flying a kite.

In presenting female characters' due claim to courage and wisdom, Yee often gives an ironic twist to traditional Chinese legends or tales about the practices of men in power. In a manner reminiscent of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Yee re-replaces the ex-centric—"the mother at the center," to quote Julia Kristeva from *About Chinese Women* (45)—back to the position of command. According to one version of Chinese history, there had been what Frederick Engels has called a "matriarchy" (35). And Yee's solid historical background serves his fictional intent well: it is precisely at the moment of hesitation and decision that the songs about the ancient and valiant Yang Family women keep ringing in Lillian's ears, urging her to make up her mind:

Their blades engaged, sparks were dispatched,
They thrust and parried, their strength was matched.
The mother gained the upper hand,

Victory was hers, better than planned.
 Then she saw fire in her son's bright eyes
 And let him win, to join their lines. (The Curses 56)

If in ancient times young males had to await female commanders' permission to take part in a war, Lillian is encouraged and inspired to emulate them. But to show her worth, she must take the first step. When she bursts out "I'm not a baby. I'm going" (56), she actually breaks away from the stereotypes of women being meek and subordinate that developed only later in Chinese history. Lillian's act is symbolic. By extension, Yee suggests that all women can achieve the same. Lillian's decision is important in yet another sense. When she resolves to leave home—the "domestic circle" (Buss 1) to which Chinese women are traditionally confined—she enters into the public domain and even into the political arena. Yet she proves her strength by exhibiting courage, perseverance, and wisdom. Both the public fundraising and the identity and security of Chinese-Canadian contributors hinge largely upon her efforts. According to Yee, though the Chinese tradition is marred by the slighting of women's ability in the Confucian concepts of filial piety and duty, it also provides an element that can be re-used to support women's causes and liberation.

Yee capitalizes on his own solid knowledge of Chinese history and on his informed notions of revolution⁴; the combination of these two elements produces at once a historically believable, realistic female figure in Lillian, and an idealist in the revolutionary sense. Unlike most Western literature where young adults come to terms with growing pains and sexual awakening on a physical and individual psychological level, Yee's Lillian is unique. The revolutionary impulse behind her father's plan to subvert what was the seemingly formidable great Manchurian (Qing) empire can only be an encouragement for Lillian to adopt a strong life purpose. Thus Lillian's realization of her individual worth coincides nicely with the progression of the revolutionary movement. There is, in the portrayal of Lillian, a touch of romanticism, to be sure, but the depiction obtains its credibility at the particular moment of history, a moment that ennobles Lillian, and by extension, all Chinese devoted to the historically necessary revolution. The change of personal life, especially that of women at the bottom of society, is connected organically with the fate of overseas Chinese (in relation to other Canadians) and with the destiny of the Chinese nation as a whole (in relation to other foreign powers and the Manchus). Any separation of these issues would have rendered Lillian a flat, traditional figure intent primarily upon personal growth. Since the story about a young female adult is inextricably connected with the Chinese history of modern revolution, and since the imminent political revolution has as its prerequisite the liberation of women,

⁴See Anthony Chart's review in *Canadian Ethnic Studies*; see also Yee's *Saltwater City* in conjunction with Peter Lee's essay for Yee's sense of history. Yee's irresistible urge to instill values and shape character is evident in his frequent declarations of intentions. See "Afterword" in *Teach Me to Fly, Skyfighter!* (122–133); "Author's Statements" after "Prairie Widow" (136); and "Afterword" in *Tales from Gold Mountain* (63–64); and Geoff Hancock's interview with Yee in *Other Solitudes* (1990).

Yee's valiant acts of crossing personal and public, or private' and political, boundaries belie a Chinese belief in the holistic relation between the individual and society, as much as that between the individual and history.

To suggest the rich combinations discussed above does not mean that Yee is a social realist or serious historian through and through and nothing else. Yee is versatile. He has also proven himself capable of blending the realistic, historically grounded with the surreal, magical, and fantastic. And nowhere is this ability more evident than in his most recent award-winning *Ghost Train*. Here as elsewhere, history re-enters his story—or rather, her story: a female painter's story. But this concrete historical referent is buttressed and embellished by the wide—and perhaps wild—imagination Yee intends to fire in his young readers. Under Yee's powerful pen, a 14-year-old girl named Choon-yi is brought to life, and she effectively serves the function of immortalizing the Chinese labourers—albeit largely male—working on and dying for the CPR.

Thus, while verifiable social history figures in all of Yee's fiction, at the center of *Ghost Train* also lie three tales traceable to Chinese literature, legends, and mythology: the Daoist story about Zhuangzi (formerly Chuang Tzu) wondering if he is a butterfly that is dreaming he is human or vice versa, after waking up from a dream; another tale calling for a new angle on physically challenged people; and yet another titled "The Magic Brush of Ma Liang." However, Yee re-invents these legends and myths with an adolescent female as the unquestionable protagonist. Though born with only one arm, she is blessed with the gift of painting remarkably vivid and life-like pictures that wins her admiration. Answering the call of her father, she arrives in North America only to find him dead – or buried alive – barely a week ago: "Many men died building this railway," Ba said. "All along the route, bodies have been swept away by the river or buried under a landslide. Their bones will never be recovered. But the time has come to transport their souls home" (*Ghost Train* 11). In Yee's imagined world, it is through her magical brush that the Chinese labourers are resurrected—if only for brief moments; and it takes the female artist's own experience riding on the ghost train in her dream to endow her with the powers to reinscribe the Chinese workers' heroic deeds and therefore enshrine them in her paintings.

In Yee's miraculous vision, then, the past resides in the present, the dead are revived, history enters her story and painting, and this world is connected to the other world. It is only natural that the father praises Choon-yi thus: "'Daughter, you have done well,' Ba said, 'Now roll up the painting and take it home to China. Then climb the highest hill in the region and bum it. Let our ashes sail on the four winds. That way our souls will finally find their way home'" (*Ghost Train* 15). There is little doubt that the heroine will complete her task, as advised by her ghostly father in a moment reminiscent of Shakespeare's Hamlet. In this way, the blending and blurring of history, mythology, dreams, and reality assist Yee in his re-inscription and monumentalizing of the Chinese labourers, who, until very recently, have been the unsung heroes in mainstream history books. Yee has demonstrated adeptness in dealing with both: the social and the literary; the imaginative and the historical. And

the fact that he creates a female painter to perform the same duties speaks volumes for his due trust in the practical abilities and magical powers of women.

5.3 The Chinese System of Values: Confucian and Taoist

Yee is also a complex culturalist who rethinks traditional Chinese values in the context of the New World. Though he usually does not specify the system of values in his works, some underlying assumptions and virtues are traceable to either the Confucian or the Daoist or Buddhist ethical and philosophical traditions. In general, Yee seems to endorse some Confucian tenets or ethical codes and to negate others. Meanwhile, he valorizes in principle the Daoist virtues. What is of special note is the Chinese-Canadian family in which predominantly Confucian values are instilled. In particular, “the School” that Louis Althusser (81–82) so heavily stresses has little function in the moulding of Yee’s female characters’ moral being or personality. It is the Chinese parents or uncles and aunts who provide the necessary values in their children’s formative years. Here, Yee clearly endorses the Confucian ethics of diligence and duty, the demands on everyone to attain sagehood and to reach perfection, and the emphasis on education. At the same time, Yee subverts the misogynist attitudes and patriarchal values, though he betrays certain ambivalent feelings about the notion of filial piety.

By vigorously challenging the age-old Confucian patriarchal value system, which puts a premium on Sons to carry on the family name and possibly its glory and to make fame for the clan, Yee creates female characters who prove to be as capable as, if not more so than, their male counterparts. In “Sons and Daughters,” despite the father’s attempt to dispose of his twin daughters, the book concludes with the daughters as virtual inheritors of the Moy business; *Roses Sing on New Snow* features Maylin as the unmatched chef of the Cheung restaurant, with the two lazy sons left to public ridicule and ignominy. In particular, Yee emphasizes the Canadian social milieu and the value system of the New World, though the latter is often presented in a most diffused or diluted form. There is a discernable attempt to compensate for the lack of equitable treatment of female characters. One need only look at Yee’s “Prairie Night 1939” to appreciate the insuperable difficulty in overcoming the traditional Chinese mentality. It is not that Gordon fails to realize the rather misogynist contempt for baby girls; his agony arises and is made all the more poignant because his mother unconsciously upholds patriarchal dictates for sons and implores him to return to China. Therefore, it is understandable that he capitulates to the dictates of conventional Chinese values and carries out his obligation to his family in China by giving up his restaurant, an enterprise of years of hard work. The return to China (as in Gordon’s case) implies an homage to old Chinese values. The stay in Canada, of course, does not by itself mean a wholesale acceptance of Canadian values; but, the comparison of these two systems made by Yee with respect to women seems to favour the Canadian experiences. Though Julia Kristeva has been criticized for her methodology and orientalism, her description of

Confucius as the “Eater of Women” may be accurate regarding Yee's views on women.⁵

If Yee refrains from specifying a certain philosophy of life for fear of spoiling the entertainment value in some of his juvenile or young adult fiction, he is more explicit in “The Prairie Widow,” which is meant for adults. The mother, a thinly-disguised figure of Yee's close relative,⁶ contemplates the idea of moving away from the spiritually sterile and culturally conformist environment in Saskatchewan in the same manner that the mother of Mencius, the second master in the Confucian genealogy, makes a strategic relocation so that her son can become a scholar rather than a “butcher” (10). But Yee does not grant a full endorsement of Confucian tenets in the New World. The mother finds her husband wanting in spontaneous love for his children's legitimate fondness of fun and play. In a series of interior monologues signifying the lack of communication between husband and wife, she cannot but come to the sad conclusion that “Gordon played the cold hard father of Confucian virtue and the boys only became another topic of argument” (16). Here, the two most important Confucian masters appear in a cluster, but they are both cast in negative images. Gum-may's ironic interpretation of the well-known story of Mencius's mother gives her the ideological strength to stay among the whites, while the austere figure of a Confucian father is blamed for the dullness and loneliness of her life and that of her children on the prairies.

Any act of subversion necessitates another of affirmation, and Yee cannot help reasserting other Confucian virtues. This point is well-made by the character of Chris Thomas, a white girl, who says: “sometimes it was easy to see that the Asian [Chinese-Canadian] kids were a lot of things that she wasn't—hard-working, obedient, and well-mannered” (“Strathcona Soccer Star” *Teach* 99). The paramount emphasis on education has been considered by quite a few to be the most important factor underlying the phenomenal economic success of countries like Japan and Hong Kong, and the academic achievements of Asian students in North American universities (Duke 39; Overmyer 15). Yee's fiction advocates the same principle. Thus, in “Who Set the Fire,” Samson's mother worries ceaselessly about her son's grades and nags him into striving for the best marks. A few characteristic lines are relevant here: “One day, he [Samson] brought home a test paper on which he had scored one hundred percent. His mother nodded approvingly ...” (44). From her point of view, Samson cannot be merely as good as the white boys: he has to be better. Samson's mother, in fact, resembles Evelyn Lau's in *Runaway* and Amy Tan's in “Two Kinds.” The three mothers all exact the highest performance from their son and daughter. Ironically, in Lau's case, maternal demand becomes an anathema that drives her away from an overprotective home despite her 89 %, “an imperfect mark”

⁵ See Gayatri Spivak's “French Feminism in the International Frame”; see also Ray Chow's *Women and Chinese Modernity* on Kristeva; see John M. Chen's papers, “Malcolm Lowry and the Tao”, and “Theorizing About New Modes of Representation,” on Gayatri Spivak, Rey Chow, and Julia Kristeva in *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 20.3 (Sept. 1993) and 21. 1 (June 1994).

⁶ We are grateful to Jim Wong-chu, Paul Yee's friend, for sharing this biographical information about the story.

(2). However, in Tao's hand, Jing-mei eventually realizes, some 15 years later, her then deceased mother's Confucian code and comes to appreciate it. By contrast, Yee definitely subscribes to this Confucian imperative by having his characters follow their parents' advice to do well in school.

Evident in Samson's mother's mentality and in Sharon's characterization is yet another Confucian virtue—perfectionism, for Confucian tenor teaches that everyone can be a sage, if one not only works hard but also cultivates an around personality (Schirokauer 31–32; 41–42). Again, this is seen from Chris's perspective: "She tended to see Sharon as a "good" Chinese kid whose marks and appearance were almost always perfect. Chris, on the other hand, was regarded by most of her teachers as a problem student ("Strathcona Soccer Star" *Teach Me* 96). In Chris's eyes, not only does her Chinese-Canadian friend excel in study, but she is also impeccable in appearance and irreproachable in behaviour. Granted that a touch of idealization may mar Chris's judgement, the ideals or models Yee wishes to establish for emulation are transparent. The Confucian perfectionist norms in academic grades and social conduct turn out to be Yee's standards. Though he questions and rejects some Confucian values, Yee also preserves the reusable ones.

Yee's literary works of his mid-and-recent career have put into practice various Confucian concepts such as filial piety, family and race harmony, and ancestral worship, concepts that regulate, harmonize, and strengthen human relationships in Canadian multi-cultural society. In *Ghost Train* and *Jade Necklace* employing magic realism, Yee's two stories manifest both heroines' unwavering filial piety in vivid details and gripping storyline. Similarly, Ming in *Bamboo* uses a magic bamboo to save her husband's life, thus protecting the integrity and harmony of the family. In much the same manner, Shu-li a Chinese Canadian girl in *Shu-li and Tamara*, spares no efforts in salvaging the reputation of her good friend, Tamara, and in keeping the ties intact between friends of different ethnicities.

Likewise, upon discovering that her brother is a homosexual, the twin sister strives to ease the tension arising from the discovery and dissipate her mother's misgivings, thereby reaching a harmonious, win-win settlement. In the same vein, Yee does not exclude non-Chinese religions, such as Christianity in *What Happened this Summer*; he advocates tolerance, forgiveness, and mutual understanding, champions the principle of harmony-in-difference, and maintains various spaces for diverging religious beliefs in different cultures.

As a result, Yee's recent literary works mostly conclude with a family or ethnic relationship being harmonized, or with a happy ending where a large social gathering or party takes place. On the surface, this kind of denouement seems to be a trifle formulaic. However, when put into the mainstream literary and cultural context, the superior features of Confucian thought become evident. For example, mainstream literary works such as *The Mountain and the Valley* and *The Handmaid's Tale* both provide a tragic ending by a great escape or by the splitting of the family or community. In Yee's view or vision, however, it is not necessary for human beings to fight to the finish at every turn. He strives to spread and develop Confucian theories about the happy median, moderation, harmony, and other subsidiary cultural concepts about prioritizing and treasuring harmony. In the Canadian society that

champions multiculturalism, it is no surprise that his literary works have been all the more well-liked.

If the Confucian teachings have a great deal to do with social and interpersonal relations, Daoism emphasizes individualist and naturalist qualities such as intuition, spontaneity, personal practice and enlightenment, and even achievements of a magical or mystical sort. The combination of childlike innocence and simplicity with the most delicate and sophisticated techniques and skills produces female characters who are solidly grounded in real-life situations, but who are also capable of spiritual heights. In this Taoist paradigm, no preconceptions, no limits, no stereotypes are put before Yee's female characters' fulfilment of potentials.

One of the main Daoist tenets states that skills and perfection come naturally from constant practice and empirical experience, not from an), prescribed gender roles.⁷ Yee's delineation of female characters benefits from this tenet. He especially fosters female courage to break new ground, to cross conventional gender boundaries of what a boy or a girl should do. "Strathcona Soccer Stars" features Sharon and Chris who strive to prove to the boys that girls "can" (92) play soccer as well as boys. The girls succeed in their endeavour, not through sheer chance or tactics, but through much practice involving pain and sweat. More significantly, Yee has the two girls outstrip in soccer the very three boys who have scorned them.

Roses Sing on New Snow, Yee's most recent publication before his Governor General's Literary Award winner, *Ghost Train* (1996), reverses traditional Chinese gender roles (e.g., male chef) by portraying Maylin who distinguishes herself in cooking. Under Yee's pen, there is a pervasive Taoist mystical sense of the ineffable and unteachable in her culinary art that defies repeated male imitation. It goes without saying that the two lazy sons fail to reproduce their sister's particular dish that shares the name of the book; even the reputedly wise Chinese Governor visiting Canada is deeply baffled by the fact that, though cooking side by side with the heroine, Maylin and he yield two dishes of widely different tastes. Here, one is indeed tempted to submit that Yee implies that certain female experience or wisdom is inaccessible or unteachable to males.

Yee also employs, to powerful effect, traditional Taoist or Chinese-Buddhist practices not only to strengthen the ties to the Chinese culture, but also to refashion the image of women. Particularly elaborate is the description of hay-gung (Cantonese pronunciation; Chi Kung in Wade-Giles and Qigong in Mandarin or *pinyin*; 86–88). In "Never Be Afraid," boys like John Chin are keen on the Chinese martial art, kung-fu, made tremendously popular by Bruce Lee in the 1970s and by Jackie Chan 20 years later, to build up self-defence techniques; however, in *The Curses of Third Uncle*, Lillian's acquisition of hay-gung serves altruistic, life-saving, and spiritual purposes (115–116). So, in Yee's scheme of things it is the Chinese medical or even mystical practices that save the old man and heal the mother. There is little reliance

⁷For some sense of the Taoist mystical experience, see *Zhuang Zi* (either A.C. Graham or Shi Jinchao) on the cook cutting up a cow and art the wheelwright; see John M. Chen's essay, "'The Voyage that Never Ends': Malcolm Lowry's Taoist Aesthetics of Return/Reversal" (in *Euro-Sinica Series, TAO: Reception in East and West*, edited by Adrian Hsia 1994).

on Western medicine, for no apparent reason. Indeed, the wonderfully therapeutic functions of hay-gung go hand in hand with Lillian's nurturing and nursing function. It would be less appropriate, so we think, if Yee allows Caribou Wing to teach the devastating technique of kung-fu to Lillian, instead of hay-gung (Chi Kung in Wade-Giles), a preventive and curative art that is now gaining wide currency in North America and Europe.

But Yee's list of women's skills does not stop here; it includes techniques or skills traditionally considered masculine. By jettisoning the Chinese foot fetishism, together with its accompanying image of foot-binding practice that reduces women to toddlers for life, Yee, in a broad stroke, depicts at least one woman, Yimen, who can "fly" (73–74; the act of jumping over a long distance effortlessly or walking on little support in mid-air), so to speak. In fact, there is more to the physical skill, for the image of flying recurs consistently and becomes a symbol. In Sharon's kite-flying episode, readers feel her desire to soar high and to see China from Canada, just like Skyfighter. The youthful imagination knows neither geographical nor spatial bounds.

The Curses brings to a climax the spiritual dimension of the Taoist or Chinese-Buddhist exercises and training techniques, a dimension that comes through in a simple but convincing manner. Take, for example, the following few lines on the possibility of flying from Dr. Sun Yatsun: "I've heard of those [sword] stories, too.... And I believe them. If the heart's in the right place and the body is trained, you can soar to any height you want!" (139). Here, readers do not encounter any moral preaching, nor abstract intellectualization. Dr. Sun, the "greatest man of our [Chinese] country," as EP. Grove's translation puts it (57), teaches the young daughter of revolution a fundamental truth couched in accessible metaphorical language.⁸ Characteristic of a revolutionary, Dr. Sun sets no limits on the ability a mere chip of a girl like Lillian can realize. Like John Chin in "Never Be Afraid," Dr. Sun must have realized that in ancient China, men and women alike trained from childhood to become the fittest and fastest human beings on earth (73). In *Teach me* as in *The Curses*, the metaphorical use of women's flying, the supreme Daoist goal with its archetype in Zhuang Zi's "Let Fancy Roam," suggests that nothing is intrinsically gender-bound.⁹ Women are as capable as men of achieving anything. By evoking the figure of Dr Sun and the flying technique, Yee has created a convincing female character that treasures her own individual development and endeavours to change the fate of the Chinese community and that of the Chinese nation. To sum up, in *Teach me to Fly*, *The Curses of Third Uncle*, *Flying Away*, and *Learning to Fly*, Yee's metaphorical or symbolic portrayals of females "flying" have reached the peak of Daoist spiritual wandering; they have, in our view, embodied the literary archetype of Zhuangzi's Bird Bird, *Peng*, best popularized by Mao Tse-Tung in his classical Chinese poem in the last century, and carried this Daoist literary and spiritual tradition forward in the New World.

⁸ See C.T. Hsia's book (1980: 30) on stories of swordsmen marked by great individual heroism and their tremendous popularity with the Chinese people.

⁹ See *Zhuang Zi*, first chapter, on flying and human imagination.

In sum, Yee's Daoist wisdom as expressed in his creative work teaches not only the spirit of self-reliance, independence, and individual heroism, but also stresses the importance of basic and practical skills (such as sewing, cooking, and taking care of the younger ones in *The Curses*). Not only can one find superb and magical painting skills—sometimes considered the realm of females—in Choon-yi, his other female characters are also skilled in sports and martial arts that used to be the exclusive trades of men: indeed, they are able to “perform whatever men can” and “hold up half the sky,” to quote Mao Tze-Tung. Thus, Yee opens up entirely new vistas for his readers, particularly female, to strive for.¹⁰

5.4 Conclusion

To conclude, Paul Yee's fictional universe is culturally rich and complex. With a heavy focus on girls and women, he looks searchingly into the underlying structures of Chinese-Canadian family and society. At a time when postmodernism and post-structuralism were in vogue in mainstream Canadian literature and culture, he went against the grain and grounded his characters firmly in society and historical time to give them authenticity and solidity. By doing this, he champions the social realist or neo-realist mode of writing that has been faithfully followed by emergent and prize-winning Chinese Canadian writers such as SKY Lee, Wayson Choy, and Larissa Lai. But his works such as *The Curses of the Third Uncle*, *Tales from Gold Mountain*, *Ghost Train*, *Bamboo*, and *The Jade Necklace*, have also shown his superb skill at intermingling the real with the surreal, the historical and social with the magical and mythical, thus transcending limited/limiting time and space boundaries, while, paradoxically, anchoring his characters solidly in palpable real life.

Furthermore, he examines critically the basic moral and spiritual codes native to the Chinese culture—Confucianism and Daoism. The tightly-knit Chinese community and its sense of cultural unity, epitomized by the image of Chinatown, is viewed with ambivalence. For Yee's characters, to leave it forever and never to return appears too radical a break with the Chinese culture. The Chinese family, along with its protection, warmth, help, and indispensable role in moral cultivation and in Confucian all-round personality development, is treated positively more often than not, though some undesirable elements are identified.

Seriously questioned and rejected are the Confucian patriarchal prejudices and practices, such as the obsession with male offspring continuing the family line and, related to this, the misogynist attitude that women are to be relegated to the margins of the family and society by the mere fact of their being women.¹¹ In this sense, Yee's work anticipated many of the themes and topics explored by established and

¹⁰ SKY Lee quotes Mao Tze-Tung, too, on guerrilla warfare, in her “Women in Touch with Coming Home” in *Telling it*. Yee's glorification of such deeds may be slightly overdone; one Canadian review by Raymond E. Jones finds it incredible that she can go independently to Revelstoke.

¹¹ See C.T. Hsia's book (105–106; 340–341) on the same phenomenon in Chinese literature.

emergent Chinese Canadian women writers such as SKY Lee, Evelyn Lau, Denise Chong, Lydia Kwa, Larissa Lai, Judy Fong Bates, and Lily Chow in the past few decades.

However, Yee confirms Confucian virtues such as frugality, modesty, respect for the old, duty, diligence, and altruism. Strongly asserted is the prerogative for Chinese-Canadian women not to sacrifice their time and energy for patriarchal purposes and reasons. The emphasis on education as having primary importance is maintained throughout, as is the possession of an all-round personality, or attainment of perfection.

On the other hand, Yee maintains the Daoist stress on intuition, instinct, spontaneity, and flexibility of attitudes; he also treasures practical skills, as much as he does the spirit of independence and individuality. This love for the Daoist tenets is not gratuitous. The Canadian environment, as represented in Yee's fiction, allows plenty of room for their practice; several of the Confucian teachings, by comparison, are not so blessed.

In short, Paul Yee's works of the past three decades have drawn the attention of Canadian, American, and Chinese readers in general, and in particular, well-published critics such as John Z. Ming and Pat Parungao (1999), Grace Ko and Pamela J. McKenzie (2003), John Z. Ming Chen and Jia Hongpo (2010), and John Z. Ming Chen and Wei Li (2010). Not only are Paul Yee's works of rich and enduring literary value across languages and time: they have also contributed appreciably to the dissemination and globalization of the excellent and enduring essence and features of Chinese culture—Confucianism and Daoism in particular—beyond the Chinese borders.

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Chapter 6

“The Voyage That Never Ends:” Malcolm Lowry’s Taoist Aesthetics of Return/Renewal

Malcolm Lowry’s sustained interest in China and in its rich cultural legacy spans nearly three decades until his untimely death in 1957 by “misadventure”.¹ From his first published novel *Ultramarine* (1933), about a trip hound for the China coast, through his vignette, “China,” his unfinished work, and a typescript named “La Mordida” of 1000-strong pages, to his novella “The Forest Path to the Spring,” we never fail to be deeply impressed by his unflagging efforts to search for knowledge and wisdom from the land of Taoism. Given that scanty attention has been paid to this aspect among voluminous Lowry scholarship, it would not do justice to Lowry’s corpus to examine here all of the Taoist elements therein. However, a concentration on his absorption of the one key concept of return and reversal – an intriguing leit-motif in fact – seems feasible within the constrictions of this paper.

Let us now follow Lowry’s footstep on his first sailing to China at an age of 18, for his literary career links up inextricably with the sea and the images of return. Water, as we know, figures large in *Tao Te Ching* as an image and symbol for the Tao. In considering Lowry’s Chinese connection, then, one should bear in mind that Laozi metaphorizes the Tao in the very image of water. I would therefore submit that Lowry takes this cue with alacrity, if not right now and here, then later in other works. In retrospect, it is doubly befitting that Lowry should start his journey to the Far East with *Ultramarine*, a thinly disguised autobiographical novel. The significance of the suggestive title, when examined in conjunction with Lowry’s oeuvre, is not far to seek: it heralds an age of marine journeys to the East for Lowry in his impressionable years and places him in the company of his literary mentors like Conrad Aiken, Joseph Conrad, and Eugene O’Neill, and Nordahl Grieg.² For all of

¹For more information, see Clarissa Lorenz’s “Call it a Misadventure” in: *Malcolm Lowry: Psalms and Songs* edited by Margerie Lowry, New York: NAL, 1975, 59–71.

²See “A Norwegian at Heart’: Lowry and the Grieg Connection” and “Nordahl Grieg, I Greet You!” in *Swinging the Maelstrom* edited by Sherrill Grace, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1992, 31–42 and 43–51. See also *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry* edited by Margerie Lowry, New York: NAL, 1975, 15–16, 117, and 255.

these writers of life at sea, launching into sea or water is a daring act for one has to leave the solid ground on which safety in the traditional sense depends. But we cannot be afloat on water for long, and the sea voyage necessitates a return to the shore. Hence, sea-faring experiences are bound to produce images of return as ancient as Odysseus in the West. The initial sailing of Lowry’s character, then, reveals as much about his own personality as the *Zeitgeist* of the age: just as the will to brave maritime hardships is of a daring nature, so the spirit to explore the Orient indicates adventurousness and readiness to learn from afar.

In addition, the long journey to the Far East in *Ultramarine* is, predictably, accompanied by recurrent images of circles or returns that bear striking resemblance to the rhythmic movement of the Tao: the waves and tides that keep coming back cyclically to the shore or the ship at anchor; the ships’ frequent entries into and exists out of seaports like Tsintao, Ningpo, and Shanghai, to name but a few; the narrator, Dana Hilliot’s regular dispatches of letters back home to his sweetheart. Finally, any voyage, no matter how long and arduous, presupposes a return trip and perhaps, mall assessment of what is gained. Otherwise it will be simply aimless or directionless wandering Lowry makes sure that the triumphant homecoming of the ship to England means more than a mere geographical manoeuvre: it is, first of all, symbolic of the protagonist’s maturity into manhood after being literally around the world and having arrived at exactly the same place of departure.

Furthermore, it is not until he sets foot on the land again – after he returns from the marine adventure – that he can mentally and fully grasps the whole meaning of his adventure. While during the voyage the introvert Dana Hilliot keeps a journal, the Oriental trip furnishes him with a solid feel of the necessity of return: one cannot sail on forever; the crucial point is that, upon reaching Liverpool, the protagonist is capable of summing up with sufficient confidence what he has learned: he certainly has grown in physical: strength, increased his endurance of hardships and loneliness, resisted the temptations of the bordellos of the Chinese ports, and more importantly, widened his geographical, cultural or intellectual horizons. The return, therefore, signals the beginning of the end of Dana’s innocence; it also allows him to proceed with yet another seagoing undertaking with the experience and wisdom recently gained.

In this connection, I should mention a sophisticated and sensitive vignette/short story, “China,” again heavily informed by personal life in source. Written some time after this trip but published much later, it treats us to an authentic account of the narrator’s attempt to articulate his perception of a foreign land. What strikes me the most is the honesty and incisiveness with which the narrator self-consciously exposes, mocks, and criticizes his own former cherished version of China. I have culled relevant passages as follows:

China is like a muddle to me, it’s just like s dream, mostly a queer dream. For though I’ve been there it takes on a quality sometimes that my imagination bestowed on it before I went. But even if I lived there it would still seem to me to be unreal; ... I had been looking forward to something anxiously and I called this China, yet when I reached China I was still

looking forward to it from exactly the same position. Perhaps China wasn’t there, didn’t exist for me.³

Again, while travelling, the narrator is unable to distance himself from his own past; only after he returns home and views everything in retrospect can he arrive at such a lucid realization that he asks his readers to rid themselves of old habits or outdated versions of China (54). Rather than being carried away with refreshingly exotic impressions or with his entrenched old notions, he champions an objective, detached attitude toward an alien land. Though he does not employ Saidian terminology, the intellectual acumen and cultural intent of this nice little piece already adumbrates what we now term Orientalism. And it is much to Lowry’s credit that he is so keenly aware and critical of his own prejudices or illusions.

In brief, the first stage of his contacts with China unfolds to Lowry a diverse spectrum of concrete and memorable experiences, which in turn inspire his literary productions. The open-mindedness and readiness in the latter to reshape his images of China indeed pave the road for his acceptance of Chinese wisdom. Despite the lack of an immediate presence of the Taoist understanding of return in these two works discussed above, we encounter numerous images and symbols of returns. Needless to say, they provide Lowry with a large quantity of empirical data; they are all the more significant as Lowry later duly recalls his past adventures in “The Forest Path to the Spring” and view them anew from the Taoist perspective.

With the above brief summary in mind, we continue with Lowry on his voyage to China and to the Too. Lowry’s next major artistic and intellectual pursuit can be profitably illuminated by an examination of the concept of return/reversal articulated by *I Ching* in Lowry’s unpublished “La Mordida” (bite or bribe). Scholars have either identified organic links between *I Ching* and *Tao Te Ching* or considered the former as the master narrative of Taoism,⁴ though others may demur.⁵ I would not conflate the two and shall discuss in some detail pertinent differences between them where appropriate.

The Canadian Lowry expert, Sherrill Grace, makes a perceptive observation when she points out that “certainly [Lowry] was impressed by the *I Ching*, for in the typescript he goes on to say”⁶;

This reminds them [Sigbjorn and Primrose] of happy days, it should be pointed out that, while this may seem hocus pocus to the ordinary person, it bears in part upon the most remarkable book in all the world’s literature.⁷

³Malcolm Lowry: *Psalms and Songs*, New York: NAL, 1975, edited by Margerie Lowry, 49 and 52.

⁴See W.K. Chu and W.A. Sherrill, *An Anthology of I Ching*. London: Routledge, 1977, p. 5 and Richard Wilhelm in *Lectures on the I Ching: Constancy and Change*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979, translated by Irene Eber, p. 7.

⁵See Zhao Ming’s *Taoist Thinking and Chinese Culture*. Changchun: Jilin UP, 1986, p. 18 and pp. 44–45 and Zhang Songru’s *On Laozi*. Jinan: Qilu Books, 1987, p. 6.

⁶Sherrill Grace, *The Voyage that Never Ends*. Vancouver: U. of BC, 1982, p. 61.

⁷See “La Mordida,” Typescript stored in “Boxes” in the Special Collection of the University of British Columbia Library, 12:19, p. 320.

We emphasize the point that though *I Ching* seems to be deterministic and even a trifle too superstitious (to its detractors) in its trigrams and hexagrams and eight *gua* (*sancai, liuyao, bagua* in Chinese), it does allow its readers/believers considerable choices if they fully appreciate the complexity and variety of chances and tuning points and truly understand its oracular predictions and workings. In the case of Lowry’s projected protagonists’ attempt to come to grips with their past, they need to make sense of their previous movements between their hotel and the Immigration Office. Lowry also turns the borders between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada into a symbol for a liminal place or for tile blurring of boundaries. Whether they can effect a change in their life and start a new phase depends to a great extent on the characters’ willingness not only to look back in time and make causal or temporal connections, but also to delve deep down into their psyche and purge themselves of consuming guilt and fear. Carl Jung has been much quoted on the psychological implications of *I Ching* (Wilhelm xv-xvi); similarly, the psychological recovery in “La Mordida” hinges upon an indispensable return to the darkest recesses of the past, as the above-mentioned negative feelings are dealt with by the protagonists properly.

Thus, Lowry grants, as *I Ching*’s tenets indeed imply, an autonomy or free will to his creatures: a propitious Fu Hexagram (strictly speaking, we should employ another term, see Chu 15) can only be fulfilled if they read the writing on the wall sagaciously and take active measures to reverse their own fortunes. Though, because of the incompleteness of the typescript, we cannot be absolutely sure whether Lowry could have developed this potential to fruition, we have reason to believe that Lowry finds a kindred spirit in *I Ching*: on the one hand, he studies it as a personal guide first through daily instructions by an American, Charles Stansfeld Jones, then through his reading of Eliphas Levi.⁸

On the other hand, in his artistic work, Lowry tries to put the philosophical concept of return/reversal into literary practice through a dramatization at the ups and downs, the twists and turns of his central character’s fate. The *I Ching* expounds on the law of enantiodromia (reversal in extremis or *wuji bi fan* in Chinese) through the trigrams that starts with the Creative Yang in Quiescence begetting the Yang and the Yin, the latter of which also mothers another pair of yang and yin (Chu 10–14). The gist of the law lies, then, in the reversal of roles between the yin and the yang. In a practical sense, the very unfortunate event at certain point of one’s life may well be the turning point toward a change: so just when Lowry’s heroes are at the nadir of their luck when they are incarcerated in the hotel, a stasis suggested powerfully by the image of the monsoon in fermentation, Lowry places an anti-monsoon in his work, one that is rushing through in the upper sky and can only be felt in the higher levels of the “lofty Hotel Quinta Eugenia” (12:9, 36). Thus, Lowry’s aesthetic of reversal exhibits itself in his simultaneous use of monsoon and anti-monsoon; his characters are not doomed yet. “Every cloud has a silver lining;” and the oxymoronic phrase, *weiji* (crisis) in Chinese, embodies the same notion most succinctly.

⁸ See Perle S. Epstein’s *The Private Labyrinth of Malcolm Lowry: Under the Volcano and the Cabbala*. New York: Holt, 1969, p. 11, pp. 13–14, and p. 38.

Lawry’s handling of the concept of return can also be examined in his notes on the *Fu* Hexagram. The following presents but a glimpse of Lawry’s fieldwork and interpretation:

Fu indicates that there will be free course and progress (in what it denotes) (the subject of it) finds no one to distress him in his exits and entrances, friends come to him, and no error is committed. He will return and repeat his (proper) course. In seven days comes his return, There will be advantage in whatever direction movement is made... But the *I Ching* goes on to show the meaning of each line making up the Hexagram, from bottom up, and the last section contains a warning. It may have been bad to repeat (or revisit) the scene of your book (12:19, 319).

Apparently, Lowry tries to formulate a concept of return that may be beneficial to the plot, characterization, and denouement of his characters’ fate. Though we are informed by Lowry’s “Note” to the typescript that there will be a reversal of their fortunes (Grace 1982:61), it is nevertheless to our profound regret that Lowry does not live to accomplish in a flesh-and-blood form what he has so intricately designed.

To the philosophically or artistically inclined reader, if Lowry’s early study of *I Ching* betrays a certain fascination with the Chinese occult or oracular art of numbers and graphs as embodied in the trigrams and hexagrams,⁹ then Lowry’s more sober, rationalist and philosophical pursuit finds its fullest expression in his wholehearted assimilation of *Tao Te Ching*. The shift from one Chinese classic to another is by no means gratuitous; nor does it signify just a chance discovery of an oriental work to be replaced by yet another. It carries with it a threefold meaning related to the theoretical or philosophical foundation Lowry’s aesthetics, to his uses of the imagery of circles, returns and reversals, and finally, to the overall structure and profound purport of the entire cycle of novels, “The Voyage that Never Ends.”

Let us first situate Lowry’s new philosophical stance in his aesthetics of the return/reversal. There can be little doubt that Lowry takes over the Taoist concept of the *yin* and the *yang* being in eternal embrace and harmony in Laozi’s *Tao Te Ching* (“*wanwu fuyin er bao yang*”, chapter 42), but what needs to be stressed heavily here is Laozi’s reversal of the values placed on the *yang* in *I Ching*. Though both master texts are often considered to be of Taoist genealogy,¹⁰ and though both employ the *yin* and the *yang* as cardinal concepts, *Tao Te Ching* advocates a philosophy which turns *I Ching*’s theory of the correspondence of the *yin* and the *yang* (“*Yinyang jiaogan*”, Zhao 45) into one that considers these two elements to be two sides of the same coin, hence making the complementary *yin* and *yang* internal and eternal components in every entity. Relatedly, another equally crucial change occurs in that Lao Zi privileges the *yin* over the *yang* (Zhao 43–45, 47) and constructs what some of us now call the “dialectics of treasuring the soft and respecting the weak” (“*Gui rou shang ruo*”, Zhao 43). I would argue that Lowry, in his final act of making *Tao Te Ching* an intertext in “The Forest Path to the Spring,” transcends even his own

⁹There are serious scholars who genuinely believe in *I Ching* as an effective and powerful divinatory work, see W.K. Chu’s *An Anthology of I Ching*, pp. 1–3.

¹⁰See Barry Wood’s “At the Edge of Eternity,” in: Barry Wood [ed.], *Malcolm Lowry: the Writer and his Critics*. Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1980, p 190.

former self shaped partially by *I Ching*. Whereas Lowry’s previous works deal almost exclusively with exciting actions, active movements, and outward voyages, he now turns to their opposites – immobility, passivity, and stillness. Such an embarking on a daring project constitutes, of course, an altogether new voyage into the less known, uncharted territory.

This self-negating mid exploring spirit is evident in Lowry’s treatment of a number of antinomies in accordance with Laozi’s diagram. The most recent excavation of Laozi in *Mawang-tui*, recording to Graham’s book,¹¹ has provided us with the earliest comprehensive list of the *Yang* and the *Yin*.¹² Though by no means going into every detail on this list, Lowry copes with a variety of binary oppositions or antinomies which can be adequately studied with the *yin/yang* principle in mind.

We shall make a selective study of the relationships between day and night, movement and stillness and demonstrate Lowry’s new emphases and values. Since Western metaphysics has privileged the one (or *yang* in the Chinese system; nearly every item on the left side) over the other (*yin*), as Jacques Derrida, Helene Cixous, and A.C. Graham have persistently critiqued in different contexts,¹³ not only must Lowry’s narrator understand and appreciate the delicate balance of the *yin* and *yang*, he also has to redress the already existing imbalance by stressing heavily the *yin* side: more specifically, the narrator undergoes a process of unlearning and learning anew, step by step in his dally spiritual walk, the woefully neglected importance of the right side in the conventional complementary pairs: night, and stillness.¹⁴

Nights and days are nothing unusual as natural occurrences, but human perception and treatment of the two parts of a natural cycle can be so drastically biased that Lowry sets out to reverse them. There are two levels on which the night/day complementaries can be studied: the natural; the natural and the personal. On the natural plane, if we may so generalize, the narrator observes the laws in nature which conform to or confirm the *yin/yang* principle; he comes to a better understanding of them; however, he does not intervene, nor has he any functions whatsoever in affecting them. It is banal to say that night follows day; or that there is more life in day

¹¹A. C. Graham, *Yin-yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*. Kent Ridge, Singapore: The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986, pp. 27–28.

¹²Since Laozi stresses the *yin*, we think it more appropriate to put the *yin* column on the left, according to the Chinese habit of naming things of primary importance first.

¹³See Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, for the reversal of binary oppositions between culture and nature, and between speech and writing (Part II); see also “Jacques Derrida and Zhuang Zi” by Xie Shaobo and John (Zhong) Ming Chen in *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (Sept. 1992), pp. 363–376. In addition, Helene Cixous’s “Sorties: Out and Out Attacks/Ways Out/Forays” subverts binaries in terms of the coupleman and woman: “action/passivity; sun/moon; day/night; father/mother” and so on (*Contemporary Critical Theory*. (San Diego: Harcourt, 1989), pp. 559–578). Lastly, A.C. Graham in *Disputers of the Tao*. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989, perspicuously capsulizes (p. 331) the differences between Chinese and Western views on the chains A and B: “... China tends to treat opposites as complementary, the West as conflicting. It is the explicitness of the *Yin/Yang* system which shows up this difference”.

¹⁴Once we apply the *yin/yang* principle, the complementary pairs can go on almost endlessly. See Zhao Ming for 41 binaries gleaned from the *Tao Te Ching* (44–45).

than in night, since old usage and ways have long fixed the order of things. But Lowry’s narrator discovers exactly the contrary. In his world of nature, night assumes a conspicuously ascending importance. The first reference to “... the Chinese Hats that only walked at night” (237), immediately after Lowry’s overt quoting of *Tao Te Ching*, serves only as a prelude to the drama of seething nocturnal life that is to unfold fully, to the astonishment of husband and wife:

It is only at night that this great world of the windrow and tide-flats really wakes up.... We had a standing joke, and would turn to one another laughing to say in a sepulchral tone: ‘It is night, and the Chinese Hats are on the move!’ (237)

The repetition of “the Chinese Hats” here not only emphasizes the night teeming with their movements, but also refers obliquely to the Eastern part of the globe and its time-oriented activities that are usually opposite to the West. Since the earth spins day and night (excuse the English clichés/idiom, though the Chinese set phrase would put it as “night continuing day” – *yeyi jiri*) and has two hemispheres, Western and Eastern, the day/night division is not absolute. The references or allusions to the East or China at least five times (216, 228, 236–237, 260, 280–81) also underscore the narrator’s relocation of natural activities by day and night, his global mind, and his awareness of the artificial nature of the dichotomy day/night in the West.

On the natural and human level, Lowry’s narrator, sometimes with his wife, endeavours to comply with a newly discovered law (movement in stillness) operative at night and to grasp fully its essence. In the first instance, the narrator changes his habits: he becomes fond of, or rather, obsessed with, performing his daily ritual walk to the spring at dusk, the completion of which is usually accompanied by darkness; he is in a way imitating the Chinese Hats, adopting their alternative lifestyle of nightly movement while others are at rest. Indeed, he rather self-complacently describes himself as a man who enjoys the “life of the night” (250–51). In addition, for more intimate natural and cosmic knowledge of the night, husband and wife sally forth to the forest to observe the stars running their natural courses in a nebulous and vast universe not accessible at daytime. There, they understand, from the Taoist still-mobile paradoxical perspective, that these stars look still because remote; that they are often blanked out by city electrical lights, the artificial illumination that is to be rejected later. Furthermore, their little poems or songs in genuine celebration of this part of new-found life of the stillness bring forth the richness and liveliness of nocturnal activities denied to or unnoticed by city-dwellers. A further turn of our expectations occurs when the narrator exclaims that even the lion (or cat) metamorphoses into his brother (264–66) and that there is no danger lurking behind or in the forest or behind the dark curtain, nor ghosts or ghouls so much feared particularly by ignorant people not living in the neighbourhood of nature. Therefore, by studying the nightly stillness with the Taoist insight, Lowry subtly exposes the fallacy of traditional myth about the dark: here, in a sense following Joseph Conrad since he does read *Heart of Darkness* avidly,¹⁵ Lowry both re-assesses and subverts the ossi-

¹⁵For A.C. Graham’s visual inscription of the reversal of values in Conrad’s masterpiece, see *Yin-yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*. P. 45. Lowry’s letters confirm his keen interest in

fied Western conventional binaries that have valorized only the right sides – nature/culture, dark/light, forest/city – but also gives the lie to the recurrent and entrenched images created by the bulk of Western literature of nature, of the dark, and of the forest as the perilous, the chaotic, the evil, and the feminine, to be excluded or suppressed at all costs.

Another case of the reversal of values takes place in the relationship between stillness and movement. Earlier we have dwelt upon the images of water at rest or in motion. As Lowry comprehends it, just as the Tao is “so still, so changeless, and yet reaching everywhere” (236), so the law of relative stillness and absolute movement operative in nature applies to the human sphere. The crux of the matter, however, rests squarely in people’s perception of stillness and movement: society has slighted the former and favoured the latter in its rampant industrial development and environmentally unfriendly encroachment upon nature, and Lowry challenges such a bias through his narrator’s daily spiritual walks and recurring self-chastisements. Noteworthy in the first instance is the resonance engendered by the multiple uses of “still” (in the sense of not moving; 226, 236–37, 258–259) and “remote and still,” (236, 268, 286).¹⁶ These words function as a leitmotif, reinforcing the complementary positions of the couple in the forest: the geometrically still points of the spring and the shack where the wife stays constitute the yin ends between which the husband moves; the two fixed centres also contrast sharply with the husband’s trajectory of movement. In other words, he must both move and rest, just as stasis and motion are mutually dependent. If both nature and humans are considered together in this microcosmic scheme, we witness a balance well-wrought: when the husband gets dry in the mouth after a brisk walk, water quenches his thirst at one end; when he is exhausted on his way back, his wife comforts and replenishes him with a supper at the other. In both cases he has the compensatory or healing power of *yin* – water and wife – at his service; the rest (*yin*) at the two extremes of his arduous movement (*yang*) further reinvigorates him. Therefore, the *yin* proves to be indispensable; Lowry’s *yin/yang* design, balanced and perfect.

The second major point related to *Tao Te Ching* is that Lowry’s new philosophy has a considerable impact on the poetics of his imagery of return. If we revert to our earlier discussion, we can see that his reading of *Tao Te Ching* further confirms his initial flirtation with the concept of “circle” he early explores in *Ultramarine*, while water imagery virtually inundates every page of “The Forest Path to the Spring.” Though Lowry adopts the *yin/yang* Taoist principle and understands the importance of balance, as Wood has rightly argued (190), Lowry also keenly senses a lack of equilibrium between the *yin* and *yang* elements and vigorously seeks to complement the yin. As a powerful yin element, water not only illustrates the nature and

Conrad though he seems to construe somewhat differently from Graham: *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*, 235, 266.

¹⁶We may cite Sherrill Grace’s “A Strange Assembly of Apparently Incongruous Parts” in *Apparently Incongruous Parts*. London: The Scarecrow Press, 1990, p. 198: “I cannot hope to comment upon all aspects of this rich intertextuality at this time; the traces are so numerous as to be almost impossible to trace.”

movement of the Tao, but also offsets the threat of *yang* fire (see above on this in relation to war): at every turn, we find Lowry employing, in an unending metonymic chain, the following signifiers: fog haze, mist, steam, vapour; rain; spring, streams, brooks, rivers; tides, currents; sea, ocean. A closer examination of a few passages from the Taoist bible may further illustrate the trajectory or patterns of movement of the Tao/water:

Chapter XI

Circularity is the movement of Tao. (Ch'en 13)

Chapter XXV

It [Tao] revolves without pause.

...

And “distance” means “returning”. (Ch'en 142)

Chapter XVI

Now, of the myriad things in all of their profusion each again returns to its root.

Returning to the root is called “tranquility”,

And “tranquility” is called “restoring original nature”. (Ch'en 110)

In both Lowry’s and Laozi’s texts, reverberating everywhere are such phrases as flux and flow, curves, circles, cycles, and returns. They graphically inscribe the circular or curvilinear movements of water in its multifarious forms (e.g. vapour, mist, steam). It is true that Lowry has made conspicuous use of the circle in *Ultramarine*: he sees them as “closed,” “vicious” and then open and benevolent (Grace 1982: 11). But there the image is geometrical and seems relatively fixed. Here, inspired by the fluidity and power in the tidal water like the Tao as a cleansing and purifying element in the inlet, Lowry allows his water to run its own course: either by evaporation, by lunar or solar gravity forming tides, or by free fall, water moves constantly and incessantly – in the air, at sea, on land – creating minor circles as in ripples (241, 286) or huge curves as in rainbows (241, 286). Invariably, the images of water exhibit a cosmic, widely applicable pattern of returning or cycles – local or global. It is through this constant recirculation that water gains its endless movement, just as the Tao revolves or returns incessantly in circles or cycles.

Lowry’s consistent representation of the movement of the Tao through the image of water in motion carries over to his vision of human beings as part and parcel of the universal scheme subject to such a law. To cement his point, Lowry re-evokes his paraphrasing of chapter 25 of *Tao Te Ching* at the end of his novella:

And the rain itself was water from the sea, as my wife first taught me, raised to heaven by the sun, transformed into clouds, and falling again into the sea. While within the inlet itself the tides and currents in that sea returned, became remote, and becoming remote, like that which is called the Tao, returned again as we ourselves had done. (286)

To avoid repetition, we need to point out Lowry’s First citation of *Tao Te Ching* lays great store by the spatial complementaries in stasis and movement through the observation of natural phenomena like stars, rain, and tides. Though we are not given to know whether Lowry reads other chapters in *Tao Te Ching* specifically on water as a manifest form of the Tao, the citation above, indeed his second reference, vividly describes the Tao as tides in constant motion. The second allusion differs slightly from the first in that the dialectics of stillness and movement, of departure

and return is admirably enshrined in Lowry's own profoundly philosophical and poetic language, somehow emulating Zhuangzi's textual style in his relation to Laozi's. It further appropriates and fully exploits the concept of return on another level by integrating the human realm organically into the natural or cosmic, thus forming a seamless and unified universe that is governed by the one Tao; this monism, we need to remind ourselves, is alien to the dualism predominant in the West, one Lowry inherits by birth and upbringing. Thus, in a symbolic act of ridding this citation of its quotation marks he employs earlier Lowry makes the Taoist intertext part of his own signifying system.¹⁷ Noteworthy is the fact that the narrator's wife makes him realize the profound truth about the circular (spatial) and cyclical (temporal) movements of rains and tides. It is as if the wife, being feminine and yin in the Taoist world, by nature knew her alike element intuitively and intimately. The narrator, on his part, hastens to add that he learns quickly and sees clearly the pattern of returning in the human sphere: the seasonal coming home from the ocean of their neighbours (the fishermen), as well as their own revisit to Eridanus after years of absence. Both water and human beings are thus viewed as being governed by the same law of circular or cyclical movement, a law particularly well expounded by the Taoist symbol of the *yin/yang* circle and the Taoist concept of return.

Third, Lowry's in-depth understanding of *Tao Te Ching* proves to be enormously conducive to the organizational principle and artistic structure of his voyage novels. According to the Lowry scheme, the "Forest Path to the Spring" is to be the coda to his cycle of novels, which include, among others, his masterpiece *Under the Volcano*. Given Lowry's ambitious plan that is meant perhaps to match any modern works focusing on the journey motif including those by Joyce, O'Neill, Aiken, Grieg, and Conrad,¹⁸ the importance of the Taoist concept of return/reversal in his massive projected work, "The Voyage that Never Ends," should claim all the more our attention. But curiously enough, when Lowry quotes Chapter 25 of *Tao Te Ching* twice by paraphrasing, his intention does not seem to be fixed on outlandish voyages or extensive movements any more. Rather, we would argue, the peace and quiet in Eridanus (Lowry's fictional version of Dollarton near the Burrard Inlet of Vancouver, in actual fact) which enable him to sit down and write have gradually seduced him: his key issues become not so much geographical and physical explorations as spiritual probing or internal journeys while being stationary or at rest in a particular location. In other words, he faces and attempts to solve questions like these: How can he rest or stay with contentment in one place without feeling a certain sense of non-action or passivity? Can he, like the ancient wanderer Odysseus at his old age, keep on exploring until exhaustion takes its toll? For, as we know by now, many of the titles of Lowry's works already exhibit an irrepressible urge to sail

¹⁷Lowry's erudition is in part due to his retentive memory and habitual citation without acknowledging sources; see Sherrill Grace's "Respecting Plagiarism: Tradition, Guilt, and Malcolm Lowry's 'Pelagiarist Pen'" in *English Studies in Canada*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4 (Dec. 1992), pp. 461–482.

¹⁸See "Index" in *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry* (London), 1967 for Lowry's comments on these literary giants.

forth, to go out, to leave home, to explore – “Outward Bound”, “October Ferry to Gabriola” and *Ultramarine*, for example, the last of which by critical consensus and authorial admission being inspired by Grieg’s *The Ship Sails on* (1927) and by Aiken’s *Blue Voyage* (1927). Lowry’s answers rest again, of course, in the Taoist notion of return/reversal.

In accordance with the Taoist tenets, Lowry’s chief concerns in many works of actual journeys now transform themselves into those with stillness, a stillness which nonetheless provides his protagonist-musician-writer with fertility of imagination and fecundity of production. Just as his protagonist, unnamed to hint at universality, turns prolific when at rest and in peace, so Lowry’s design to make “The Forest Path to the Spring” the coda of “The Voyage that Never Ends” is a marvellous act of artistic flexibility, achieved chiefly by exploiting Laozi’s dialectics: Lowry has clearly in mind the Taoist concept of return as a central, controlling image to encompass all his previous spiritual, philosophical, and geographical odysseys in an endless search for meaning in human life and laws in nature. Little surprise that Barry Wood (1980, 190–191) asserts that the seemingly still moment when the *yin* and the *yang* are in perfect harmony is not a dead one, for the unnamed narrator is most productive as he resides at the center of these two cosmic forces, at the edge of water and land, and between past and future.

Indeed, one may relate the Taoist philosophical emphasis on stillness to the peaceful kingdom in Eridanus in “The Forest Path to the Spring.” The coda is permeated with a romantic and naturalist sense of peace and serenity rarely found in the Lowry canon: perhaps for once at least, he does finally find his ideal haven – a paradise that boasts almost all the Taoist requirements for a Utopian world: harmony with the animal world, brotherhood among his neighbours, simplicity of life, spontaneity of character, and unity with nature, a paradise where peace and happiness reign supreme. Considered in this light, the theme of rebirth, of starting anew by another move or movement in his earlier works like *Ultramarine* or “La Mordida” is reshaped to suggest that stillness, non-action, and impassivity can also change one’s lot to the better; one is not dead when not moving around. Instead, both Lowry and his characters have ultimately found a place they can call home, a place where they can act out the Voltairean motto, “Il faut cultiver notre jardin.” Here, of course, more appropriate to the Taoist tenor, we hear echoes of Laozi’s discourse on the small agrarian state, or of Tao Qian’s prose eulogizing his Peach-Blossom Spring (what a coincidence in Lowry’s title!).

In conclusion, Malcolm Lowry’s vignette/short story “China,” his first novel *Ultramarine*, his manuscript “La Mordida,” and finally, the novella “The Forest Path to the Spring,” form a neat, though not closed, cycle of works in its own right: it first demonstrates the writer’s exquisite artistic execution of the Taoist philosophical vision of the *yin* and the *yang* in all things ranging from the cosmic through the natural to the human realms, though his planned enterprise of “The Voyage that Never ends” is unfortunately cut short by his untimely death. Here, we do not witness the unwitting or intentional misreading or misrepresentation of the nature of Chinese philosophy, language, and poetics which typifies the practices of some

Westerners like Hegel, Ezra Pound, and Jacques Derrida.¹⁹ Furthermore, the recurrent images or symbols of circles, cycles, and returns in *Ultramarine* and "China" furnish Lowry with huge empirical data which he elevates onto a higher metaphorical level. Relatedly, the concept of return/reversal expounded in *I Ching* gives impetus to the Lowryan characters' constant and endless movements, while its reworked version by *Tao Te Ching* enables both Lowry and his characters to stoat afresh, to continue with another category of journey. External and internal journeys, when linked together make up their meaningful life, as the Same Taoist concept offers them not just a new departing point on the geographical or physical plane, but also a point of rebirth, regeneration in the spiritual sense, when all are quite, still, and motionless. Therefore, Lowry's adoption of the Taoist dialectics of stillness/movement again revitalizes his literary production, so that he has virtually inexhaustible source of inspiration, so that he can explore, forever, in the universe that is our world. It is in these two senses, at once physical and spiritual, that Lowry's works and life constitute "voyage that never ends".

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¹⁹ See Zhang Longxi's *The Tao and the Logos*. Durham: Duke UP, 1992, pp. 17–35, for his shrewd critique of various Western malpractices and misinterpretations.

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Chapter 7

Harmony, Beautiful Balance, and “Fearful Symmetry”: Aspects of Fred Cogswell’s Yin/Yang Aesthetics

*The myriad things shoulder the yin and embrace the yang,
And through the coalescing of these vapours,
They attain a state of harmony.*

–the *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 42, trans. from Ch’en Ku-ying 207

7.1 Introduction and Critical Deficiencies

Since not much recent scholarship has been published on Fred Cogswell’s poetic and philosophical connections with China, it is appropriate to cite the blurb on the back cover of Fred Cogswell’s *The Kindness of Stars* published in 2004 – the year Fred Cogswell passed away:

Fred is a prolific poet, translator, editor and scholar and has been recently dubbed “A Friend of Poets–Amis des Poetes” for his lifelong commitment to poetry and those who write it. He is the author of 33 books of his own poetry, 9 books of poetry translation and publisher of 307 books of poetry. In addition Fred has written and published many learned articles and reviews. His poetry has been published in magazines, journals, anthologies and textbooks and has been translated into several languages including Chinese, Romanian, Spanish, and French.

We cite the rather long passage above for two reasons. The first has to do with the dearth of current scholarship on Fred Cogswell. The two authorities – *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (2nd ed. 1997) and *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (2002) predate this volume of poetry and thus render the information therein slightly out of date, while *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature* (2004) fails to include Cogswell altogether. Other critics who have come to our attention lag behind in this regard as well (e.g., Hawkes 2004; Besner 2001; Thorpe 2000). Furthermore, no entries or critics have ever made references to Cogswell’s Chinese connection except for the passage cited above, courtesy of Kathlene Forsythe, Cogswell’s only surviving child.

John Z. Ming Chen and Wei Li have contributed to this chapter, an essay published previously and re-printed here with permission.

We re-use the title from Northrop Frye’s critical study on William Blake’s poetics, “Fearful Symmetry;” Frye in turn, borrows his title from William Blake’s “The Tyger”.

The second reason relates to Cogswell’s lived experience, as well as to Chinese language, Chinese philosophy, Chinese poetics, and the translation of Cogswell’s English poetry into Chinese by two Chinese immigrants to Canada. This cross-cultural aspect has again received scant attention in Cogswell criticism. However, our research indicates that Cogswell possessed personal knowledge of Daoist yin/yang aesthetics, at least partially, through a Chinese immigrant, Yue Ming Chen, whom he typically and tirelessly mentored into a published poet (see, for example, *Canadian Literature*, 140 [Spring 1994], 49). In addition, Cogswell befriended John Ming Chen, a published poet and a scholar in Daoism, who, over 20 years ago, was involved in revising and prefacing the translation of Cogswell’s *Pearls* into Chinese, interviewed Cogswell, and corresponded with him over issues of Daoist philosophy and yin/yang aesthetics (“Letter from Cogswell”). More recently, while staying with the Cogswell and his daughter in their apartment in the Greater Vancouver area and interviewing him again over several days during the Christmas season of 2002, John Ming Chen acquired further intimate knowledge about the poet and the man: Cogswell studied *The White Pony: An Anthology of Chinese Poetry from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (1947; 1960) and presented this item to Chen as a souvenir. In retrospect, it is a natural corollary that, in a series of conversations with Kathleen Forsythe, Cogswell sheds much light on the subject of Chinese poetry, Chinese calligraphy and characters, Ezra Pound’s Imagism, and Chinese poets repeatedly (*The Vision of Fred*, 2004: 30, 41, 45, 111).

Thus, it is with much academic regret that we have come to this realization: Cogswell’s deservedly good reputation as an editor, critic, and publisher may have, ironically, eclipsed his reputation as a poet. In particular, though there have been scattered book reviews, interviews, memoirs, and other short pieces on him, and an official biography in the offing by Wendy Scott, Cogswell’s poetic achievements warrant far more serious, systematic, and sustained studies than is currently in circulation.

Considering the multiple volumes of Cogswell’s poetry and the space limits, we attempt to examine one chief aspect of Daoism – the yin/yang theory – as expressed not only subtly and skilfully but also poetically and powerfully in Cogswell’s poetry.¹ Beginning with an enunciation of basic yin/yang balancing and harmonizing principles, we discuss its wide range of implications and applications in the context of English Canadian post-structural and even deconstructionist poetics concerned or obsessed with binaries. This is followed by an explication of Cogswell’s skilful realization of balance and symmetry in contrasting and unifying poetic forms and schemes, in paired and other-conscious images, and in parallel and complementary syntax and structures. Furthermore, by exploring his poetic imaging of the cardinal

¹Very disproportionate scholarship exists on Cogswell’s poetics. Besides Robert Gibbs’s one-page entry (1983), W. Keith’s two-page general discussion (1986), and Davies’s good piece in *Living Winter* (1960), there has been no other substantial study. However, John Metcalf’s less than appreciative comments (1982) does serve as an antidote, unwarranted as it is.

yin/yang concept on the human, ecological, physical, and metaphysical levels, we present his holistic aesthetic vision – often couched in and vivified by visual and musical images and metaphors – as a cautiously optimistic one in face of present environmental catastrophes and technological nightmares. Finally, we also view his poetic vision as one that is ultimately beautiful because, just like the structure of his poems, the structure of his poetic universe is solid and symmetrical, wherein the complementary – even conflicting – forces are harmonized and the ecology and economy (e.g., of line lengths and words), balanced. Born is an eco-poetics and aesthetics with yin/yang balancing import.

7.2 Yin/Yang Complementarity, Implications, and Applications

Our current project to examine Fred Cogswell's aesthetics as significantly informed by Daoist yin/yang theory is by no means conjectural: with grace the late poet has identified many of his poems as thus inspired. ² Research has demonstrated relevant facts related to Cogswell's exposure to and thinking through Daoism. Over the span of more than a decade, John Ming Chen met with, interviewed and corresponded with Cogswell regarding the sources of his poetic inspiration and creative processes. Daoism emerged recurrently. His favourite books included, among others, *The Ways of Lao Tzu* and *The Sayings of the Old Boy*, two modern texts on Daoism; one of his kindred spirits was none other than Tom MacInnes, identified by Cogswell himself as a bona fide Daoist writer.

Other personal information obtained from Cogswell himself has also confirmed his keen interest in the yin/yang philosophy. Specifically, in reply to John Ming Chen's inquiries about the 60 or so poems readily marked by Cogswell as under Daoist influence, Cogswell wrote: "what these poems show is a simple rendering of the surface of events and feelings in language relatively free of adjectives and qualifiers... and a philosophy of ... contrast between polarities, the chief of which are yin and yang" ("Letter", 12 April, 1994). To understand and thereby appreciate the beauty, symmetry, harmony, and power of Cogswell's aesthetics, then, we must probe the poetic and philosophical underpinnings of the yin/yang system. As a matter of fact, two blurbs on the back cover of his *The Trouble with Light* (1996) converge on the issue of philosophy and Daoist aesthetics. Richard Lemm observes: Cogswell's "wisdom and urbane emotionality work with," among other fine qualities, "the sublime sensory impressions and the philosophical solace found in nature." John M. Chen pinpoints the matter precisely: "Writing of Cogswell's innovative use of Taoist aesthetics," he maintains, Cogswell has "introduced a different philosophy of life ... and applied it in a reinventive manner by creating his own poetics ... unique...rarely witnessed in English Canadian Canada." In sum, both Lemm and Chen

have touched upon the philosophical and aesthetic dimension of Cogswell’s poetry, a dimension that calls for further exploration.

Needless to say, Daoist aesthetics remains a huge field, and given space restrictions, we can only hope to focus on several key aspects of the yin/yang theory. Since the yin and the yang – not the yin or the yang, nor the yin versus the yang – are always united in one entity as in a tightly embracing state, one key function of Cogswell’s aesthetics would rest squarely with its explicit foregrounding of correlations, complementarities or binaries, alterity or otherness, and parallels in objects, persons, and relations. Since the other/mindedness and two-sidedness are always present, the natural corollary of the yin/yang logic, if we may use such an analytical term in the realm of Daoist aesthetics and poetics, would be its additional beauty of symmetry and balance in structure and vision.

It is useful to have some historical and philosophical understanding of where the yin/yang paradigm and parameters originated and developed. The excavation of the *Lao-Tzu* in Mawang-tui, according to A.C. Graham’s *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (27–28) and *Disputers of the Tao* (1989, 330–340), has revealed the earliest comprehensive list of the yang and the yin. Because of its seminal nature and direct impact on Cogswell’s aesthetics and poetics, we cite it in part as follows 3.

A Yang	B Yin paradigm
1. Heaven	Earth
2. Spring	Autumn
3. Summer	Winter
4. Day	Night
5. Big states	Small states
6. Important states	Insignificant states
7. Action	Inaction
8. Stretching	Contracting
9. Ruler	Minister
10. Above	Below
11. Man	Women
12. Father	Child
13. Elder brother	Younger brother
14. Older	Younger
15. Noble	Base
16. Getting on in the world Syntagm	Being stuck where one is

The items on the list are given merely as selective examples and one should not limit oneself to them. Indeed, Zhao Ming (1986, 44–45) has identified 41 explicitly correlated concepts in the *Daode jing* (the *Tao Te Ching*) alone, not to mention many others suggested. However, the combination and permutation of a different number of elements taken from the left and/or right columns immediately complicate the overall composition or quality of the yin and yang.

It goes without saying that creative writers and poets make varying and creative uses of this paradigm²; we further submit this: Cogswell poetically explores a variety of what are deemed in the West binary oppositions or antinomies that can be best studied with the yin and yang principle in mind, though he by no means can or would exhaust all the possibilities. Since our era is very conscious of binaries and polarities, and since the yin/yang system also articulates concepts in pairs, one cannot resist asking the following question: What constitutes the main differences between Western and Chinese systems of thought, and by extension, their respective aesthetics?

In confined space, we cannot hope to address all issues crucial to the yin/yang theory, nor all of Cogswell's poems that have explored it. However, by examining his representative pieces, we may gauge with some measure of confidence his poetic achievements by referring to certain current and, perhaps paradoxically, still not yet *passé* (?) poststructuralist or Derridean concepts in conjunction with Chinese ones. From a cross-cultural perspective, A.C. Graham, in *Disputer of the Tao*, perspicuously encapsulates the differences between Chinese and Western views on the chains A and B:

... China tends to treat opposites as complementary, the West as conflicting. It is the explicitness of the Yin/Yang system which shows up this difference, the first between the conceptual schemes to attract attention. That Western thought not only has a chain of oppositions at the back of it but has a preoccupation about their relation to be exposed and challenged has been appreciated only since Derrida (331).

Apparently, because of the non-dualistic nature of the yin/yang paradigm, it offers a counterpoint to the Western worldview and metaphysics of oppositional binaries. Also, the yin/yang system should be noted for its vision of interconnectedness and correlatedness of things in the universe (i.e., in Cogswell's "Yin-on-Yang" and "The Quiet Sunshine"). Therefore, we venture this point. In Cogswell's re-invented aesthetic scheme of things ranging from the microcosm to the macrocosm, this yin/yang vision frequently results in his locating a proper place for even the tiniest or weakest object in a delicately balanced structure, one that he feels threatened imminently by the encroachment and invasion of society and technology (e.g., in the gently and ironically titled "The Winter Wonderland").

Furthermore, if one changes conceptual paradigms, the problem of emphasis becomes more transparent. Western metaphysics and poetics have privileged Side A (or the yang in the Chinese system: nearly every item on the left side) over Side B (yin), as Jacques Derrida, Helene Cixous, and A.C. Graham have persistently critiqued in different contexts.³ Cogswell's multiple speakers/personae need to understand and appreciate the balance of the yin and the yang; they also actively seek to

²We wish to thank the poet posthumously for his time and effort in locating them. The poet used the term "Taoism" in his time. Current academic standard use is "Daoism" and its variants such as "Daoist."

³Since the author of the *Lao Zi* (or the *Tao Te Ching*) reverses the yang/yin opposition in the foundational text, we think it is more appropriate to put the right column on the left, and vice versa. However, we keep the original order intact in order to preserve the original quotation.

redress already existing imbalances by stressing the yin side. Specifically, the speakers in his poems undergo a process of unlearning and learning anew, the woefully neglected importance of the right side in the complementary pairs: fire/ice, spring/winter, strong/weak, rock/water, and firmness/flexibility.

Cogswell the poet started to question the dualism and hence the will to contention inherent in the Christian Bible when he arrived at the monism and co-existential philosophy of Daoism. As early as 1959, the very title of his *Descent from Eden* already intimated the directions of his movement – a happy one, as we soon realize – into the post-lapsarian world; and nowhere is the initial shift of paradigm more apparent than in the poem “I Do Not Know What Eden’s Garden’s For”⁴:

I do not know what Eden’s garden’s for.
There life was sown in varied soils and seeds.
But once established, each new shoot made war
On all its neighbours as mere wicked weeds.
(*In Praise of Old Music*, shortened to *IPOOM*; 50)

In plain and direct language, the poetic thrust against biblical disharmony, aptly couched in a weeds/shoots metaphor, is straightforward. Two other features also stand out. First, what some Western theorists (e.g., Northrop Frye 1957, 152–53) take as a symbol of paradise – the Garden of Eden – Cogswell perceives as a spawning ground for conflict. Perceptively, he identifies the roots of the problem: the intolerance of one for the other and for the different; through images of “wicked weeds” and “war”, the Christian conflictual mode of living and thinking is poetically critiqued.⁵ Rather than following others who view and represent the biblical garden as a perfect, idyllic place, Cogswell re-evaluates it and re-casts it as under the shadow of “war”: wars to exclude and terminate the other/different. The poet’s aversion to the conflictual model enshrined in Christian mode of thinking by the Bible cannot be more obvious.

Hence, in very few words and apt metaphors of seeds and weeds, Cogswell turns the Garden of Eden into a powerful symbol for the Christian exclusionist vision of life; the Garden is critically re-presented as a site of constant contention, where and because the conflictual mode of existence and thinking looms dominant.

One may juxtapose this concise but paradigmatically profound piece with a considerably longer one on the yin and the yang. Here, a different way of treating the other is appealingly proposed. Because of its beautifully balanced structure and

⁴To present-day readers, some of the terms in the above paradigm may seem simplistic, fatuous, and even blatantly sexist in a long, 5000-word philosophical poem which is the *Tao Te Ching*; however, readers must make sufficient allowance for both the undeveloped Chinese theoretical discourse and different cultural sensibilities of some 2500 years ago, and for the almost always woeful inadequacy of translation. See Ellen Chen (1989), Michael Duke (1990), and Shaobo Xie (2009) respectively on Chinese-English translation across cultures.

⁵See J. Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1976) for the reversal of binary oppositions between culture and nature, and speech and writing (Part II); Helene Cixous’s “Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays” for her challenging of the establishment of a binary system in terms of the couple – man and woman: “action/passivity; sun/moon; culture/nature; day/night; father/mother; head/heart; intelligible/palpable; logos/pathos,” and so on. Cixous’s terms, with some possible exceptions, bear a striking resemblance to those used in the Daoist texts.

richly rewarding imagery of “eternal music” and “love-dance”, the poem deserves a full citation:

Yin-on-Yang
 If by some molecular miracle
 Matter concentrated the form and face
 Of beauty that in women most I love,
 I would look upon that handsome stranger
 For a space with pleasure, then pass her by
 As something static as a statue,
 One-dimensional as a photograph,
 And, unlike you, without a sharing heart.

What you mean to me, what I mean to you
 Is what we say, do, and feel together
 And the way these mesh, tangle, and dissolve
 As we learn from ever-changing nows
 That accommodate in complexity
 Memory, hope and being; a process
 That makes us join, inexplicably one,
 The eternal music of the spheres.

One on one, yin on yang, a beat that cries
 For partnership; by it are corners smoothed
 And opposites reconciled; by it we
 Unite with universal harmony
 Inside the timing of our own love-dance ...
 Where all life pulses to a symphony
 That needs paired movements to complete its score,
 Beware all those who will to waltz alone.
 (*As I See It*, henceforth *AIS* 1994, 62)⁶

With an explicit title, the poem invites, first of all, an analysis of its concretization and vivification process in terms of the yin/yang principle. The metaphysical nature of the yin/yang is powerfully bodied forth initially in matter (e.g., molecules), then in the beauty of human “forms and face”. But Cogswell immediately tears the veil away from such self-centered, self-complacent “beauty” as perched on the pedestal. Rather, by two skilful and natural metaphors of music and dance, Cogswell organically joins humans in their “paired movements” and “universal harmony”, all in dialogues, in potentially unifiable and harmonizing relations.

Thus, Cogswell’s grand vision of the universe, modelled on and suggested by the yin and yang paradigm/syntagm, ranges wide and far: from particles to humans, from music to dance. Cogswell refuses to surrender to versions of reality that deny the possibility of harmony and balance either in humanity or in the natural world. More importantly, in his re-conceptualized yin/yang aesthetics, dialogic human relations, polyphonic musical notes, and partner-minded dancing rhythms, are all subjected to or governed by the same harmonizing principle of the universe: the yin/yang principle of incessant interplay and interrelation leading to harmony and creativity.

⁶Timing may not be important in this case. For want of space, we leave interested readers to savour the two poems on monism, one in *A Long Apprenticeship* (80), another in *Meditations: 50 Sestinas* (30).

To appreciate Cogswell’s aesthetics, one can further explore the imagery of joining two persons as opposed to that of a single beauty standing still, alone and aloof. Not only do the vividly related images regard no boundaries across the human, spheric, acoustic, or cosmic levels, they are also intermingled and interwoven with images of “mesh” “tangle.” Thus, notions of companionship, sharing, togetherness, co-operation, and reconciliation are brought to life. Surely, Cogswell treasures beauty not as a static, never-changing, singular quality, but as the ability to cooperate and harmonize with others, and he elects to negate such aloof, statuesque “beauty” in any human form – including women. The warning at the end against dancing alone – a sort of verbal monologue transformed into self-centered, monologic physical actions – emphasizes the need for harmony and balance between or among partners and companions.

Furthermore, the poem’s neat and balanced structure seems to intimate the possibility of created or constructed harmonies and symmetries as well. Structurally, the cleverly duplicated eight lines in three octets each give one a solid sense of regularity, consistency, and symmetry; also, since each octave consists of lines of nearly equal lengths, the three building blocks, so to speak, of the carefully erected poetic edifice are microcosmically regular and neat. In doing this, the poet perhaps designs the poem as an epitome or exemplification of several aspects of the yin/yang tenor in the macrocosmic world: balance, beauty, symmetry, and harmony all combined; and all qualities are harmonized.

We do not mean to suggest that Cogswell’s poetic process of harmonizing and balancing can be an easy one, or one that can be completed once and for all. Indeed, he continually revisits this issue. There are, undoubtedly, moments of conflicts, of confusion, of near irreconcilability, and he honestly registers them. After all, the world as we know it is perhaps not that much in balance, at least temporarily:

Now When I See ...
 Now when I see conflicting ways
 Blur once clear roads of right and wrong
 I know how hard it is these days
 To compose a meaningful song.
 (AIS; 24)

In a move that somehow resembles the American poet, Robert Frost’s in “The Road not Taken”, a poem that thrives on ambiguity and uncertainty, Cogswell casts, metaphorically, difficult and different choices in the very figure of a road, but the image of “a meaningful song” joins “Now When I See ...” in the chorus initiated by “Yin-on-Yang” on euphony and harmony. Thus, the Canadian muse poetically and musically reminds us of the necessity of continued efforts at the balancing enterprise. In fact, the reaching for new equilibriums can never be “static” like that reified, aestheticized, and arrested image/statue of “beauty”; it should be kept going, forever, as George Woodcock has articulated so superbly:

On all planes, after all, the wonder and satisfaction of existence depend on the true balancing of the yin and the yang, the feminine and masculine principles: not the androgenous unity of the Angels, those impossible beings, or of Tiresias, the perfect wise man, but the everlasting interplay of the forces of life we all carry with us. Anything tending to assure that balance, to continue that interplay, ... must be welcome and fostered.
 (“Balancing the Yin and the Yang” 1992, 7)

7.3 Yin/Yang and the Reversal of Values/Situations

As demonstrated above, Cogswell perceives and poetizes the need for balance and harmony. But one should not take the ostensible requirements for balance at their face value, given that the poet grasps the spirit of yin/yang dynamics and is capable of redressing previous imbalances or of counter-balancing. In fact, the reversal of conventional values occurs, however subtly: Since the essence of Daoism lies in its female principle and in its strategic subversion and reversal of conventional or current over-emphases on the yang, Cogswell sets out to foreground and aestheticize the yin in a multitude of manifestations. As a result, there is much to be studied in Cogswell's complex and interrelated patterns of imagery and vision. We will focus on a key image of the yin in metonym – the water/air/tears, flowing or still, and interpret it in terms of the “weak” overcoming the strong, the soft outstripping the hard, the flexible (signs of life) conquering the rigid (indicators of death). In this sense, Cogswell goes beyond the need for balancing and harmonizing: he virtually creates an aesthetics that, in the Canadian context, runs opposite to conventional Western wisdom.

The poem, “The Water and the Rock,” wastes no time in couching the yang in images of hard and haughty rock, stones, and cup and the yin, in those of fluid and flexible water and air. The first two stanzas, each written in a triplet, give one the initial impression that the aptly universalized I-speaker is strong and standing firm, whereas the un-named, metaphorized “she” is weak and meek: just like water, like air.

Hard rock was I, and she was water flowing,
Over sharp stones of opposition going;
Shaping herself to me as to a cup,
She filled the valleys of my ego up

With a cool, smooth compliance, everywhere
As yielding and unhurt as air.

(“The Water and the Rock”, *A Long Apprenticeship*, henceforward ALA 38–39)

Upon close scrutiny, however, one comes to this realization: the illusion that the yin is submissive and compliant stems from the deceptive and disarming skills and powerful effect of the poem. A subtle reading will reveal something else, however: Cogswell undercuts the stout and strong yang images with a final quatrain, one that subtly – but with a vengeance – reverses the whole situation:

Soft was my love as water, and I forgot
In the calm wash of compliant rhythm caught
How water shapes and softens, sculpts and smooths
The channel of the rock through which it moves.

(ALA; 38–39)

One could interpret this poem in light of Freudian psychology or Western sexology and view it as dwelling on the oppositions between the fair, gentle, weaker sex and the sterner, rougher, stronger one on the human level. However, the poem, by employing images of shaping and sculpting, goes beyond mere sexual and/or social psychology and reaches a philosophical-artistic plateau. The masculine ego or

I-speaker (not necessarily male ego; a woman can also be yang – masculine – too, as in Carl Jung’s Daoist-influenced depth psychology) may be construed as a symbol for anyone aggressive, ego-centric, inflexible, and hard; however, the yin/yang scheme is more profound than that, since the archetypal water is nature-related. The rock stands then, literally and literarily, for anything strong, unyielding, and rigid on the physical level, as much as for such qualities on the abstract, metaphysical level. Ironically and paradoxically, at the end the rock is penetrated and eroded. Hence, the poem amounts to an unabashed affirmation of the feminine, the soft, and the flexible – all yin qualities, not the masculine, the hard, and the inflexible – all yang attributes. In this regard, one cannot resist citing a few lines from the *Tao Te Ching* to express the philosophical tenet and to connect the international Daoist intertextuality cross cultural boundaries:

Nothing in the world is as soft and weak as water,
Yet in corroding the firm and strong,
There is nothing which can surpass it.⁷
(the *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Ch’en 303)

One may also recall Daniel Overmyer’s encapsulating the preferences in the yin/yang theory for images of water, not rock; of the valley, not the mountain; of the female, not the male (1987). It becomes clear: Cogswell grasps fully well the main thrust of the yin/yang precedence (or in current parlance, and he sees quite clearly its hidden agenda) and poetically but powerfully accentuates and concretizes key yin images such as water. Another of his short poems would further illustrate this point:

A Commentary
Women do not hide their grief. It springs from their eyes.
Men keep in their tears.
Now I know what Blake meant when he wrote, Fear poison from standing water.
(*Watching an Eagle*, henceforth abbr. to *WAE*; 22)

The connection between William Blake and Daoism has been made by Arthur Waley, the world-renowned sinologist and translator⁸; but what intrigues us the most is Cogswell’s aesthetic choice of tears as a central image and his subtle and poetic questioning of patriarchal or masculinist values of being macho or tough. More importantly, the archetypal image of water bifurcates into the stagnant and stale on the one hand and the free and flowing on the other. In other words, in Cogswell’s re-constructed yin/yang scheme, the nuances and shades of water imagery as chiefly a yin element are further refined – indeed, fine tuned to the point of delicacy or even intricacy. Here, the stagnant, un-circulating, immobile water – what is kept in, not let out, by force and social restraints – is, according to William Blake, and now, Cogswell, harmful and poisonous, for not shedding tears does not necessarily mean

⁷Like Baudelaire (whose poems Cogswell translated) working on similar themes or topics (e.g., the cats, the hair) in different poetic forms or genres (the sonnet and prose poems), Cogswell reworks this Christian garden in “The Garden” (*A Long Apprenticeship* 59) with the same intent of questioning “God’s madmen.” Space restriction does not allow further demonstration.

⁸We wish to thank the poet for allowing us the privilege to read the poem before its publication.

strength or masculinity. Because of the subgenre of a commentary, the texture of this poem may not be as rich as that in “The Water and the Rock;” nonetheless, images of tears, water, and air are certainly concrete and vivid, simple and yet profound, and richly pregnant with yin/yang aesthetic meanings.

7.4 Unity/Fusion, and Balance in/of the Yin/Yang Eco-poetics and Aesthetics

Fred Cogswell’s ying/yang aesthetics has profound ecological implications textually and extra-textually. Throughout decades of philosophic-poetic practices in the yin/yang spirit, Cogswell has also developed into a masterful craftsman in constructing a neatly and elaborately balanced poetic universe that is more than a simulacrum of the extra-textual world. Indeed, his search for proper poetic forms leads to the sestina, and this particular form allows for the existence of a self-contained, self-sufficient verbal world that relies for its existence and vitality on the recyclicity, symmetry, and balance of key words and concepts. The salutary result is a reconstructed poetic world that serves as a microcosmic version of a well-balanced world, and that functions as an exemplar – nay, a possible new model or even ideal – to replace what seems to the poet’s critical-cum-aesthetic eye to be the chaotic and ugly contemporary world of dehumanizing technology and big corporations in an ecologically unbalanced world.

More specifically, Cogswell establishes an aesthetic world in which poetic forms and strategies of recirculation and juxtaposition both suggest and embody symmetries, balances, beauties, and unities. His fond form remains constantly and consistently the sestina; his oft-used devices are repetition and parallelism in words and phrases, and hence, consonance and assonance in euphonious sound effects. The poet has composed an unusually large number of sestinas, but typical of his creative use of the yin/yang (here chiefly manifested as the shaded/the lit, the soft/strong, the subdued/dazzling) theory in this challenging poetic form are two poems: “The Quiet Sunshine”, an early anthologized poem, and “Winter’s Wonderland”, another refreshingly new masterpiece.⁹

In “The Quiet Sunshine”, the emphasis on fusing the yin and the yang, as well as on the interpenetrating or symbiotic relationship of the two key elements, is evident in the first two stanzas:

The Quiet Sunshine ...

The quiet sunshine in the late afternoon touches the grey bark and bare buds as if they yet were clad in summer, gilding them above December snow. How these trees blend with dark green spruce and golden tamarack as I look at them through the west window.

⁹It is intriguing to note how some Chinese named themselves according to this Daoist principle. Chen Ruoshui (Chen Like Water; literal translation), a former professor in Asian literature studies, is an apt example.

Inside the same balance. By the window I am as calm as is the afternoon, in my own autumn, heedless of the rack and fury of an approaching winter. If sun-rays shone inside my brain, they would blend with light outside. No storm would stifle them.

(Inside the Poem 1992, 259–260)

The call for “blend[ing]” and “balance” occurs again and again, in part as a requisite of the sestina, in part because of the yin/yang prerogative of balancing and unification. In fact, as the flow of repeated words and phrases and the momentum of yin/yang unity and fusion continue to develop, the poet fully utilizes the formal features of sestina. Poetic diction such as “blend” and “balance”, repeated throughout the poem, highlights the yin/yang notion of unity, while words like “the grey dark” “calm”, “quiet” (all suggesting yin qualities) complement at every turn phrases like “rack and fury”, “storm” (both associated with the yang). Symmetry and balance are two remarkable features combined in an organic one; and synonyms or semantically related terms and concepts on both the yin and the yang sides circulate round and round, until they converge, at the poet’s command, into one organic whole, one unified, “seam” less universe in the last two sestets and the envoy:

It’s better only to be and not lend our sense to mere particulars that rack the brain with thought. Let the afternoon inside, outside, without a seam or hem—be all-engrossing. Let the west window vanish. Let there be no more need for if.

This now is beyond space and time, and if we lose ourselves inside that cosmic blend time and space will turn elastic, and oh, easeful to our souls which have borne the rack of the particulars that have dwarfed them, like window, tamarack, and afternoon.

If silent chords can sound through the window with no crack in thought, let us, here with them, blend in one instant like notes in one tune.

(Inside the Poem 1992, 259–260)

Both the imperative mood and its re-use four times convey a strong sense of urgency, immediacy, and humanity. Like chanting, like a lullaby, the latter part of the poem gathers force by repetition and by gentle persuasion. In particular, one detects Cogswell’s subtle but sure subversion of the biblical “Let . . . there be light”, because the Christian ideological and aesthetic fear and marginalization of the dark and the chaotic (the yin elements) seem all too blatant. His yin/yang universe embraces both the yin/yang elements and advocates an inclusive approach, as well as a non-confrontational manner. Like other poems discussed above, “The Quiet Sunshine” underscores the need for harmony in Cogswell’s favourite metaphors of songs, musical notes, or tunes. Everyone should sing and every note is significant, but a blending of multiple sounds into a melodious yet polyphonic song or tune makes for the beauty of his broad-minded and all-encompassing yin/yang aesthetics.

If “The Quiet Sunshine . . .” is more private and personal and tends to the natural and the cosmic, then the ironically titled “A Winter Wonderland”, with a powerful consonantal effect, and its precursor, “The Mill” (*The Bright Light Shines*, 38–39), bring into Cogswell’s philosophic-poetic purview the public and political, the local and the international. In this sense, the poet up-dates and extends the yin/yang theory in its global applications in the modern and contemporary world. For, in “The Quiet Sunshine . . .,” “universal harmony” is not yet jeopardized altogether, but in “A Winter Wonderland”, a deep and genuine sorrow evinces, only to be alleviated at the

end by a poetic vision with the yin/yang paradigm and dynamics as and at its backbone.

In fact, the wonder (if we may pre-empt ourselves or borrow from Cogswell and Woodcock) and grandeur of Cogswell's yin/yang aesthetic vision lie precisely in addressing urgent ecological and environmental concerns, with the balancing enterprise in the entire planet encapsulated and miniaturized in the microcosm of a poem. This project starts with Cogswell's relentless but poetic criticism of late twentieth-century civilization and its wanton destruction of nature's symmetrical beauties and delicate balances:

The world today is a white fairyland,
A palace where ice, exquisitely cold,
Reflects the blazonry of Winter sun
But to beleaguered bird and animal
Such beauty is starvation's kiss of death
That's deadly to earth's milder covenant.

Before this storm occurred, the covenant
We knew was one that space and time, unplanned
But traditional, had put in place. Death
And life, subject to less extremes of cold,
Were so balanced that bird and animal
Had a chance to survive for the season.

What happened to the trees was worse. Season
After season they had borne more lenient
Weights upon their limbs. In twin vices all
Resilience now was crushed. Fairyland
To most of them is this, buds wrung with cold
And overweighted boughs that snap in death.

Though aesthetically their splendid death
Is something we enjoy, gilded by a sun
So bright that viewers overlook the cold,
How can we not see the breach of covenant
In ravaged trees so deadly to our land
And in the deaths of bird and animal?

(The Trouble with Light)

Echoing his other poems, the thematic concern with balance persists, as the bell of a "milder covenant" – another and explicit way of articulating a balanced world – sounds out; the concept of a balanced brave new world reasserts itself, in different variations on the ancient but natural order and fine symmetry and balance in the universe. With equal consistency, the contrast continues between the yin/yang, as captured powerfully and contrapuntally in archetypal images of illusionary warmth and virtual cold, epitomized respectively by winter/ice/cold on the one hand, and sun/light/heat on the other. Again, beauty, the aesthetic object, is re-examined and redefined, as in his poem, "Yin-on-Yang". Here, beauty has to be wrought not for its own sake – Cogswell would demur to the tenet of "L'art pour L'art" of the French poets or the aestheticism of (a) Wilde – but for the symmetry, balance, and harmony of all forms of lives, animate and inanimate alike: trees, birds, animals, and human beings.

Equally worth exploring is Cogswell’s totalistic, wholistic, and organic aesthetics turned political artistry. He moves resolutely beyond the pure or narrow aesthetic realm and points his accusing finger at greed and grabbism of late capitalism. In his poetic world, just as the “gilded sun” seems to have deluded us about the bitter cold in the winter (as natural phenomena and as metaphors), so the white “palace” and “big corporation” might yet blind us to the industrialization, consumerism, and materialism that damage or destroy our environment and ecology with a speed unparalleled in history: a capitalistic speed that kills.¹⁰ In this connection, one finds – rather, feels – the rich and resounding resonance from his “The Mill”. Written some 30 years ago, it was apparently inspired by F.P. Grove’s *The Master of the Mill* with an apocalyptic vision, in which “the mill at Arbala” (*The Master of the Mill* 216), the completely white, clean – indeed, sterile (pun intended) – and automated but humanly cold (i.e., indifferent) palace is placed under a critical gaze recently proven Marxist.^{11,12,13} Hence, Cogswell’s “The Mill” already adumbrates the dichotomy or opposition between humanity and the machine, a highly relevant issue in this highly alienating high-tech age. Now, with the advent of the Green Peace movement and the ecological epoch, one marvels at the foresight of the yin/yang ecological system (cf. Chen 1989 xi; “The Vision of Peace in the *Tao Te Ching*”, 40–43), as well as at Cogswell’s early re-invention of it with an acute twentieth-to-twenty-first century sensitivity and specificity. There is little doubt that Cogswell’s yin/yang aesthetics must include politics, when he declares:

It’s deadly, too, in omens. This spectacle
 Paradigms an economic death
 To be seen in each organic land
 After corporations seize the sun
 Freeze gold to form a harsher covenant
 Which the poor endure, powerless and cold,

 A Winter wonderland, all white and cold
 And beautiful, held not in natural thrall
 But in an unnatural covenant
 Of light and frost. I shall not grieve its death
 But look with many for a milder sun
 That no one owns in a more human land.

 I will not include in my covenant
 The price of beauty in a sun-cold land
 That is death to bird, tree, and animal.
 (*The Trouble with Light*)

¹⁰ See his “Blake the Taoist” in *Madly Singing in the Mountains* for the Daoist connection.

¹¹ Interested readers may read Cogswell’s poems in *When the Right Light Shines* and *The Trouble with Light*, published by Borealis Press in Ottawa.

¹² See Rey Chow’s *Writing Diaspora* on the motif of speed under late capitalism (165–66, 170–79), and Fredric Jameson “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” on the speed of mass media images that changes our aesthetic sensitivities; see also Hugh MacLennan on the industrial society “galloping” to its own destruction.

¹³ See John Z. Ming Chen’s “Re-Reading Grove” in *Canadian Literature*, No. 147. Noteworthy are Chen’s thanks to Cogswell and the references to Grove’s life and to *The Master of the Mill*.

The speaker's unabashed siding with the poor and powerless in society, and with the weak and endangered species in nature, falls perfectly in line with the yin/yang scheme with its emphasis on counter-balancing, on paying special attention to the invisible, the hidden, the marginal(ized). Cogswell's recently expanded and refined aesthetics becomes part of his new politics, or vice versa, since he champions a new combination of "light and frost", a new balance in no other terms than those of natural imagery, natural order, and "organic land".

One notes, in particular, the emphatically repetitive, but not repetitious sentence structure (i.e., "I shall not . . ."; "I will not...") in the speaker's condemning to death the "unnatural covenant" and calling for "a milder sun" and for the establishment of "my covenant". Indeed, as in the bulk of Cogswell's other sestinas, repetition continues to be his effective poetic device: skilful and economical at other times in terms of poetics, but ecologically and environmentally significant and friendly this time. Why, one may ask, does the poet insist on employing the strategy of repetition and recycling, and of balancing and checking?

One should consider the ecology of the poetic universe and the economy of words. The poetic form of sestina as revamped by Cogswell envisions and constructs a verbal universe with exacting requirements for skilled verbal performance. That is, his sestinas are a universe built on re-used words (most notably six), recycled phrases and rhymes, and re-circulated or varied ideas or concepts such as beauty, unity, symmetry, and balance. All these we have by now partially experienced while reading "The Quiet Sunshine". In fact, the very act of recycling the old poetic form of sestina for contemporary use, not once, but many times, is of great ecological and environmental significance; and the poet has been working at the sestina tirelessly and with relish. Is he not, by precept and by example, trying to send us ecological messages? Is he not, by the use of repetition, tautology, recycling – indeed, by the deployment of the very form/medium of the poem as well, if we may alter the McLuhanian motto ever so little – exemplifying the spirit or zeitgeist of our age? Beauty to Cogswell, is balance; is symmetry of all forms of existing life; and is recircularity and recyclicity. We may thus venture a further point: the microcosmic world of his economical and ecological poems potently serves to illuminate on the macrocosms of the larger, real world. It is true that the poetic form is old and has been used by others; however, Cogswell's refreshing yin/yang eco-poetic vision gives the poetic form new life.

Indeed, in poems like "A Winter Wonderland", Cogswell's humanistic, ecological, and metaphysical concerns and imperatives all intermingle in a dense tapestry of well-knit images: of sun/cold, of humanity/nature, of man/machine, and of death/life. His words no longer remain mere words: they are made flesh and concrete in the extra-textual world; they are, in fact, aesthetic objects turned environmentally and ecologically useful. From this perspective, the beauty of Cogswell's sestinas is thus: things, like his words, are recyclable or re-usable; one should not take things too lightly – nor Cogswell's words too lightly. As Robert Gibbs points out, Cogswell "has maintained a broadly tolerant and humane stance" (1983, 133). Following the same concern for the human race and the environment, one also thinks, not so remotely, of Jeanne Perreault's wittily punning title, "Just Humanism" (ACCUTE

Newsletter Winter 1995). Therefore, Cogswell is no mere wordsmith, nor free player of the signifiers of the postmodern, poststructuralist or deconstructionist bent. His poems are “transparent” and referential. But we may insert something from a yin-yang perspective: Amidst – or more appropriately, against – the mainstream of postmodern, and self-reflexive writing, his poetic output might be viewed as an antidote, a new balancing move, just as the extremities of cold and sun in “A Winter Wonderland” need to be redressed.

Also typical of the yin/yang dynamics is the cautiously optimistic vision that is given flesh and blood by Cogswell. “A Winter Wonderland” ultimately ends on a sober yet ultimately forward-looking and tragic-happy note: the poet does not indulge in the morbidity of an elegy. Rather, he opts for a “new covenant”, a new vision of life in terms of re-balancing everything, and he vigorously champions such a cause by his environmentally friendly and ecologically aware poetry based on the yin/yang aesthetics. A new equilibrium is always already in order it is here that Northrop Frye’s assertion – “What may matter more, eventually, is what man [sic] can create in the face of the chaos he also creates” (Woodcock 1983, 283) – assumes an entirely new dimension of meaning in Cogswell’s newly introduced paradigm of the yin and the yang in Cogswell’s construction of a yin/yang aesthetics useful for Canadian, and by extension, North American environment.

A caveat or qualification is in order: By no means are ecological concerns raised only in recent years or even centuries, nor pursued by only Canadian poets such as Margaret Atwood and Earle Birney, and now, Cogswell. In Canada, as John Ming Chen puts it in *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers* (“Conclusion”, 2008), D.M.R. Bentley’s challenge to Northrop Frye’s notion of “terror of nature” and the “garrison mentality” is justified. There exists indeed a substantial body of Canadian nature poetry with ecological pursuits. However, Daoist nature poetry differs from the English Romantic poetry and Canadian ecological poetry, the latter of which D.M.R. Bentley has addressed admirably in his 1992 book. Of particular interest is “Section II Along the Line of Smoky Hills: The ecology of form in Canadian poetry” (15–42), just as is Chen’s duly appreciative observations on Bentley’s scathing re-evaluation of Northrop Frye’s misguided sense of “terror of nature” and notion of “garrison mentality” in Bentley’s “Rummagings, 5” (*Canadian Poetry* 58 [Spring/Summer 2006]).

Furthermore, the entire Daoist system is of such magnitude and grandeur as to warrant much more space. As the world’s leading scholars on Daoism have taken nearly 500 pages in a tome, *Daoism and Ecology* (2001) to broach the issue in the twenty-first century, it would be immature and over-reaching to lump together Daoist nature poems with English Romantic or lyric nature poetry, the Western pastoral or idyllic, or Canadian nature poetry as explored in D.M.R. Bentley’s 1992 book or his 2006 “Rummagings, 5” (*Canadian Poetry* 58, 5–9). The East’s and West’s respective epistemological, ontological, and cosmological, and poetic origins, concerns, and views remain fundamentally different and largely unexamined. Any meaningful, nuanced, and critical examination of the two philosophic-poetic traditions and their specific poetic expressions and visions in Fred Cogswell’s poetry requires multiple, separate papers.

7.5 Conclusion

The great men [sic] of letters have never created more than a single work, or rather have never done more than refract through various mediums an identical beauty which they bring into the world. –Marcel Proust (qtd in Halperin 121)

By re-inventing the non-conflictual, other/wise and other/minded yin/yang theory in his poetry, Fred Cogswell constantly urges upon us the relativity and, paradoxically, the necessity of the two sides in and of everything, the two sides in and of people, and the co-existence of humanity and nature to reach harmony and creativity. In the Canadian and global context, his yin/yang aesthetics would function, legitimately, as a complementary poetic discourse for or an alternative to the structuralism and poststructuralism that thrive on binary oppositions current for the last little while in Western dominant discourse. The case can be made because in Cogswell's poetic universe, things and objects such as the water and the rock, and the molecules appear in pairs; the strong and the weak, the visible or invisible are changeable and complementary; they take turns to be important. Likewise, his people – be they dancers or singers – are partners or companions, as in a waltz, in a choir or chorus; they are always aware of the other: they are not just self-centered or selfish in the manner of the power and property-hungry, and money-minded mighty corporations.

In addition, many of Cogswell's yin/yang-inspired sestinas construct a balanced and symmetrical world of words that poetically, politically, and economically (in both senses: relating to the economics of a society and recycling and sparing words) reflect upon the actual larger world in which we live; they constitute a microcosm that exemplifies the self-sufficient, self-contained, self-regulating, recycling, as well as recirculating yin/yang principles of environmentalism and ecology that make sustainable development possible. His is no mere Barthesian pleasure of the text: his pleasure derives from the verbal and phenomenal or material balance, symmetry, and unity. It is true that the objects and objectives of his poetic preoccupations are apparently and/or initially aesthetic, but these concerns converge on and eventually embrace the economic, social, and political. All in all, Cogswell's project is not a high modernist reworking of art as an ultimate end in and of itself for two reasons: because an ecological and environmental consciousness pervades his poetic corpus, and because he not only creates and affirms but also celebrates and advocates beauty, symmetry, and balance in the text and in our universe. If one may link poetry and aesthetics in a manner – a distinctively yin/yang one – that can re-use or appropriate what one's literary ancestors have articulated, the Keatsian prerogative would have to be modified forever in terms of balance/symmetry. The re-formulation might well be: beauty is balance/symmetry; balance/symmetry, beauty.

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Chapter 8

Jacques Derrida and Chuang Tzu: Some Analogies in Their Deconstructionist Discourse on Language and Truth

Taoism as a classical Chinese philosophy is well-known in the West, although it might still be new to compare Taoism and deconstruction. Philosophers such as Hegel, Jung, and Heidegger have discussed Taoism in their works. For instance, Hegel says in one of his lectures: “Ohne Namen ist Tao das Prinzip des Himmels und der Erde; mit dem Namen ist es die Mutter des Universums” (146). Jung wrote, “If we take *Tao* as the method or conscious way by which to unite what is separated, we have probably come quite close to the psychological content of the concept” and he acknowledged that in his technique he “had been unconsciously led along the secret way which for centuries has been the preoccupation of the best mind of [China]” (quoted in Chang 5). Heidegger wrote: “Das Leitwort im dichtenden Denken des Laotse lautet Tao und bedeutet “eigentlich” Weg. Weil man jedoch den Weg leicht nur äußerlich vorstellt als die Verbindungsstrecke zwischen zwei Orten, hat man in der Übereilung unser Wort “Weg” für ungeeignet befunden, das zu nennen, was Tao sagt. Man übersetzt Tao deshalb durch Vernunft, Geist, *Raison*, Sinn, Logos” (Heidegger, qtd. in Walf 5). Jacques Derrida’s theory and practice of deconstruction is built on assumptions which – as it will be argued in this article – can be found in Taoist philosophy. This notion can be exemplified with the opening statement of *The Tao Te Ching*:

Tao that can be spoken of,
Is not the Everlasting (ch’ang)’Tao.
Name that can be named,
Is not the Everlasting (ch’ang) name. (Chen 51)

This statement raises three fundamental issues. The first has to do with the concept of Truth. According to Lao Zi (Lao Tzu), the essence of Tao – similar to the Western ideas of God, Origin, Meaning, and Derrida’s “transcendental signified” – can hardly be defined or captured. Another issue concerns the arbitrariness and instability of language. The name that we use for Tao is nothing but a name; it can

Shaobo Xie and John Z. Ming Chen have contributed to this chapter, an essay previously published and re-printed with permission.

be changed; other words may serve to name it just as well. Still another relates to the status of the subject: whoever names the Tao does so from a necessarily subjective and temporary position; she/he is forever denied access to the objective, everlasting Tao. The above assertion was initially made by Lao Zi (571 B.C.), but it is Chuang Tzu, (also Zhuang Zi, 369–275 B.C.), the second master of Taoism, who carries the torch of scepticism and discusses at much greater length the problems of language and truth.¹ Based on these considerations, an inquiry into the writings of Derrida and Chuang Tzu will reveal that these two philosophers maintain many similar assumptions. Fully aware of language working against itself, the Chinese and the French thinkers take for their point of departure a highly sceptical stance towards all claims to truth. And both enjoy the textual free play which defies common-sense uses of language. Sceptical of man's efforts to discover Truth, Chuang Tzu argues that all discourses on Truth are movements of one biased system replacing another. Taking some cues from the first master, Chuang Tzu employs every resource of rhetoric to debunk the conventional propositions and values of his time. Perhaps the most vigorous force of Chuang Tzu's writing lies in the way it undermines the stability of language. He not only thinks that language is inadequate to describe the true Tao, but he deliberately uses words to mean the opposite of what they ordinarily mean, in order to reveal their self-contradictions. His chief device of rhetoric is paradox, which compels the reader to realize that "awareness of a truth outside the pale of ordinary logic," reduces "language to a gibbering inanity" (Watson 5).

In much the same manner, Derrida questions the fundamental propositions that have dominated Western metaphysics for over 2000 years. The whole logocentric philosophy since Plato, Derrida summarily declares, has taken for granted the correspondence between Reason and Truth. It defines Truth as a transcendental signified which is susceptible to Reason but exists outside the play of language. This transcendental signified has been given many different names such as Origin, Being, and God. Derrida argues that this transcendental signified is a myth. Each and every philosophy has claimed to discover Truth, and yet what actually happens is but a linked chain of substitutions of one discourse for another (cf. 1967a, 21–31).

Derrida's critique of logocentric thinking is based on his assumption that language, meaning, and thinking are all the sign of a sign. In a certain sense, Derrida's philosophy of the sign is contained in his favorite paradox that "*le signe est cette chose mal nommée*" (1967a, 31) There is no absolute identity between signifier and signified. In other words, the word can never be purely replaced by its referent; the referential relationship between word and meaning is always a temporary identification, which is to be displaced and supplemented endlessly. This phenomenon of

¹According to Lin Yutang's calculation, Zhuang Zi has written about 100,000 words, 20 times as many as Lao Tzu. Lin also describes the differences between Lao Tzu and Zhuang Zi in this way: "while Lao-tse [different spelling of the same name] spoke in aphorisms, Chuang-tse [Zhuang Zi] wrote long, discursive philosophical essays. While Lao-tse was all intuition, Chuang-tse was all intellect. Lao-tse smiled; Chuang-tse laughed; Lao-tse taught; Chuang-tse scoffed. Lao-tse spoke to the heart; Chuang-tse spoke to the mind..." (7).

“endless supplementarity,” in Christopher Norris’s words (1982, 32), is termed “*différance*” by Derrida:

The Gram as *différance* then is a structure and a movement no longer conceived on the basis of the opposition presence/absence. *Différance* is the systematic play of difference, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other. This spacing is the simultaneously active and passive ... production of the intervals without which the “full” terms would not signify, would not function. (1981, 27)

The term “spacing” is of key importance in this passage. It is what Fredric Jameson calls the “interrelationship” of words or signifiers. The meaning or the trace of meaning “is an effect produced by the interrelationship of material signifiers” (119). Spacing makes possible the signification of words in a text, but it always resists fixation and is to be ruptured and shaped afresh in endless alternation. Therefore, the meaning of a text is only a moment of *différance* -present absence.

With his theory of the sign of a sign, Derrida casts doubt upon Saussure’s structuralist theory of the sign and the signified. Derrida develops the notion of *différance* out of Saussure’s proposition that signifier and signified obtain their identity through their differences from all other signifiers and signifieds Norris 1982, 32). But Derrida takes the argument one step further, he calls in question the identifying relationship between signifier and signified (Latimar 175), and asserts that the sign derives its meaning not only through its differences from other signs, but also through the differences within itself. The sign carries an infinite number of alternative meanings. Therefore, the choosing of a particular meaning results in the absence of all other alternative meanings, and that chosen meaning is part of the presence or trace of the sign.² The absence of full presence “*étend à l’infini le champ et le jeu de la signification*” (Derrida 1967b, 411).

Derrida’s sceptical stance towards truth-claims recalls Chuang Tzu’s discourse on language and meaning, although Chuang Tzu does not make as systematic and microscopic an analysis of the sign as Derrida does. Chuang Tzu assumes that words cannot define Tao. Transcendentally immanent, Tao is the centre of everything, but “it is also exterior to them, above them and anterior to them; it is an autonomous reality in its own right” (Kaltenmark 87). Chuang Tzu’s concept of Tao mirrors the concept of the centered structure held by Western metaphysics, but he denies any possibility of capturing Tao in language as he argues, “Tao by its very nature can never be defined. Speech by its very nature cannot express the absolute... [The] perfect Tao cannot be given a name ... for the Tao which is manifest is not Tao. Speech which argues falls short of its aim” (Lin 1948b, 53–54). Here, the notion of the perfect Tao points to Derrida’s presence of meaning. Chuang Tzu pushes further his sceptical argument by saying that Tao cannot be affirmed. The name designated for Tao is merely an artifice for practical purpose: “While there are names and realities, you are in the presence of things. When there are no names and realities, you exist in the absence of things...In calling it the Way [Tao] we are only

²In his *Literary Theory*, Terry Eagleton pushes Derrida’s notion of the presence/absence of the sign to the moment when the concept of “I” (subjectivity) is also put in doubt. He writes: “Not only can I never be fully present to you, but I can never be fully present to myself either” (130).

adopting a temporary expedient” (Watson 293). Different schools of philosophy claim to know Tao, but each of them has only its own words about Tao rather than Tao itself. “Tao is obscured by our inadequate understanding and discourses are obscured by flowery expressions,” Chuang Tzu says, “Hence the affirmations and denials of the Confucian and Motsean Schools, each denying what the other affirms and affirming what the other denies, [and this] brings us only confusion” (Lin 1948b, 48). Two phrases need to be clarified in order to grasp Chuang Tzu’s deconstructive tendency. The first, “inadequate understanding,” does not presuppose that there is no adequate understanding *per se*; rather, it means that our understanding is inadequate in its larger context. The second, “flowery expressions,” is reminiscent of what are termed by Derrida as metaphors and metonymies for Truth. Chuang Tzu is close to Derrida in his belief that Reason only achieves self-authorized projections of itself rather than access to Truth. Schools of discourse betray “the force of a desire,” a desire to replace, to exclude the Other.

There exists another parallel in Chuang Tzu to Derrida’s metaphor of the linked chain of determinations of the mythical centre. Derrida deconstructs the centre from within the structure by seizing upon the contradiction the concept of centre entails. In order to govern the structure, the centre has to escape structurality, the relations of structural parts. Therefore, the centre exists, “paradoxalement, *dans* la structure et *hors de* la structure. Il est au centre de la totalité et pourtant, puisque le centre ne lui appartient pas, la totalité à *son centre ailleurs*” (1967b, 410). In other words, the centre is a myth, whose function is indispensable for writing.

Since the centre is only a functional myth, speaking or writing is doomed to undergo erasure. The self-effacing utterance does not simply negate the effect of meaning, but leaves it as a structure of difference. The necessity of writing under erasure is argued by Derrida as follows:

... la valeur d’archie transcendante doit faire éprouver sa nécessité avant de se laisser raturer elle-même. Le concept d’archie-trace doit faire droit et à cette nécessité et à cette rature. Il est en effet contradictoire et irrecevable dans la logique de l’identité. La trace n’est pas seulement la disparition de l’origine, elle veut dire ... que l’origine n’a même pas disparu, qu’elle n’a jamais été constituée qu’en retour par une non-origine, la trace, qui devient ainsi l’origine de l’origine. (1967b, 90)

Here, the “archie transcendante” and the “origine” both refer to the “transcendental signified” or the centre of an utterance; the non-origin and the “trace” are both different versions of the temporary result of the structure of difference. There is never the origin of meaning in an utterance, and what there is instead is a seeming effect or a self-effacing trace of meaning. Derrida’s centre as a temporal image is analogous to a spatial one in Chuang Tzu:

To diverge into disputation balances tile on tile and ties the cord in knots, chiseling phrases and hammering sentences to make the heart stray among questions about “the hard and the white,” ‘the same and the different,’ and fatuously admire useless propositions, do you deny it? – but Yang and Mo did that. (Graham 1981, 200)

Both Chuang Tzu and Derrida speak metaphorically of the increase of epistemological explorations aimed at grasping Truth. One describes the diachronical

movement; the other the synchronical accumulation. “The hard and the white” and “the same and the different” refer to concepts of categories of binary opposition. Chuang Tzu argues that conceptual distinctions will ultimately break down, because there is always a point where conceptual boundaries are not tolerated: “When the distinctions of true and false appeared,” he asserts, ‘then Tao lost its wholeness. And when Tao lost its wholeness, individual bias began’ (Lin 1948b, 44). The term “wholeness” is of crucial importance concerning the connection between Chuang Tzu and Derrida in their understanding of the sign. The wholeness of Tao is equivalent to the transcendental totality of meaning, and the notion of ‘individual bias’ echoes Derrida’s notion of the ‘trace’ of meaning. Chuang Tzu – although less explicitly than Derrida – pointed out that conceptual language based on binary oppositions can never close off the play of the signifying sign. The wholeness of Truth or Tao exists beyond any linguistic activity which invariably happens in time and place. If we substitute “Tao” for “centre,” then we can have Derrida speak for Chuang Tzu: “On ne peut déterminer [Tao] et épuiser la totalisation parce que le signe qui remplace [Tao], qui le *supplée*, qui en tient lieu en [Tao’s] absence, ce signe s’ajoute, vient en sus, en *supplément*” (1967b, 23).

Chuang Tzu thinks that meaning is ineffable, because what language says is undecidable. His awareness of the instability of language is affirmed by “Speech is intended to say something, only what it is intended to say cannot be determined. The words of arguments are all relative” (Lin 1948a, 48). Different speakers have different centres, hence they have different interpretations of words. Therefore, the signification of words becomes an endless process of supplementarity. The indeterminacy of the meanings of words makes Chuang Tzu utterly distrust language:

Men of the world who value the Way [Tao] all turn to books. But books are nothing more than words. Words have value; what is of value in words is meaning. Meaning has something it is pursuing, but the thing that it is pursuing cannot be put into words and handed down. The world values words and hands down books but, though the world values them, I do not think them worth valuing. (Chuang 152).

The sign as materialized consciousness always signifies a present absence: half of it is always absent; the other half is always not it (Derrida 1967a, xxxii). That is why Chuang Tzu says that what speech intends to convey cannot be determined. If words cannot capture meaning, then the words and their referents constitute a relationship of restless difference, hence the notion of *différance*. As the meanings of words are relative to time and place, they only signify an open-ended process of relativity.

The awareness of the bottomless relativity of meaning runs through the writings of both Derrida and Chuang Tzu. They both question the stability of all concepts and the validity of binary oppositions: “Le concept de signe,” as Derrida argues, “est déterminé par cette opposition: de part en part et a traverse la totalité de son histoire” (1967b, 412). Both Derrida and Chuang Tzu constantly push language to the moment when it can no longer tolerate categorical distinctions. And both remind us that conceptual polarities are convertible as they are ultimately complementary sides of the same thing.

The convertability of antinomies is by no means new to Western metaphysics. It has been one of the primary themes for philosophers such as Hegel and Marx. What is new in Derrida's treatment of it is his methodology. In Jameson's words:

Language as model! To rethink everything through once again in terms of linguistics! What is surprising, it would seem, is only that no one ever thought of doing so before; for of all elements of consciousness and of social life, language would appear to enjoy some ontological priority... [Structuralist] content – the organization and status of language – furnishes a new body of material in terms of which the old problems are raised in new and unforeseen ways. (1972, vii)

Although Jameson is not dwelling on Derrida's theory, he identifies in it the new paradigm. Derrida differs from conventional philosophers in that he treats philosophy as a microscopic analysis of language. Part of his strategy is to read every text closely, concentrating on a number of key terms whose significations threaten the logic of the text. To have a glimpse of Derrida's deconstructive textual practice, one can focus on the dismantling of some common binary oppositions: signifier and signified, nature and culture, writing and speech, etc. Derrida's textual commentary involves, as Norris puts it, "the dismantling of all those binary oppositions ... to the point where opposition itself – the very ground of dialectical reason – gives way to a process where opposites merge into a constant undecidable exchange of attributes" (1987, 35). Signifier and signified, for example, no sooner enter into opposition when they slip into an endless cycle of interchangeability. Since the transcendental signified can never be captured at all, the signified is always a signifier of the forever deferred signified. The opposition between the two sides of the sign is functionally necessary. The practice of translating messages from one language to another affirms the opposition; the infinite possibilities of translation of the same text problematize the opposition (Derrida 1981, 20).

In his essay "La structure, le signe et le jeu," Derrida dissolves the opposition between nature and culture. In representing Lévi-Strauss's definition of the nature/culture opposition, Derrida says that nature is what is "*universal et spontané*," while culture is what "*depend d'un système de normes ... pouvant ... varier d'une structure sociale à l'autre*" (1967b, 415). But this opposition breaks down, for instance, in the ease of incest prohibition, which is at once institutional and universal. In treating the nature/culture opposition, Derrida drives through to the point where the signifier can no longer be replaced, for this opposition ultimately finds itself erased. He seizes upon this moment of indecision and turns to question "*systematiquement et rigoureusement* l'histoire de ces concepts" (1967b, 416). One can never trace back to a pure moment which divides nature from culture; rather, there is ultimately a moment which is neither purely inhabited by nature nor culture. Humans, at whatever stage of social interaction, i.e. history, always live in a cultural context, for human nature is always culturally informed or instituted.

The best example of Derrida's textual practice is the undoing of the speech versus writing distinction. As Western metaphysics is phonocentric and it has always believed in the primacy of speech over writing – holding speech as self-presence – writing is considered as a supplementary inscription twice removed from meaning. According to Sanssurre, the spoke word is naturally related to the meaning in the

speaker's mind, while the written word is a sign of the spoken word. Derrida appropriates the notion of the "sign of the sign," extending it "to every kind of discourse, spoken language included" (Norris 1987, 85). Since the meaning of the sign is a result of difference, the imaginary self-presence of the sound is a signifier of the ineffable signified as well. Therefore the spoken word has no primacy over the written word in relation to meaning. Traditionally, writing is thought of as the material doubling of speech, but even this traditional view supports Derrida's subversion of the hierarchic order of speech and writing. "Si" écriture "signifie inscription et d'abord institution durable d'un signe (et c'est le seul noyau irréductible du concept d'écriture)," Derrida writes, "l'écriture en general couvre tout le champ des signes linguistiques... L'idée meme d'institution – done d'arbitraire du signe – est impensable avant la possibilité de l'écriture et hors de son horizon" (1967a, 65). What occurs at the first moment of language is not speech, but writing in general, archi-writing or proto-writing, of which speech is only a species. Both Rousseau and Levi-Strauss, in their discourses on speech and writing, always refer to the former as good and spontaneous and the latter as corrupt and institutional. But Derrida contends that writing in the sanctioned sense already exists in the so-called natural, primitive society, because language is already there. Language, whatever its form, is an institutionalized system of differences. Thus, Derrida's notion of writing violates its conventional definition. In much the same way, Chuang Tzu, in his writings, deconstructs binary oppositions. As "reversion is the action of Tao" (Lin 1948b, 207), no concept, no entity, has a stable status. Everything is a "synthesis of opposites, or what Hegel calls an "identity-in-difference." That is to say, "A is A, but at the same time A is not A" (Chang 32):

Emptiness and fullness alternate, and their relations are not fixed.... The succession of growth and decay, of increase and diminution, goes in a cycle, each end becoming a new beginning. In this sense only may we discuss the ways of truth and the principles of the universe. (Lin 1948b, 207)

The endless conversion of things and concepts makes it impossible to pin down anything of a determinate meaning, thus proving conventional thinking problematic.

Chuang Tzu's insight about the vulnerable binary oppositions is well expressed in his discussion on the question of origin and non-origin:

If there is a beginning, then there was a time before that beginning, and a time before the time which was before the time of that beginning. If there is being, there must have been non-being. And if—here was a time when non-being existed, then there must have been a time when even non-being did not exist. All of a sudden there is non-being. Could any one then really say whether it belongs to the category of being or of non-being? Even the very words I have just now uttered – I cannot determine whether they say something or not. (Lin 1948b, 52)

This passage brings to mind Derrida's discourse on origin. In commenting on Mallarmé's *mime*, Derrida elaborates Mallarmé's assumption that the question of "mimesis" or "origin" is a false one. We can never think back to the origin of a text, and what we have instead is "an endless series of inscriptions, a perpetual redoubling

of text upon text” so that the origin of mimesis is always lost beyond recall (Norris 1987, 50). Chuang Tzu has exactly the same notion of origin in his discourse on the priority of being or non-being. One cannot determine which of them exists at the “real” moment of origin, for one cannot define “origin.” What one performs is an endless backward movement of tracing the untraceable origin, hence the origin attained is perpetually a non-origin or a trace of the origin. The indeterminacy of the origin, as Chuang Tzu’s deconstructive logic evolves, effects the breaking down of the distinction between being and non-being. Chuang Tzu readdresses the problem of origin in discussing the crisis of the identity of the subject ‘I’:

In the process of change, [one] has become a thing [among other things], and [one] is merely waiting for some other change that [one] does not yet know about... What is more, we go around telling each other, I do this, I do that – but do we know that this “I” we talk about has any “I” to it? (Chuang 88)

This concept of the subject “I” strikingly coincides with Derrida’s notion of the subject as a structure of *différance*. The “I” as speaker is an ever changing process of fathomless unconsciousness; the “I” as the subject of the speaker is only a momentary, unreliable conscious part of the self. The “I” as a pronoun serves as a make-shift designation “for the ever-elusive subject” (Eagleton 168). Therefore, to resort to language is to be severed from the “real,” from the “inaccessible realm which is always beyond the reach of signification” (Eagleton 168). It is from such assumptions about language, origin, and identity that Chuang Tzu proceeds to deconstruct the concepts of binary opposition. Derrida’s deconstructive operation runs the same course as Chuang’s deconstruction on antinomies: juxtaposition, subversion, and transformation. One of the examples of this strategy is Chuang’s discussion on the relationship between “this” and “that”:

There is nothing which is not “this;” there is nothing which is not “that.” What cannot be seen by “that” (the other person) can be known by myself. Hence I say, “this” emanates from “that;” “that” also derives from “this.” This is the theory of the interdependence of “this” and “that.” (Lin 1948b, 49)

Here, language as a signifying system of signs seems no longer to have any referential relationship to reality. It is reduced to a floating structure of signification. “This” and “that” may share the same signified, hence the disappearance of the boundary between them as between signifier and signified in Derrida’s writing. The interdependence of “this” and “that” suggests that their identities derive from their intrinsic differences. Thus, language is condemned as self-contradictory or self-deconstructive in tending to articulate reference on the basis of binary oppositions.

The constant process of change does not tolerate determinate language with its metaphysical categories. “There is no end to the weighing of things,” Chuang Tzu says, “no stop to time, no constancy to the division of lots, no fixed rule to beginning and end,” (Chuang 177), and the determinacy of reference is a matter of circumstance. Difference is constant and absolute; identity is relative and temporary:

From the point of view of difference, if we regard a thing as big because there is a certain bigness to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not big. If we regard a thing as small because there is a certain smallness to it, then among the ten thousand

things there are none that are not small. If we know that heaven and earth are tiny grains and the tip of hair is a range of mountains, then we have perceived the law of difference. (Chuang 179)

What Chuang Tzu means here is that if we try to determine the identity of an object, we will constantly get caught in a moment of indecision, for that identity which we wish to delineate is a result of difference from all other things. According to this logic, the contradictory attributes of a certain thing compose its identity and, as differences are infinite, the fixed designation of utterance never signifies the thing in full. That is why and how the distinction between big and small breaks down.

In discussing the distinctions between noble and mean, few and many, Chuang Tzu further elaborates his notion of infinite supplementarity:

From the point of view of the Way [Tao], what is noble or what is mean? There are merely what are called endless changes. Do not hobble your will, or your will be departing far from the Way [Tao]! What is few and what is many? There are merely what are called boundless turnings. Do not strive to unify your actions, or you will be at sixes and sevens with the Way [Tao]! (Chuang 181)

To attempt to determine the boundaries of binary oppositions is to attempt to determine Tao, which, as the totalization of all those “changes” and “turnings,” is only a utopian ideal. The absolute Tao is incompatible with any claim to Truth or identity. Here, the endless “changes” and “turnings” resemble Derrida’s “ruptures” and “play” of the structure.

The comparative discussion of Chuang Tzu and Derrida, so far, has demonstrated their respective deconstructionist assumptions. Chuang Tzu assumes that there is a transcendental Tao, but its access is forever denied to language. Derrida claims that there is no transcendental Truth because it has never appeared in language. Their apparent difference in wording does not obscure their essential similarities. Actually, these two philosophers exchange positions because in their textual practice each seems to speak the other’s words. This exchange between Derrida and Chuang Tzu not only further emphasizes their substantial likeness, but, more importantly, reveals their respective inconsistencies.

Derrida, for example, alternately deconstructs and reinvokes the centre. His problematic situation is described by Jameson as follows:

Derrida’s own dilemma lies in the fact that he is himself part of that tradition, inextricably involved in its language and institutions, and condemned to the impossible situation ... of denouncing the metaphysic[s] of presence with words and terminology which, no sooner used, themselves solidify and become the instruments in the presentation of that illusion of presence which they were initially designed to dispel. (1972, 174)

As there is no escape from metaphysical language, Derrida must reinvoke the decentered centre and, in his textual practice, he never claims to have exorcized the centre. His allegorical readings of Plato, Rousseau, and Lévi-Strauss only manage to reveal himself tied back to the centre. This is because, in reading texts differently from their authorial intentions, Derrida has to base himself on a centre of his own, which can hold together his tropes and images, justifying his own choosing of meanings of the key terms in those writers’ texts. This kind of textual practice is

characteristic of “a double-dealer in language” as Abrams argues. In deconstructing logo-central language, Derrida “assumes the stance that his language works, that he can adequately understand what other speakers and writers mean, and that competent auditors and readers will adequately understand him” (Abrams 573).

To read or write competently is to read or write coherently. And coherence exists only in relation to a centre. Coherence of thoughts means words and concepts functioning in convergence upon that centre. One can unravel, as Derrida does, the elements of indecision in any text, but one always already has a centre in one’s own text whenever one begins to use language. Even the term “deconstruction,” already implies a kind of centre or coherence of thoughts. And this is especially true when the term is applied to the heterogeneous textual activities wide-spread in Europe and North America. Therefore, what Derrida does is to repeat the cycle of deconstructing the centre and reinvoking it. In textual practice, he falls back to Northrop Frye’s position. Frye assumes that “there is a centre of the order of words,” because “[unless] there is such a centre, there is nothing to prevent the analogies supplied by convention and genre from being an endless series of free associations” (Frye 118). Derrida’s inconsistency can be further examined with regard to his notion of meaning as a trace of that forever deferred signified. That notion seems to presuppose an origin or a totality of meaning as well. His formula that “the sign is that ill-named **thing**” not only stresses the infinite play of the sign, but also the insufficiency of language or consciousness. But how can one determine “insufficiency” if one has no idea of “totality”? As Wayne Booth argues, “a universal openness” in signification is well-nigh impossible (1988, 62–63). That is why Richard Rorty, when commenting on Derrida’s notion of “trace,” argues that “in developing this alternative, Derrida comes perilously close to slipping back into what he and Heidegger call “the tradition of onto-theology” (151). Derrida’s theory makes his readers suspicious of a kind of nostalgia for “the Ineffable,” for “what can be shown but not said, believed but not known” (Rorty 153).

In spite of this deficiency, Derrida, when compared with Chuang Tzu, allows for more room for textual free play: he does not create a new type of binary opposition in his terminology. Derrida employs a series of terms such as “trace,” “arche-writing,” “différance,” and “in fact quite a few other words” to describe his new concepts and new findings (cf. 1967, xv). One has the impression that Derrida even refuses to be bound by his own terminology, that he moves ahead, persistently and consistently, in his deconstructionist journey, approaching closer and closer to certain truths, if not the absolute ones. Each step is accompanied by some discovery, by something deconstructed. There seems to be no end in his deconstructive operations, nor falling into the trap of binary oppositions of his own coinage like Chuang Tzu’s Being and Non-Being and Origin and Non-Origin. Hence, Derrida’s deconstructive movement is progressive; his deconstructive method, thorough-going; and his deconstructive practice, fruitful.

By contrast, Chuang Tzu is caught up in his deconstructive logic. Trying to release himself from the prison-house of language, he deploys the cycle of deconstruction and reinvocation. Apparently, he begins the cyclical process from the other direction, for he acknowledges the ontological status of Tao before reducing it to a

myth. As Tao can never be determined, the name of Tao is not a real name, but a trace of that name. More importantly, the different meanings he assigns to "Tao" involve semantic contradictions. Tao is "Origin," "Being," and "Meaning," but it also means "Non-Origin," "Non-Being," and "Nothingness." As a result, new binary oppositions are established after the deconstruction of the old ones. Thus, in Chuang Tzu's philosophy, the world comes from Non-Origin, hence having no origin. By his cunning doubling in interpreting Tao, Chuang Tzu's Taoism becomes a kind of mysticism.

Just as Tao constantly alternates in these two incompatible clusterings of meanings, so Chuang Tzu oscillates between the unknowable Tao and the knowable Tao, between 'Fao as Nothingness and Tao as the generative Being. He deconstructs Tao when it is defined and invoked by other philosophers; he reinvokes it and defines it when he is writing on it. Every time he argues for the ineffability of Tao he is actually close to preaching about how to reach it. His notion of the futility of language and the indecidability of meaning is counterbalanced by his own prolific, enthusiastic textual practice. Both the phenomenal world and its conceptual simulacrum, Chuang Tzu thinks, are a restless process of change and reversing; but when he is criticizing other philosophers, he arrests the mobile process of signification. Hence, Chuang Tzu's double gestures problematize his theory and practice of deconstruction.

Deconstruction as it is championed by Derrida and Chuang Tzu reduces philosophy to a kind of writing which is not superior to other kinds of writing. It regards philosophy as the exercise of rhetoric 'that always insinuates its own workings into "truth claims" (Norris 1982, 49). It dismisses the history of truth as an onto-theology. It also exposes the inadequacy and instability of language. The fundamental difference between deconstruction and other discourses is that the former deconstructs Truth or meaning as a myth while reinvoking it as functional; the latter, more or less, take Truth in a spirit of faith. It is true that, to a certain degree, deconstruction is more self-conscious than useful, but this self-consciousness has seriously challenged our ideas about and habits of reading and thinking; when this self-consciousness becomes part of our consciousness, it changes our old ideas and habits altogether.

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Chapter 9

Conclusion

This monograph studies Malcolm Lowry, Fred Cogswell, Lo Fu, and Paul Yee in relation to newly constructed Canadian Daoist poetics and ethics in the global context. As a sort of a Daoist collective by philosophical, inter-literary, and cross-cultural associations, these writers have made specific and distinct contributions to globalized and globalizing Daoism as follows. In the first place, they have expanded the field of Daoist ecology by establishing an eco-poetics relevant to the modern, postmodern, high-tech age of “late capitalism”, to use Fredric Jameson’s term. They have also questioned the meanings of progress and civilization, critiqued Western Enlightenment notion of subjectivity and dualism, and addressed complex problems brought about by unplanned industrialization, aggravating environmental pollution, and deepening ecological imbalances.

Next, Lowry, Cogswell, Lo Fu, and Yee have affirmed and explored Daoist notions and principles of creativity or Daoist poetics, broadly conceived, in their varied practices from prose to poetry. These newly constructed Daoist notions and principles include, but are not limited to: spontaneity, simplicity, tranquility, harmony, balance, and non-action. Indeed, we venture to advance this: more than the Chinese writers or painters featured in Chang Chung-yuan’s *Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art, and Poetry* (1963), these Canadian writers or poets have practised and disseminated key Daoist ideas and principles of poetic or artistic creativity and spread them directly in the English-speaking world. In a rich variety of fiction and/or poetry over the past century and into this millennium, they have demonstrated a newly constructed Daoist poetics or aesthetics at work outside China.

Also constructed was a refreshing and hybrid Daoist and/or Confucian ethics of care, love, and compassion for the environment, and for Heaven, Earth, and humanity at large from a refreshingly shaped Daoist ontological and epistemological perspective. In particular, Lowry’s and Yee’s Daoist-feminist ethics re-visions and re-balances human relationships; it also challenges and even changes Western and Eastern patriarchal assumptions and practices. In Governor-General Award winner Paul Yee’s works of the past three decades or so, we have located and made explicit

the hidden or implicit ethical and moral value systems, which exist both in the lived Chinese Canadian experiences and in Chinese Canadian Daoist and Confucian discourses. Some words of caveat are due, though. Yee has not used the terms “Daoist” or “the yin/yang” in his creative writings, but the culture-specific social milieu and intellectual context constructed in his writings do allow us to draw our conclusions. However, as a historian by trade, he has covered religious Daoist icons and the yin/yang phenomena in his publications on Chinese Canadian history. In sum, he has put into a dialogic relation Christian, Daoist, and Confucian ethical philosophies and religions, thereby offering new possibilities of peaceful and harmonious co-existence for peoples of different and often diasporic cultures.

Another very unique Daoist poetics has also emerged in Canada. Cogswell’s and Lo Fu’s Daoist poetics thrive on the minimalist mode of expression and production, thereby leaving behind a poetics that gravitates towards, ultimately, non-word and suggestive silence, a poetics that can be properly termed a poetics of negativity—a poetics of the void or emptiness. This poetics differs from any similar Western notions such as those by John Keats, and it can be seen in other Canadian poets such as Fred Wah, to be covered in another volume.

Last but not least, all of these writers have contributed to the establishment of a newly fashioned Daoist theory, a theory in the postmodern sense as re-defined respectively by Jonathan Culler (1997, 2011) and Terry Eagleton (1983, 2008). This achievement may prove to be truly exciting and promising in terms of opening up a new field of investigation, for such a “literary critical” (Richard Lane 2013) mode of thinking cast in doubt commonsensical or conventional ideas, norms, and standards that have been taken for granted, especially in the West. Indeed, the importance of constructed Daoism as a theory can never be over-emphasized in literary and cultural studies in this age of globility.

By no means have we exhausted the study of the tremendous Daoist potentials for Canadian authors and critics, and there are still others from Canada to consider. For instance, Fred Cogswell will reappear in our next volume on Daoist aesthetics, politics, and perhaps most importantly for critically or theoretically-minded scholars, on Daoist theory and criticism. In fact, as a pioneer in Canadianized Daoist poetics and ethics, Fred Cogswell has definitely and directly inspired the younger generation, for Yue Ming Chen and John Z. Ming Chen have both been his disciples and produced many a Daoist pieces of creative writing. A number of prominent Canadian multi-cultural writers such as Fred Wah, SKY Lee, Joanne Arnott, Judy Fong Bates, and Larissa Lai, as well as preeminent Canadian critics and theorists (e.g., Northrop Frye, George Woodcock, W.H. New, and Sherrill Grace), will enter our purview in the ensuing volume.

Appendices

Appendix I: Key Published Daoist Books Reviewed

1.1 In the interest of serving the field of global Daoist studies from the literary and cross-cultural perspective, we have prepared this survey of published scholarship in English and Chinese and contextualized this first English-Canadian Daoist monography within the overall framework of our planned Daoist series. The latter is, arguably, the first of such an endeavour in the English-speaking world on philosophical and religious Daoism in relation to American and Canadian literature and criticism. There have been two precursors in this field that have covered a small portion of this literature, but far more work remains to be done. Chen's 2008 *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers* focuses on Asian-Canadian literature and poetics respecting philosophical Daoism in ten writers, while studying religious Daoism in three writers, SKY Lee, Wayson Choy, and Larissa Lai. In addition, Chen's work zeros in on several Chinese American writers, with observations on Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston, with passing comments on Ursula le Guin and Fredric Jameson in relation to Daoist utopian visions. Similarly, Chen's and Wei Li's 2011 monograph, *A Study of Canadian Social Realist Literature: Neo-Marxist, Confucian and Daoist Perspectives*, foregrounds the influence of philosophical Daoism on three Chinese Canadian writers, Paul Yee, Wayson Choy, and Lo Fu. The above-mentioned two monographs appear to be the most recent scholarship regarding Daoism and North American literature. We will discuss these works below and compare our proposed book with these two works and other relevant books.

1.2 Since our primary intended audience is college and university students and scholars in the arts, humanities, and social sciences in the English-speaking world, we will focus mainly on published scholarship in English. As far as monographs go, there are, strictly speaking, only two comparable book-length studies that focus exclusively or almost exclusively on philosophical and/or religious Daoism in connection with twentieth to twenty-first century North American literature and poetics and aesthetics by covering at least several writers and critics. They are both by the

two principal writers of this proposal. In fact, one of Chen's findings in his 2008 volume dovetail with Kohn's 2009 and Lai's 2008 respective calls for serious study of Daoism in relation to literature; however, Kohn and Lai apparently did not have the information about the publication of Chen's 2008 book at their disposal. While Kohn and Lai separately have not advocated any specific methodology for what would seem inevitably an inter-or multi-disciplinary or comparative study, our proposed book will take an approach that is, to an appreciable extent, similar to what Yue Daiyun, a world-renowned and senior comparatist of Beijing University (formerly Peking University), has characterized as "interdisciplinary literary study" (*Comparative Literature and China: Overseas Lectures by Yue Daiyun* 2004, 41). As is known in the field, much scholarship on religious or philosophical Daoism in relation to literature, poetics, film, and art has been published in journals of comparative literature/culture, in books of comparative cultural studies, and in books of a comparative nature on East-West poetics or hermeneutics involving Daoism; studies by Wai-lim Yip (Ye Weilian), Earle Miner, Yue Daiyun, Zhang Longxi, and Adrian Hsia come to mind immediately (see Works Cited and Referenced). However, these well-known literary critics or theorists have not examined Daoist poetics, aesthetics, and hermeneutics in relation to North American creative writers or critics as a whole over the last century or so. Following are comparisons of books that have direct bearing on our proposed Daoist book series.

2.1 Chen's 2008 *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers* as compared to the proposed book. In our research into published scholarship in the English-speaking world, we have found that Chen's 2008 book seems to be the very first monograph devoted entirely to the influence of Daoism in relation to North American writers – in this case, Asian-Canadian writers. Of all books to be compared below, Chen's shares the most affinities with our proposed book because of our express interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, literary, and poetic focus: globalized religious and philosophical Daoism in relation to literature and poetics in the context of North American literary, cultural, intellectual history.

In terms of approach or methodology in general, our proposed book is eclectic, open-minded, inclusive, pluralist, and open-ended. It will expand on Chen's interdisciplinary, comparative, cross-cultural, and literary approach by treating comprehensively American and Canadian writers and poetics on the one hand, and on the other hand, American and Canadian writers and critics and, where relevant, their related Chinese counterparts in translation; it will also insert an emphasized historical, cultural, and intellectual background that is relatively muted in Chen's 2008 book. As summarized by a group of seasoned Daoist specialists and teachers mainly from North America and Asia featured in Gary D. DeAngelis' and Warren G. Frisina's edited *Teaching the Daode jing* (DeAngelis and Frisina 2008a), a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary study of Daoism is necessary to gain as complete or comprehensive a view as possible on the many-faceted aspects of Daoism.

As for terminology, we will update and fine-tune all key Daoism-related terms based on current scholarship and use them in our text, and compile a user-friendly glossary of Chinese and English terms. However, we do not intend to compromise depth and scholarship: we will employ certain standardized terms already in use in

global Daoist studies in English and incorporate some new ones based on recent translations from Chinese into English. The latter include, for example, works of this millennium in particular, by Ryden (2003, 2008), Henricks (2000), Wu (2008), Miller (2003), Kohn (2009), Yuet Chau (2011), Jones (2010), Overmyer (2009), and Major et al. (2010).

We will strive for a clear, simple, user-friendly language throughout to explain even concepts and issues generally considered difficult, mystical, or occult. We will also provide historical, intellectual, geographical, and cultural background to Daoism and its developments and transformations during the process of globalization. Our scholarly apparatus will include the following: (1) numerous illustrations or photographs of Daoists in residence, Daoist temples and arts, and writers and critics influenced or inspired by globalized Daoism in North America; (2) charts and tables of literary, poetic, and creative Daoist characteristics and their developments over the centuries; (3) indexes of names in Chinese pinyin, Chinese characters, and English, as well as indexes of subjects and key Daoist terms in Chinese pinyin, Chinese characters, and English; (4) tables of references, motifs, images, and metaphors of literary, poetic, and aesthetic Daoism; (5) a detailed chronology of key literary, poetic, and cultural events relevant to Daoism in relation to North American literature and poetics – something absent from Chen’s (2008) monograph – somewhat after the fashion of the informative chronology in Kohn’s 2009 *Introducing Daoism*; (6) a section titled “study questions” attached to every chapter devoted to a specific creative writer or literary critic; (7) a section titled “further reading” attached to each chapter; (8) a nearly exhaustive bibliography, in English and Chinese, of globalized Daoism in relation to North American literature and poetics updated to October 2013 now, and to 2014–2015, the expected duration of our writing; and (9) a selection of a limited number of Daoist couplets, short poems, and brief prose pieces, in Chinese and English, by the authors of this proposed book, after the fashion of *Daoism and Ecology* (2001) with respect to Ursula le Guin.

As for the scope of study, the proposed interdisciplinary book will cover religious, philosophical, literary, aesthetic, and creative dimensions of Daoism in relation to the writing of creative writers and literary critics or theorists in both the United States and Canada. The number of writers and critics covered here will far exceed those examined in Chen’s (2008) book, which considers ten writers and critics. In our proposed book, to the Canadian coverage will be added 11 new creative writers and literary critics or theorists not yet examined by Chen’s (2008) monograph, including but not limited to: Malcolm Lowry, Northrop Frye, Fred Cogswell, George Woodcock, Paul Yee, John Z. Ming Chen, Winston Kam, Denise Chong, Judy Fong-Bates, Bing He, Ka Nin Chan, and possibly, Lien Chao (if more of her texts become available). Also notable in our proposed book is a new and major focus on religious Daoism in relation to Canadian literature and poetics.

In addition, as compared to Chen’s (2008) monograph on some 40 years of Asian-Canadian writing, an expanded period of Canadian literary, aesthetic, and intellectual history under the influence of Daoism will be covered to reach a hundred years in our proposed book. Added creative writers and literary critics include Malcolm Lowry, George Woodcock, Northrop Frye, and Fred Cogswell, among others.

Last but not least, a major expansion of the scope of Chen's (2008) monograph lies in religious and philosophical Daoism's influence on, or inspiration for, American literature and poetics over a hundred years or so. Some 50 American creative writers and literary critics will be systematically and historically examined, ranging from Pearl Buck, Lin Yutang, Eugene O'Neil, J.D. Salinger, Ursula le Guin, Fredric Jameson, Carolyn Kizer, Robert Bly, to Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, Carolyn Lau, and Ha Jin, to name but the most obvious.

The proposed Daoist book series will take into consideration the newly gained critical perspective and recent scholarship mentioned above in 1.2. Though there has been significant scholarship on the influence of Daoism on Eugene O'Neill, for instance, there is no full-length English study as yet in American literary criticism that can match the scope, depth, and focus of Chen's (2008) monograph in terms of Daoist study that compares critically and systematically some ten writers over a 40-year period.

In terms of current scholarship, in addition to what already exists in English (see the Bibliography below), we will make full use of a large volume of primary and secondary materials in both English and Chinese up-dated to October 2013. Needless to say, many recent, post-2005 major Chinese publications on Daoist philosophy, religion, aesthetics, and poetics remain unavailable in English. However, thanks to our bilingual ability, we will be able to take advantage of the bulk of them by translation, or by incorporating the gist of this recent scholarship into our proposed book.

Some necessarily incomplete data may be in order here regarding the reception of Chen's 2008 *The Influence of Daoism on Asian-Canadian Writers*. In Canada, it has been listed on Queen University Professor James Miller's international Daoist Studies website and on Ryerson University's Asian Heritage website, and collected by the University of British Columbia Library. It has also been reviewed positively by the *University of Toronto Quarterly* in 2010 (see Timothy Yu) and is currently used by Professor Ma Jia in the Department of Literature, Linguistics, and Languages at York University. In China, Jinan University Professor and Chair of English, Dr. Pu Ruoqian, has also included it for her undergraduate and graduate courses, as is the case with the English departments at Inner Mongolia University and Xiamen University, respectively. Information on the use of Chen's book in America or Britain has not been gathered.

2.2 Comparative comments about our proposed book and a recently published monograph – *A Study of Canadian Social Realist Literature: Neo-Marxist, Daoist, and Confucian Perspectives* (Hoh Hot, China: Inner Mongolia University Press, 2011, 552 pages).

Of all our books intended for an English-language market, *A Study of Canadian Social Realist Literature: Neo-Marxist, Daoist, and Confucian Perspective* is the second closest (after Chen's 2008 monograph) to our proposed book by virtue of six of its features:

1. its expressed, cross-cultural, interdisciplinary approach to Daoism in relation to literature, aesthetics, politics, and poetics;

2. its updated scholarship on Daoist developments in Canadian literature, aesthetics, and poetics since Chen's (2008) monograph mentioned in 2.1. (Note: our proposed book discusses a few Asian-Canadian writers and critics not previously covered in Chen's book, namely Paul Yee, Wayson Choy, and Lo Fu – a Nobel Prize for Literature nominee);
3. its Neo-Marxist, Confucian, and Daoist approaches and its two glossaries – one on Marxism's relation to the literature and the arts and the other on Daoism's relation;
4. its detailed and updated bibliography;
5. its interdisciplinary, comparative, and cross-cultural contents that focus on philosophical Daoism in relation to literature, politics, aesthetics, and poetics; and
6. its Afterword.

Although these six features distinguish our proposed book from both Chen's 2008 monograph and Chen's and Wei's 2011 co-authored work, our earlier works have prepared us for our new undertaking. Our proposed book will involve a study of religious and philosophical Daoism in relation to Daoist politics, aesthetics, ethics, and poetics in the context of American and Canadian literature and criticism. Chen's and Wei's 2001 monograph can likewise provide an extended glossary of Marxist and neo-Marxist terms, and a chronology of key events over a hundred years of Canadian literary, socio-political, and intellectual history. Chen's and Wei's three-pronged critical perspective has also paved the way for the proposed book. Confucianism, Daoism, and Maoist Marxism have been recently coexisting in China, and this unique phenomenon has filtered down into the writings of Chinese immigrant or diasporic writers in North America.

There are also several additional differences between Chen's and Wei's 2011 monograph and our proposed book. The focus on religious Daoism in relation to North-American literature, criticism, and poetics will be vastly expanded. (Since the 2010 publication of *A Study of the History of Religious Daoist Aesthetics* [translation ours] by Tang Xianyi and others, much light has been shed on Daoist aesthetics, and our proposed book can benefit from this ground-breaking work.) Our proposed book will also cover the entire history of North-American, Daoist-inflected literature and criticism in four main genres – nonfiction, poetry, fiction, and drama – and this is a study no scholars have yet attempted yet. Nearly all key aspects of religious and philosophical Daoist life and principles in relation to literary creation and criticism as re-invented or constructed in America and Canada will be included. The dialogic fusion of a variety of Western literary and critical theories with their Chinese counterparts will be the basis of our theoretical approach. Our discussion will include Chinese writers and critics in new literary or cultural exchanges with their North American kindred spirits. It will also include diagrams, charts, and tables that can help to make cultural sense of North-Americanized Daoism in a comprehensive way. There will likewise be tabulations of key aesthetic and literary features of religious and philosophical Daoism as constructed in North-American literature and criticism. Our "further reading lists," our summaries of key points, and our questions pertinent to each chapter are also new. We have thus tried to

include all information needed to make our proposed work “most compelling for [our] ideal reader.”

In short, the above-mentioned two books by Chen (2008) and by Chen and Wei (2011, 2012) seem to offer the broadest discussions of Daoist-reflected North-American literature and criticism. There are also other scholarly works on Daoism in relation to individual North-American authors such as Robinson’s *Eugene O’Neill and Oriental Thought* (1982), which is a study of O’Neill’s constructed Daoism, and Yip’s *Diffusion of Differences* (1993), which discusses Anglo-American poetry under the influence of Daoism during the modernist period. No full-length academic monograph has attempted to accomplish what we are proposing to do.

Generally speaking, certain books in our intended market have conducted at least partial studies of aspects of Daoism in relation to literature, literary criticism, arts, and music; they have also played a vital role in shaping literary taste and establishing a pluralistic mind-set among our expected audience. Some comparisons with them would therefore be of value and would help to define our relevant research in this area. Our comments below are not meant to be exhaustive, however, since book reviews have already performed a large part of this task; our interdisciplinary or comparative comments will be confined to aspects of Daoism in related to literature and literary criticism as well as to poetics, ethics, aesthetics, and politics.

2.3 Kohn and Roth have edited *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual* (2003). This 392-page collection of essays constructs a convincing Daoist identity by expanding on Hans Mol’s definition of identity developed from psychologist Erik Erikson. With respect to our proposed book, this volume provides a sensitive and illuminating essay by Suzanne Cahill on the Tang poetess Yu Xuanji. Cahill has ably shown that a Daoist identity can be established by the study of Yu Xuanji’s poetry alone, with or without reference to her life as a Daoist priest or nun. In a similar vein, other works on Daoism in the Tang Dynasty include Kohn (2000a, b) and Barrett (1996). Since our proposed book will include American writers (e.g., Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Ha Jin) and Canadian writers (e.g., Fred Wah, Larissa Lai, Rita Wong, Lidia Kwa, and Yue Ming Chen) who have all discussed Tang Dynasty Daoist themes, the scholarly works by Kohn, Cahill, and Barrett will prove helpful and enlightening.

2.4 Kroll’s *Studies in Medieval Taoism and the Poetry of Li Po* (2009) is a 374-page collection of previously published essays with a new long critical introduction. It offers a sensitive discussion of Li Bai (Li Po formerly) as a Daoist – Li Bai being one of the greatest Tang Dynasty poets. Kroll’s book, which does not deal with North American literature and criticism, is thus of value to our study of Daoist-inflected North-American poetry.

2.5 N.J. Girardot, James Miller, and Liu Xiaogan’s edited *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape* (2001) is a 476-page *magnum opus* by a multidisciplinary group of renowned Daoist scholars and a model for others to follow for many years to come. The ecological perspective is also appealing to readers, and the chapter by Jonathan R. Herman on Ursula le Guin’s creative work sheds particular light on certain ecological topics in our proposed project. This book, however, does not treat Daoism with North-American literature and criticism as its focus. It should

be further noted that Chen's 2008 monograph cites from and comments on this book as does the essay co-authored by Wei and Chen on Fred Cogswell's yin/yang aesthetics concerning ecological balance and environmentalism.

2.6 Jameson's 431-page *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Scientific Fictions* (2005) includes three chapters about Ursula Le Guin's science fiction in relation to Daoist strategies and utopian visions. Among other things, Jameson demonstrates that Daoism can lend itself to both new thinking about Western utopian ideas (e.g. Marxist ideals) and re-conceptualizing what global life would be like under Daoism. Unlike our proposed study, Jameson's book does not concentrate on Daoism in relation to North-American literature and criticism as a whole. Professor Wei Li's guest lecture on Daoist poetics in North-American literature and criticism (given in the Department of English, the University of British Columbia, Canada, in November, 2012) discusses this limitation in Jameson's work.

2.7 Peipei Qiu's 248-page *Basho and the Dao: the Zhuangzi and the Transformation of Haikai* (2005) focuses on the cross-cultural Daoist literary and philosophical relationships between Zhuangzi (a Chinese philosopher) and Basho (a key Japanese literary figure); it also sheds new light on Daoism's influence on North-American poets through Basho's reconstructed Daoist poetic and philosophical discourse. Qiu's discussion, however, is limited to the genre of poetry and even then does not account for several North-American, Daoist traditions within that genre.

2.8 Stalling's *The Poetics of Emptiness* (2010) focuses on one aspect of Buddhist and Daoist poetics – emptiness. Stalling examines a Daoist-inspired, Korean-American poet, the Daoist models of Wai-lim Yip, and several Buddhist-inflected writers. He reassesses the traditional, Chinese, Daoist school of critical interpretation (including the work of James J.Y. Liu) and advances his own “hetero-cultural” model. This newly-fashioned model is designed to replace ones that are “multi-cultural,” “inter-cultural,” or “cross-cultural” in orientation. While offering insights into the Buddho-Daoist poetics of emptiness, Stalling thus challenges certain Westernized ways of interpreting Chinese poetics. His study of an aspect of poetics differs greatly from our proposed book in its critical approach and in the limited scope of its subject.

2.9 Chang Chung-yuan's 1970 *Creativity and Taoism* (241-pages) is a multidisciplinary study of philosophical Daoism in relation to classical Chinese literature and the arts. It broke new ground in its time and provided much insight into Daoist metaphysics and aesthetics in Chinese literature and paintings. As a result of the revived interest in globalizing Daoism, Chang's trail-blazer was reissued in 2011 without revision. It does not cover Daoism in relation to North-American literature and criticism as we intend to.

2.10 Zhang Longxi's *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West* (1992) can be compared to the proposed book. Zhang's ground-breaking book compares the discourse of the Tao in its Chinese hermeneutical context with the discourse of the Logos in its European hermeneutical context. This study is developed, in part, from an article published in Chinese nearly 10 years earlier, and it

draws many insights from the erudite, Chinese comparatist Qian Zhongshu. A well-balanced study of mainly classical Daoist (Taoist) and Chan/Zen traditions and European logocentric literary traditions in several European literatures (e.g., English, German, French), Zhang's book does not focus either on religious Daoism or on the entire history of North-American literary Daoism in four major genres of writing. It therefore differs from our proposed book, which promises to cover these missing parts.

2.11 Zhang Longxi's *Unexpected Affinities: Reading Across Cultures* (2007) can also be compared to our proposed book. Based on four Massey lectures given at the University of Toronto, Zhang's slim volume of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural study champions the discourse of similarity-in-difference as opposed to the discourse of difference prevalent in current Western academic circles. It offers multiple "unexpected affinities" between European and Chinese literary-cultural strategies, themes, and concerns; and it argues for a cross-cultural compatibility and fusion of similarities (including the yin/yang paradigm) from the East and West. Whereas Zhang's work does not focus on Daoism in relation to North-American literature and criticism, whether mainstream or multicultural, ours will.

2.12 Zhang Longxi's edited *The Concept of Humanity in an Age of Globalization* (2012) is relevant to our proposed book. In Zhang's Introduction to his book and in Chapter 12 on certain Confucian concepts of humanity and humanism in Chinese history, Zhang considers these Confucian concepts as "compatible" with certain Western ones. As Daoism's other, Confucianism does occupy an important place in our proposed book. Viewed in this light, Zhang's two 2012 pieces survey and update the scholarship in Confucian and other humanities studies. These studies can also benefit our comparative scrutiny of Daoist and Confucian philosophies as dialogic forces in mutually respectful conversations with their Western counterparts. Our proposed book will incorporate certain insights from Zhang's freshly-edited collection, and it will examine North American Daoist-inflected literary texts and cultural contexts in conjunction with Confucian principles and literary-cultural visions.

2.13 Tseen Khoo and Kam Louie's 313-page edited *Culture, Identity, and Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English* (2005) has ideas that can be used in our proposed book. A collection of essays published previously with a new critical introduction, this book focuses on diasporic, Chinese literatures and cultures in several countries. It embraces interdisciplinary, literary, and cross-cultural themes and perspectives, and heavily employs Western critical theory. It also contains a chapter by co-editor Kam Louie on Chinese-Australian writer Brian Castro's appropriation of a strand of Daoist thought on longevity culture. This same chapter also discusses Castro's use of religious, Daoist elements relating to the deified Laozi in order to satirize Orientalist, Western dichotomies. But no North-American Daoist writers or critics are covered as we would do in our proposed book.

2.14 Adrian Hsia's edited *TAO: Reception in East and West* (1994) will be useful. Hsia's edited, 310-page collection of essays is based on papers delivered at an international symposium by the same title at McGill University, Canada, in 1993. All invited speakers had previously published on aspects of Dao ("the soul of Chinese metaphysics," according to the blurb) and were emerging or well-established

scholars in the field of Daoism. The collection is an interdisciplinary trail-blazer in the study of the influence of philosophical Daoism on literature, metaphysics, and poetics. It also discusses the spread and construction of philosophical Daoism in North America, Europe, and Asia. Several essays, including one by John Z. Ming Chen on Malcolm Lowry's Daoist aesthetics, focus on philosophical Daoism's influence either on creative writers or on Western poetics. The rest, in German, French, and English, mainly perform exegetic, hermeneutical, and translating tasks on the *Daodejing* or the *Zhuangzi*. They compare philosophical Daoist themes with themes found in the major works of Western philosophers like Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger.

Our proposed book can benefit from the various points of views regarding how philosophical Daoism has been constructed in non-Chinese literatures and cultures. Because the collection features a wide range of literary or philosophical comparativists or theorists of Daoism, it has the assured merit of multidisciplinary and cross-cultural literary study with multiple insights. By the same token, however, it lacks an overall philosophical or literary scheme of things that unifies the separate essays. There is another noteworthy Daoist aspect, though. The collection attaches to its end an original Chinese text of the *Daodejing* as an appendix. This is meant to be read vertically, from right to left, and from back to front, in the traditional Chinese way still prevalent in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other Chinese diasporas in the world. The strategic move challenges readers' way of thinking and reading, and evokes Daoist images, metaphors, and modes of return as reversal or renewal.

Our proposed book will differ from Hsia's edited collection of essays markedly in at least six aspects: (1) the much large number of North-American creative writers and literary critics to be covered; (2) the multiple religious Daoist elements in relation to North-American literature to be examined; (3) Daoist scholarship updated to 2012 and newly gained perspectives and critical consensus; (4) seven scholarly apparatuses promised above in 2.1; (5) the combination of current Western and Chinese critical and aesthetic theories; and (6) an entire North American Daoist literary history with a comprehensive study of constructed and holistic Daoist aesthetics, politics, ethics, and poetics we intend to establish. In brief, there will be practically no overlapping between Hsia's edited collection of essays and our proposed book. Since this collection is of significance to philosophical Daoism in relation to literary and cross-cultural studies globally, and since it includes an essay by Chen on Malcolm Lowry's Daoist Aesthetics of return as reversal/renewal, we have attached its electronic advertisement for your easy reference.

2.15 Kohn's edited 914-page *Daoism Handbook* (2000) will help our proposed book. An impressive and encyclopaedic masterpiece published at the turn of the millennium, this multidisciplinary book, which has been edited by a leading scholar in religious Daoism, offers much-needed Daoist scholarship. Many of the chapters raised important issues some 13 years ago and developed later into separate books. Notably, this 2000 tome provides two chapters on Daoist art and musical rituals respectively. This focus bears upon the interrelationship between globalized Daoism and the arts, and can benefit our proposed book. Chen's and Wei's essay published in 2010 cited Kohn's 2000 work. No attempts, however, are made in Kohn's edited

book at a systematic and historical study of North-Americanized Daoism in literature and criticism, and we intend to rectify the deficiency.

2.16 Wai-lim Yip's *Diffusion of Distances: Dialogues Between Chinese and Western Poetics* (1993) has certain things in common with our proposed book. An obvious attempt to bridge the gap between contemporary Western and classical Chinese literary theories by embracing both traditions in his discussion of Daoist and Chan/Zen aesthetics and poetics, Yip's book not only opens up a new field but also provides a new model for inter-literary, cross-cultural, comparative studies (see especially Chapter 2, Chapter 4, and the Epilogue). But the bulk of Yip's book is focused on classical, Chinese, Daoist, and Buddhist poetics, on modernist American poetry, and on modernist, Chinese poetry. It also treats philosophical Daoism in relation to Western culture in general. Religious Daoism in relation to North-American literature and literary Daoism in other non-poetic genres are not considered. Our proposed book will fill in many gaps.

2.17 Youru Wang's *Linguistic Strategies in Daoist Zhuangzi and Chan Buddhism: the Other Way of Speaking* (2003, 251 pgs) brings the theories of Derrida, Foucault, and other Western "deconstructionist" thinkers to bear upon Wang's re-reading of Daoist Zhuangzi and certain Buddhist texts. Its focus is philosophical and linguistic while offering insight into aspects of Daoist and Chan/Zen poetics. It does not cover the construction of religious and philosophical Daoism over the last century or so by North-American writers – a mission we intend to undertake.

2.18 Liu's (1975) *Chinese Theories of Literature* (197 pgs) was a pioneering success when it introduced Chinese literary theories to the English-speaking world. Subsequent sinologists and students of Chinese literature in English have all been indebted to it, especially Cai (2004) and Stalling (2010), who responded to Liu's work through acts of redefining, refining, and expansion. In Liu's work, Daoist philosophical-literary theory is categorized as "metaphysical" and discussed in the longest chapter (pp. 16–62); his book also makes comparative comments on Western literary theory and stakes out a needed theoretical background for our comparison of Chinese and Western literary theories. Liu's theories, however, do not qualify as "theory" as this term is currently understood; and they are not what we have relied on in our proposal in order to update Daoist scholarship. We will also include the North-American construction of religious and philosophical Daoism in four genres – a task unknown to Liu in his time when thematic, essentialist, and expressive approaches held sway.

2.19 Although Cai Zong-qi's 2002 *Configurations of Comparative Poetics: Three Perspectives on Western and Chinese Literary Criticism* is somewhat like Liu's (1975) theoretical book on Chinese and Western poetics, Cai takes a comparative approach to Western and Chinese literary criticism and uses some current Western critical parlance (including that of Derrida). Cai's work is also an updated version of microcosmic and macrocosmic Daoist cosmology in relation to literature. Like Pauline Yu and other scholars in Chinese literature, Cai grounds classical Chinese literature and criticism on Chinese cosmologies; he argues that ultimately the world vision of a poet's or writer's work is based on – or can be traced to – a certain religious or philosophical grounding in a certain culture. But, unlike several compara-

tive works by Zhang Longxi that emphasize similarities and commensurability across the cultures of East and West, Cai's work underlines literary and cultural differences while absolutely repudiating the superiority of one cosmological paradigm over the other. Cai's work, it should be noted, does not discuss North-American literature and criticism.

2.20 Cai Zong-qi edited *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties* (2004) – a collection of essays by specialists in the field of classical Chinese literary and philosophical studies. Some essays reconstruct schools of Daoist or neo-Daoist thought by the literati in response to Buddhist teachings in the Six Dynasties. Although these essays would be of relevance to our proposed project, this collection does not cover constructed Daoism in North-American literature and criticism.

2.21 Miner's *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature* (1990) is, like James Liu's book, an early work written from an East-West comparative perspective. While offering many insights, it is relatively long on Japanese genres and poetics and short on Chinese ones. It does not use current literary theory in the sense of Jonathan Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (2011, 2nd edition) or Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (2008; 25th anniversary edition). Nor does it deal with Daoism's transformations in North-American literature and criticism.

2.22 Yue Daiyun's (2004) *Comparative Literature and China – Overseas Lectures by Yue Daiyun* is a 512-page collection of essays and speeches by a leading, second-generation Chinese comparatist at Beijing University. Mostly translated from the original Chinese, many seminal essays focus on Daoist and Chan/Zen philosophical-literary tropes and on themes in the fields of comparative literature or comparative culture. Yue focuses on Chinese culture after the political and academic thaw that followed the 10-year Cultural Revolution in the 1960s–1970s. Her book provides much information and many insights about a field related to the one in our proposed book, but it does not cover American or Canadian Daoist-inflected intellectual and literary history or the study of four genres in relation to Daoist constructions. We are ready to make a difference here.

2.23 Gray's *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (2002, 246 p) takes its central image, "straw dogs," from a line in the *Daodejing* about an object used and then cast away in sacrificial ceremonies. Gray, a very senior British philosopher, critiques long-held, Western humanist views (e.g., Platonic, Marxist) on humans and animals from a philosophical Daoist perspective and advocates new, post-humanist, non-conquering relationships between humanity and animals. The book also holds interdisciplinary significance for the study of art, poetry, and the frontiers of science; it can also provide additional background to the globalization of Daoism. However, it is not a study of North-American Daoist literature and criticism as a whole, and our proposed book would be.

2.24 Gray's 2007 *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* features a 243-page discussion of the tropes of religious apocalypse and utopia in modern times. Although written from Gray's Daoist perspective, it refers directly to Taoism twice (pp. 193 and 206). Its pessimistic tone seems at odd with the sanguine

conclusions of such other studies as Jameson's (2005) referred to above and Lyman Tower Sargent's *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, Oxford, 2010, 145p). Both Jameson and Sargent see the hopeful potential for the trope of utopias, including the Daoist ones. Nonetheless, the book by Gray, with many modern examples of dystopia (ranging from the Nazi regime, to the former Soviet Union to Mao's China) can serve as an antidote to our optimistic appreciation of Daoist utopianism. Gray's book does not cover North Americanized Daoist utopias in literature, but ours will of necessity.

2.25 Binghai Li's (李炳海) 1993 *Daoism and Daoist Literature* (translation ours; Chinese original: 《道家与道家文学》) is a nationally acclaimed, prize-winning interdisciplinary monograph. Surveying 2,500 years of Daoism's literary and critical transformations, Li's 434-page watershed study focuses chiefly on philosophical Daoism and partly on religious Daoism in relation to classical Chinese literature and criticism. Li is interested in metaphysics, aesthetics and poetics, and, in our estimation, his book remains the most fully developed treatment of its subject to be published in the 1990s. It does not use current Western critical theory, however, or cover North-American literature and criticism, although it does include occasional comments on conventional Western, aesthetics, philosophy, and religion from Plato's time onwards.

2.26 Binghai Li and Qiang Wei co-edited *Lectures on Classical Chinese Literature* (2005), the first in a series of books expanding on Li's (1993) prize-winner discussed above. In the context of China's twenty-first-century cultural revitalization drive, Li's and Wei's recent canon-reconstructing project includes excerpts from the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* together with poetry or prose masterpieces by recognized Daoist writers. These writers range from Tao Yuanming, Li Bai, Su Dongpo to some Ming and Qing poets and prose writers. Li and Wei's series complements Stephen Owen's impressive, translated tome (published in 1993), which analyses how Chinese philosophical thought has been incorporated into Chinese literary and critical history. Li's and Wei's edited series of books also distinguishes itself by seeking to establish a Daoist tradition of literary criticism. This tradition is predicated upon the philosophical and critical thrust of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and their followers, and it includes a discussion of linguistic features and aesthetic standards. Although their series does not cover North-American literature, it opens a new horizon with regard to Daoist literary and critical traditions and their reconstructions over time in China. We can follow suit in our project on North-American literature and criticism.

2.27 Wai-lim Yip's *Chinese Poetics* (《中国诗学》 in Chinese 2006, expanded edition; translation ours) contains a few chapters translated or revised from his English *Diffusion of Differences* (1993). Yip adds new chapters on classical Chinese poetics which he illustrates with examples drawn from Daoist and Chan/Zen Buddhist writers. To anti-essentialist, Western-trained scholars such as Stalling (2010), Yip's approach may sometimes smack of linguistic and literary essentialism. He argues, for example, that classical Chinese is uniquely transparent and that certain Daoist and Zen-Buddhist messages are obtainable only in this Chinese medium. Yip's study covers aspects of philosophical Daoism in relation to American

culture in general and to modernist poetry in America and Taiwan. Yet he has not examined systematically the whole history of North-American, constructed Daoism in literature and criticism. He embraces some current Western critical discourse, and we will take note of his project in this regard.

2.28 Zhong Laiyin's *Su Shi in Relation to Philosophical and Religious Daoism* (《苏轼与道家道教》1990; translation ours) in Chinese resembles to some extent Li Binghai's 1993 national prize-winner. The inclusive title of Zhong's book refers to the influence of both religious and philosophical Daoism on Su Dongpo, an illustrious poet, prose writer, and calligrapher who lived during the Song Dynasty [960–1279]. Combining conventional Chinese exegetical and hermeneutical methods, Zhong distinguishes the philosophical from the religious dimensions of Daoism in relation to Su's private and public life, and his discussion touches on Su's politics, poetics, ethics, and aesthetics. Zhong also employs conventional Chinese strategies discussing thematic and the close reading of texts but makes no West-East comparisons and draws on no current Western literary/critical theory. Nor is he concerned with North-American literature and criticism as a whole. Zhong's book does, however, set out to critique Lin Yutang's "misreading" of Su Dongpo as a gay and Buddhist poet and seems to hint at Lin's romanticizing, if not orientalisizing, tendencies.

2.29 Though slim, Li Changzhi's 《道教诗人李白的苦难》 (*Daoist Poet Li Bai and his Sufferings*; translation ours; 1939) remains probably the earliest volume on Li Bai (Li Po) to discuss the conflicts between Li Bai's Daoist hermit philosophy/religion and his Confucian activism. It debunks the long-held myth of a care-free Li Bai and highlights the influence of religious Daoism on this world-famous poet of the Tang Dynasty. Since our proposed book studies translated Daoist literature from China reconstructed in North-American literature, this small book is relevant. It fails, however, to treat North-American literature and criticism.

2.30 Shi Qingqiao's 2009 《道教一本通》 (*Grasping Religious Daoism Through One Book*; translation ours; 495 p.) provides arguably the most comprehensive study yet written of the history, literature, and arts of religious Daoism over the past 2000 years. His book clearly spells out the tenets of religious Daoism with 200 illustrations, paintings, and charts. It features several chapters on religious Daoist poetry, music, and architecture from the classical to recent times in China. It can thus serve as a model for the treatment of similar topics in our proposed book, although it does not cover North-American literary or religious life and writing.

2.31 Pan Xianyi et al. 潘显一等's *A Study of the History of Daoist Aesthetic Thought*, (《道教美学思想史研究》2010; translation ours) has been lauded as a milestone that fills the gap in the study of religious Daoist aesthetic throughout Chinese history. With some reasonable modification, this collaborative work can serve to undergird our theoretical framework for the study of constructed religious Daoist aesthetics in North-American literature and criticism. We will, of course, add current Western critical theory into our mix of Western-Chinese comparisons.

2.32 Tiandao Li 李天道 in *The Contemporary Meaning of Laozi's Aesthetic Thought* (《老子美学思想的当代意义》; translation ours; 2008) approaches Laozi's aesthetic thought by appropriating comparable Western aesthetic categories.

It also updates Daoist scholarship and makes Laozi's aesthetic palatable to contemporary Chinese readers (some trained in Western aesthetics) and applicable to their lives. Li's focus in Chapter 5 on the interrelated concept of qi and Dao as a key category is somewhat reminiscent of Cai's discourse on qi (2002, 109). An aesthetic framework of this kind can be strategized for our proposed work, though the scope of our study will be much broader.

2.33 Zhenwei Zheng 郑振伟 published *Daoist Poetics* (translation ours; 《道家诗学》 p. 223) in 2009 to re-interpret philosophical Daoist poetics for contemporary readers. Comparing relevant Chinese and Western concepts, it explores five key aspects of Daoism: ontology, primitive thinking, aesthetics, women, and consciousness of space. Though Zheng's study does not deal with North-Americanized Daoism in literature and criticism, its numerous insights will benefit our proposed book as far as the above-mentioned topics are concerned.

2.34 *Daoist Aesthetic and Wei-Jin Culture* by Chunqing Li (李春青 《道家美学与魏晋文化》 2008; translation ours) studies philosophical Daoist aesthetics in the context of the culture of the Wei-Jin Period in China. It resembles the collection of essays edited by Cai Zong-qi (2004) in covering the same Chinese historical period regarding Daoist aesthetics as part of Chinese aesthetics. It differs from Cai's work by introducing Western theory for the interpreting of aesthetic thought all the way from Laozi through Zhuangzi to the Wei-Jin period. Many of the recent findings by Li are relevant to our bridging of Daoist aesthetics in China with its transformations in North-American literature and criticism.

2.35 Jiemo Zhang 张节末 in *Chan/Zen Aesthetic* (translation ours; 《禅宗美学》 (2009)) connects Zhuangzi's aesthetic with the Zen one and complements obliquely Peipei Qiu's study (2005) of Basho's Chan/Zen poetics and Zhuangzi's philosophy. But Zhang's work covers a wider historical period – from the aesthetics of Zhuangzi through that of the Metaphysical School to that of Chan/Zen – and takes a comparative, intra-Asian approach to Indian Buddhism, especially as it was absorbed by the Chinese Metaphysical School. Much can be appropriated from Zhang's monograph in our proposed project, for we have promised to make cross-cultural comparisons between Zen aesthetics and Daoist ones in our examination of globalized Daoism in North-American literature.

2.36 Hu Fuchen's 胡孚琛 *A General Discourse on the Daoist School* (translation ours; 《道学通论》 2009, 3rd ed., 506p.) has proven to be an encyclopedic *tour de force* in philosophical and religious Daoist scholarship in China. It clarifies many contentious issues regarding in the dating and defining of religious and philosophical Daoism. It also proposes a new Daoist school for the whole world while making suggestions for developing a Daoist inner alchemy appropriate for the postmodern age. In particular, Hu, following Zhang Xutong's taxonomy, re-categorizes culture, literature, and arts (p. 37) using the method of the Eight Diagrams and offers three main aesthetic categories of beauty – mountains and waters, young girls, and infants. Though Hu does not employ current Western critical theory, he does compare Western philosophy, religion, and social sciences with their Chinese counterparts. He also has a theoretical framework for interdisciplinary study not unlike what is now referred to in the West as "theory." We believe that Hu's 2009 masterpiece

deserves to be translated into English, and we are in the process of obtaining his official permission for this task. We will also base much of our understanding of key Daoist problematics on his new concepts.

2.37 Preeminent Daoist scholar Fuchen Hu 胡孚琛 edited *An Unabridged Dictionary of Chinese Religious Daoism* (translation ours; 《中华道教大词典》, 5,460,000 words) in China in 1995. A landmark tome designed for the general reader and written by a contingent of some 100 Daoist scholars, Hu's book is a successor to *An Unabridged Dictionary of Religious Daoism* (1994). The latter book, which was compiled by the Chinese Daoist Association, was meant for Daoist specialists only. Hu's *Dictionary* takes what Mou Zongjian (牟钟鉴) has described as a "neutral" stance by covering practically all aspects of Chinese Daoist culture. This culture includes sex and sexuality, the art of love and making love in the Daoist spirit or with Daoist techniques, and a whole realm of Daoist inner alchemy. Hu's 1995 work also has sections on religious Daoist literature and arts. Although it does not cover North-Americanized Daoist literature and criticism, it would certainly be of great use in our proposed cross-cultural and comparative project.

2.38 Wang Tao 汪涛 in *Locating the Origins of Chinese and Western Poetics* (translation ours; 《中西诗学源头辩》 2009) traces both Chinese and Western poetics to ancient Greek and Chinese philosophy. His goal is to establish their respective philosophical and theological foundations, main modes of argument, and ultimate concerns. Wang identifies certain models of thinking and patterns of persuasion in Western and Chinese poetics. He discusses, for example, logic and lineal thinking as well as various concepts of Humanity-Divinity and certain relations between these two concepts. Whereas the division and opposition of this binary pair seem to dominate Western poetics, Chinese poetics, which are based on intuition, emphasizes the unity of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity and the number three hold sway. Wang's study is strong in his discussion of Confucian poetics but comparatively weak when it comes to the poetics of Daoism. Wang observes that Heidegger and Derrida turned to ancient Chinese poetics for new cultural resources (169). Wang's study is based on foundational theories from Plato and Aristotle in the West and on those of Confucius and Laozi in China; it traces their developments to the twentieth century. Wang does not discuss North-American Daoism in relation to literature. Yet he does shed light on fundamental issues of philosophy and poetics.

2.39 Liwen Zhang, Xutong Zhang, and Dachun Liu (张立文 张绪通 刘大椿) are the editors-in-chief of *Metaphysical Vision: Daoist Discourse and Chinese Culture* (translation ours; 《玄境 – 道学与中国文化, 348p.》 published in 2005. In a series of four multidisciplinary books, these authors broke new ground in philosophical Daoist studies of Chinese culture. Chapter 8 deals exclusively with Daoist discourse in relation to Chinese literature and the arts. This chapter is divided into four sections that provide lucid descriptions of the Daoist theory of creativity and criticism. Another 14 chapters discuss aspects of Chinese culture in relation to philosophical Daoism. One shortcoming, however, may be the absence of a chapter discussing Daoism and ecology historically in China. This topic is touched on, however, in *Daoism and Ecology* (2001), which looks at Daoist ecology in a global context. As a whole, the 2005 monograph provides a much needed study of the

metaphysical dimension of philosophical Daoism in relation to Chinese culture while leaving religious Daoism out of the picture. The study does not cover North Americanized Daoism, but we plan to do so.

2.40 *A General Introduction to Chinese Culture* (translation ours; 2007, 464p. 《中国文化概论》) chiefly edited by Yuanpu Jin (金元浦) and others is a state-sponsored textbook. Chapters 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15 discuss Chinese philosophical Daoist culture in relation to Chinese literature, literary criticism, music, and other arts. It examines systematically the pervasiveness of philosophical Daoist culture in several key areas of Chinese life from antiquity to the present and clarifies many issues related to Chinese Daoist philosophy, aesthetics, poetics, and ethics. Many of its insights lend themselves to our interpretation of North-Americanized Daoism in relation to literature and criticism. Unfortunately, this textbook gives short shrift to religious Daoism in relation to Chinese literature, music, and other arts, as do most Chinese books in this field. This deficiency might be due to the residual effect of the orthodox Marxist-Maoist attitude to religion “as the opiate of the masses.”

2.41 *Chinese Cultural Psychology* (translation ours; 《中国文化心理学》 2005) by Wang Fengyan and Zheng Hong was probably the first Chinese book to tackle the issue of cultural psychology in China. It discusses Daoism in relation to the formation of Chinese world views, social habits, and customs. Using Western cultural-psychological theories, this work points out the positive and negative sides of Daoism in China but makes no mention of its foreign reconstructions. Its weakness may lie in viewing certain religious aspects of Daoism from a dogmatic Marxist-Maoist viewpoint. Nonetheless, this multidisciplinary study, which can supply insights into the cultural psychology of the Chinese even in the diaspora, will benefit our proposed book.

2.42 Mengxiao Zhang’s 张梦道 *Religious Daoism Illustrated* (translation ours; 《图解道教》 2007) breaks new ground by illustrating religious Daoism in China chronologically with numerous paintings, charts, and graphs. He also supplies contexts for these by providing concise summaries of some two millennia of history. Another key feature of his book is the succinct multidisciplinary discussion of religious Daoism in the fiction, poetry, and music of China. Though this book does not cover North-American literature and criticism, it can be useful for our proposed project because it sheds light on the creative ways in which North-American writers (e.g. Ursula Le Guin and Larissa Lai) and critics have (re)constructed the Chinese version of religious Daoism in history and in literature.

2.43 Yang Yi’s 杨仪 *Twentieth-century Chinese Novels and Culture* (translation ours; 《二十世纪中国小说与文化》) published in 2007 discusses several novelists influenced by philosophical Daoism. These include, among others, Lu Xun (Lu Hsun), Shen Cong-wen, and Wang Zengqi. Although the book does not use current Western theory, it considers these modern Chinese writers as proponents of Daoist philosophy in their spiritual and intellectual pursuits and in the literary-cultural ambience of their fictional and critical works. Yang’s study, which is conducted at times in the light of cross-cultural contacts with the West, focuses on the re-invention or transformations of Daoism in modern China. It can supply much food for thought for our re-thinking of constructed Daoism in the context of North American

literature, especially the dialogic force of philosophical Daoism within fiction. Yang's study does not include North American literature and criticism; ours will.

2.44 C.T. Hsia's *The Classic Chinese Novel: a Critical Introduction* (1968; rpr. 1980, 413 p., 2010, 436p.) discusses six landmarks of Chinese fiction with respect to their structure and style as well as their moral and philosophical themes. In dealing with the latter, Hsia embraces both philosophical and religious Daoism, while drawing parallels between Chinese and Western literary classics. By association or implication, some of Hsia's insights can be of value in our proposed book. For our cross-cultural study of North-American novelists will certainly include writers who have been influenced by Daoist texts or Daoist-inflected novels translated from the Chinese.

2.45 *Laozi and Myths* (translation ours; 《老子与神话》) by Ye Shuxian 叶舒宪 (2005, 294p.) compares the mythological theories of C.G. Jung, Northrop Frye, N.J. Girardot, and other Western scholars with Laozi's mythological traditions in China. It also emphasizes the matriarchal and matrilineal systems and lineages of goddesses and female spiritual immortals such as Nu Wa and the Queen Mother of Western Heaven. Empty spaces – wombs, valleys, caves, and gourds – are viewed as illustrating Laozi's philosophically and aesthetically productive concept of “non-being” (wu 无) over that of “being” (有). Above all, Ye offers an unflinching examination of the philosophical, biological, and mythical meanings in various allusions to female reproductive organs (e.g., breasts and genitals) as idols or totems – something much Daoist and Confucian scholarship has managed to avert and marginalize. Though Ye does not seem to realize that both C.G. Jung and Northrop Frye were inspired by Daoism, his cross-cultural mythological study, which many have neglected, does add an important dimension to Laozi's discourse. Our North American Daoist project can benefit from Ye's work in this regard.

2.46 Xie Xuanjun 谢选骏 published *Myths and the National Spirit* 《神话与民族精神》 (420 p) in 1986, and it was an intellectually challenging work for its time. It traces mythologies from the Chinese *Classics of Mountains and Seas* 《山海经》 and its Greek and Roman counterparts by dealing with Chinese mythology in general in relation to the formation of the Chinese national spirit. It does not, however, discuss religious Daoism or religious Daoist mythologies as such. In recent cultural studies, much of the subject discussed by Xie would be properly subsumed under religious Daoist mythologies (道教神话), as in the taxonomies of Ye (2005a, b), Shi (2009), and Zhang (2007). Xie's concept of “cultural circles” first divides and then joins Western and Eastern cultural spheres of influence and confluence in relation to their specific national character. In the context of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century religious Daoist scholarship, Xie's work might seem slightly out-of-date. However, his spirited attempt to bridge cultural gaps in spite of different mythologies is inspiring for our cross-cultural and interdisciplinary project.

2.47 Sargent's *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (2010, p. 145) zeros in on one concept in Western and non-Western traditions – utopianism. Whether it is a legend or myth, the story about Laozi's version of utopia nonetheless fleshes out the true spirit of Eastern philosophies and religions. This spirit is syncretistic and dialogic rather than analytical and dialectical. It cherishes a small, peaceful, and

conflict-free life in nature as opposed to a big, war-mongering, and conflict-filled existence against nature. Sargent also discusses several versions of the Chinese Daoist utopias, ranging from that of the Peach Blossom Spring by Tao Yuanming to Confucian and Buddhist ones. Also included are literary utopias enacted by Ursula La Guin (30) under the influence of Daoism. In particular, a picture with Laozi, Buddha, and Confucius in it says a thousand words about a typical phenomenon in China: the peaceful co-existence of three philosophies/religions – Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism – and the eclectic mode of thinking that seems to dominate Chinese, if not Asian, culture (71). Sargent’s brief publication can certainly shed light on the Eastern and Daoist utopian visions in Western or North-American texts that we intend to discuss in our proposed cross-cultural study.

2.48 Hocks and Smits co-edited *Reading East Asian Writing: The Limits of Literary Theory* (2003, p. 299) – a collection of 13 essays authored by as many scholars with a strong interest in applying or contesting current Western literary theory in relation to East-Asian writing. These essays employ theories derived from Freud, Kristeva, applied structuralism, New Historicism, and deconstruction. They offer new insights into Chinese literary studies and open a new field for academic exploration. Some essays, however, may at times smack of neo-Orientalism and bring to mind the “cultural misreadings” (Maxine Hong Kingston) already critiqued by the late Ji Xianlin, Qian Zhongshu, and other leading Chinese comparatists. How to read literary texts across cultures without imposing inappropriate meanings remains a delicate problematic. While taking cues from these theory-oriented studies, we intend to further examine “the question of how culturally specific or universal literary theories really are” (to quote from a blurb on the back cover of this book).

2.49 Vincent Leitch was the editor-in-chief of the second edition of the impressive tome *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (2758 pages) in 2010. In the interest of globalized human knowledge, it covers non-Western theorists such as the eminent Chinese scholar Li Zehou. Though Daoism or Taoism is not indexed, the cardinal Daoist or Confucian philosophical concept of qi (chi, chee) is discussed. Neither Confucian nor Daoist discourse was originally conceived as literary theory in the conventional sense, and these texts touch on many issues. These include moral, ethical, and political matters as well as ones that are the aesthetic, cosmological, and metaphysical. Although the notion of theory (as defined, say, by Jonathan Culler 2010, 1–4, 13–16) has taken on a radically new meaning in current Western academic usage, both Daoist and Confucian discourses fall well within the scope of postmodern definition of theory. Western and Eastern students of North American literature and criticism can therefore surely benefit from our proposed book. In our view, to be globally informative and inclusive, Leitch’s massive anthology would benefit from including the discourses of Laozi, Zhuangzi, Confucius, and Mencius on the same footing as the anthologised essays by Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Marx. Some discussion of the relationships between Daoism and a host of anthologized Western theorists who have taken an interest in Eastern theory would also be helpful. Such relationships would include but not be limited to the following: Hegel and/on Daoism, Martin Heidegger and Daoist mysticism, and Carl

Jung and the Dao and yin/yang dynamics. Also worth discussing would be Julia Kristeva's feminist appropriation of the yin/yang concept in her critique of Confucianism and Western patriarchal capitalism, Jacques Derrida's and Zhuangzi's discourse of difference, Northrop Frye's Daoist concepts of non-action and interpenetration, Fredric Jameson's utopian theory in relation to Daoism, and Bertolt Brecht's concepts of democracy, writing, and time in relation to Daoism.

2.50 *A Study of the Ecological Thought in Religious Daoism* (translation ours; 《道教生态思想研究》) (2010) is a collaborative interdisciplinary work by Xia Chen, Yun Chen, and Jie Chen 陈霞 陈云 陈杰. As the first and third authors were co-translators of *Daoism and Ecology: Ways Within a Cosmic Landscape* (2001), the influence of the English book on this Chinese work is evident: both books discuss ecological concerns and religious Daoist thought and practices. But the three Chen's also make original contributions by staking out new territories and offering fresh findings from Chinese culture. Though the later work does not cover North-American literature and criticism, it does provide a comprehensive study of global ecological issues stemming from religious Daoism. This latter discussion would benefit our proposed book.

2.51 *Reading the Dao: A Thematic Guide* (2011, p. 182) was translated from the Chinese by the author Keping Wang – an eminent Professor of Philosophy at Beijing University.

This work treats Daoism and Confucianism as “complementary” visions forming the yin and yang parts of Chinese culture (p. ix). In chapters 12 and 13, Wang also discusses key issues of aesthetics in relation to Daoist philosophy with each theme given a chapter title. In this respect, Wang's book brings to mind James Miller's *Daoism: An Introduction* (2003), which also deals thematically with Daoism as a religion. Taken together, Wang's and Miller's books complement each other; they would help with the writing of our proposed book even though they do not discuss North-American literary culture.

2.52 Zhou Ye 周冶 published *The Dao Models Itself on Nature: Religious Daoism and Ecology* (translation ours; 《道法自然:道教与生态》 210 p) in 2012 and extended Chen Xia's co-authored book mentioned above. Taking an avowedly dialectical-materialist approach to ecological issues and Chinese Daoist culture, Ye uses simple language and focuses on the here and now. The interdisciplinary book employs a tripartite structure – Daoist and ecological synergy, Daoist ecological wisdom, and Daoist ecological practices – to promote religious Daoist ecology in an impressive Daoist-natural way. Though the book does not cover North-American literature and criticism, it could surely benefit our proposed book: it discusses Daoism-inspired ecological poetics, aesthetics, and politics.

2.53 Zehou Li's 李泽厚 *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition* (2010; 257 p.) translated by Maija Bell Samei is mainly a discussion of “Confucian-based traditional Chinese aesthetics” (Preface to the first edition, vii). One of Li's original insights is the cultural-psychological structure of the Chinese aesthetic; another is “psychological sedimentation.” In Chapter 3, entitled “The Daoist-Confucian Synthesis,” Li discusses the Daoist aesthetic in connection with the Confucian one. The concepts of the conscious and unconscious as spiritual dimensions of the creative process are

discussed in the contexts of the Chinese psyche (without references to Freud or Jung (pp. 111–112)) and “the naturalization of humans” (115). In particular, “Daoist breathing exercises, or qigong,” “breath control and other spiritual training” are included in Li’s account of Chinese aesthetic traditions (115–116). As our proposed study will juxtapose Daoist with Confucian and (Zen) Buddhist philosophies and spiritualities to study North-American, constructed Daoist aesthetics, Li’s work would be very helpful despite its lack of North-American references.

2.54 Sheldrake’s 2012 *Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction* (133 p.) discusses spirituality purportedly in an interreligious dialogue “with all world religions” (Preface, xvi). While the author ably distinguishes four types of spirituality and six kinds of mysticism, his background seems strong in Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Sheldrake stands on less sure ground, however, when it comes to Daoism and Confucianism. The term Daoism or Taoism is not referred to although there are two mentions of tai chi (35, 75), feng shui (54, 75), and Confucianism (17, 66); Buddhism receives extensive coverage in 12 places, Zen in 9, and Christianity in 16. Sheldrake’s analysis of religious and the spiritual dimensions would help clarify aspects of Daoism as a religion (or as “bio-spirituality” as some scholars have suggested). His discussion of spirituality in relation to aesthetics and the arts (52–56) also widens our artistic horizons. Though Sheldrake does not discuss North-American literature and criticism in relation to spirituality broadly defined, his nuanced definitions and his inspirational arguments for spirituality in the twenty-first century could help to give more purpose and vision to our proposed Daoist study.

2.55 *A Treatise on the History of Ancient Chinese Thought* (translation ours; 《中国古代思想史论》 (1991, rev. ed., 390 p.) by Zehou Li was a multidisciplinary landmark publication in the Chinese academia of the 1990s, much as Benjamin Schwartz’s *The World of Thought in Ancient China* was in America in the 1980s. Li devotes a chapter to Zhuangzi’s aesthetics and Zen philosophy (209–259), and many insights are still valid and should be made available to the English-speaking world. He deeply regrets, however, that he has never had the time to write a book on Zen Buddhism, the metaphysical school, and Lao-Zhuang (an abbreviation for the interconnected thinking of Laozi and Zhuangzi’s) (p. 388). Li also identifies the perceived weaknesses of Chinese philosophy as characterized by Lu Xun (380), who nonetheless was the first person to discuss the foundational importance of religious Daoism to Chinese culture. Li’s work is necessarily marred, however, by China’s vestigial Marxist-Maoist thought control of the 1990s, for it seems to make light of the spiritual dimensions of life not immediately present or accessible to commonsense or the sensory organs. As a result, it has missed several vital aspects of Daoist philosophy and religion in the lives of the Chinese in China and abroad, including, by extension, Daoism in the lives of the Chinese in North America. Despite these weaknesses, Li’s work can still be of much value to our proposed project.

2.56 In response to popular demand and critical acclaim in China, Zehou Li and Xuyuan Liu 李泽厚 刘绪源 published in 2011 *Is it Time for Chinese Philosophy to Come on Stage?: A Collection of Li Zehou’s Conversations in 2010* (translation

ours; 《该中国哲学登场了?:李泽厚 2010 谈话录》)。This 189-page multidisciplinary book covers a variety of key issues pertinent to philosophy, religion, aesthetics, literature, and Chinese culture in relation to their Western counterparts. Li, the only Chinese theorist who was included in Leitch's edited *The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism* (2010) advances a few central concepts after his extended exile in the United States since the early 1990s. In his typical cross-cultural manner, he systematically critiques Western philosophical traditions from Plato and Aristotle through Kant and Heidegger to Marx and Derrida in their pursuit of rational, logical, and analytical thinking to the exclusion of other equally important modes of knowledge. Li contends, for instance, that much of current Western philosophy and critical theory have marginalized, if not totally ruled out, a whole realm of lived experience, teeming life, and profound non-rational insights. Li's notions of "emotions and feelings," "pleasure culture," and "cultural-psychological structure" as applied to Chinese thought and culture certainly delineate areas hitherto untapped by the majority of Western thinkers. Interestingly, Li's remark that further understanding of aesthetics has to rely on the emergence of a new biological science is consistent with what Harvard University professor Stephen Pinker has praised in Dutton's 2009 *The Art Instinct* (see below) in relation to Dutton's Darwinian study of the arts in relation to the "cognitive and biological sciences" (cited from the blurb on the back of the dust jacket). Li's collection also echoes Hu Fuchen's argument about the scientific aspects of Daoism (2009) – a topic well studied by Needham (1984). Last but not least, Li's observations about putting lived life as well as aesthetics back in the equation of current critical discourse resonates closely with the intent of Jonathan Culler's "Ethics and Aesthetics" recently added to his 2011, revised edition of *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (121–133). In sum, Li and Liu's 2011 collection pinpoints several directions in which philosophy, aesthetics, religion, and literature can enrich each other across disciplines and cultures in the East and West. Though Li and Liu's book does not comment on North-American literature and criticism, our proposed book would be greatly impoverished if we failed to include their important insights.

2.57 *Euro-American Ecocriticism* 《original English translation; 欧美生态批评》 by Wang Nuo 王诺 (2008, 260 p.) offers a multidisciplinary critical study of ecological criticism in Europe and America. It delivers a scathing criticism of much of European and American literatures and practices, which Wang and his research team at Xiamen University (China) consider to be disastrous to global ecology. On the positive side, Wang refers to books on Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism published by Harvard University Press in 1997, 1998, 2001 that have sought solutions to ecological problems in Eastern religions (234–235). As can be seen in our annotated Table of Contents, our proposed book has made a point of examining these Eastern philosophies and spiritualities in conjunction with their Western counterparts. In addition, Wang also refers to Daoist philosophy as a counter-discourse to six Western, anti-ecological discourses written since the Enlightenment. These include aspects of Marxist and Maoist ideologies (pp. 137–196). Though Wang's book does not cover North-American literature and criticism, his critical insights into global ecological issues will help explain why North-American writers and

critics alike have found Eastern philosophies and religions, especially Daoism, attractive; Wang's study will also facilitate our continued exploration of ecological issues in North- American literature and criticism within the global Daoist-ecological framework established by *Daoism and Ecology* (2001).

2.58 Corinne H. Dale edited *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature: A Reader* (2004, 247 p.), a collection of previously published essays by an interdisciplinary group of leading scholars, both Western and Chinese. This book is a recent attempt to assess Chinese aesthetics and literature in the context of Chinese culture and to answer to the needs of American students in the context of an increasing application of Western theory to Chinese literature. Written with an intention to convey an "insider's" point of view, so to speak, Dale's Preface and Introduction struggle "to destabilize [his] Western-bred expectations" (Preface, VII), and emphasize "learning about Chinese culture" twice ("Introduction," xiv–xv). Plentiful insights exist in joint or single-authored essays by well-established scholars: Pauline Yu and Theodore Hunters, Roger Ames, Tu Wei-Ming, Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft, Wendy Larson, Stephen Owen, Paul S. Ropp, Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, Leo Ou-fan Lee, Yan Haiping, and Howard Goldblatt. In our study of mainstream or multicultural North-American writers ranging from Pearl Buck and Lin Yutang to Maxine Hong Kingston and Larissa Lai, who have made considerable use of Chinese literature (in English translation) and Chinese aesthetics, Dale's edited work will contrast well with another collection of essays edited by Hockx and Smits (2003) and discussed above. These two collections offer a mutually balancing perspective for our proposed book.

2.59 Dutton's *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, and Human Evolution* (2009; 278p.) takes a Darwinian approach to art and attempts to draw cross-cultural conclusions about an "art instinct" in the wider context of "a Darwinian Genesis for the arts" (p. 42). While stubbornly adhering to conventional aesthetics and poetics – in spite of the current poststructuralist discourse on the subject – Dutton re-establishes the idea of intentionality in the arts of the West, and to some extent, in the those of the East. He also seriously questions the "anti-intentionalist" perspectives of such Western theorists as Freud, Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, and others (163, 168–69, 171–72). Most of Dutton's conclusions are convincing within the traditions of the art and literature of North America, Africa and Europe (especially Greece, Britain, and France). Yet his 12 standards or "cluster criteria" for great art, which he first defines and then puts to the test (51–59; 196–202), do not seem applicable to what has been recognized as great Chinese arts based on Chinese aesthetics. For instance, Dutton fails – most probably for cultural reasons – to account for the fundamental concept of qi (chi), which is a dynamic, scientifically proven form of vital-creative energy (*prana* in India, *ki* or *khee* in Japan and Korea), as well as for its myriad artistic expressions and constructions in Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian literature and arts. Inherent in this concept of the qi in the arts of Asia lies a full spectrum of qi-related senses and sensitivities, emotions and feelings, desires and aspirations. Chi is also related to Nature-based enlightenment and to ideas of epiphany, and sublimity.

Though Dutton does mention China (213), alluding to the Chinese concepts of beauty and music respectively (67, 233), much can be added to his Darwinian thesis.

Certain instinctive, intuitional, biologically inherited traditions in Asian – e.g. Indian yoga, Japanese reiki, Zen meditation, and Chinese qigong (which predated Laozi and Zhuangzi who philosophised about it) – are all closely connected to literature and the arts (e.g., Daoist or Zen paintings and sculptures from antiquity). Since some Chinese scholars have advanced the concept of “cultural genes” and qi passed down from generation to generation, an evolutionary study of these Asian artistic phenomena might yield epoch-making findings for the whole world. Regardless of the weaknesses mentioned above, Dutton’s book, which discusses the nurture/nature debate in a new light (204–205), will prove useful for broadening our investigation into North-Americanized Daoism in literature and the arts as well as their contemporary criticism and theorization.

2.60 Harrison’s *Eastern Philosophy: The Basics* (2013; 199 p.) was fresh off the press on the subject of Eastern philosophy in March 2013, with published scholarship updated to 2012. Like Heintzman’s 2011 book (see below) that points up certain distinct differences among Western and Eastern religions and spiritualities (e.g., 43–45), Harrison shows keen awareness of the unique nature and properties of Eastern philosophies evolved even in close geographical proximity. Chinese culture, isolated for a long time from other Asian civilizations, has developed a philosophy of its own quite different from those of its neighbors such as India, and from the philosophies of other continents (Harrison 2013: 101). Moreover, Harrison identifies many differences among Eastern philosophies – Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism – with virtue, authenticity, and wisdom constituting key concepts in the Chinese world view (101–177). Though Harrison does not deal with North-American literature and criticism, her new publication will assist us in describing the specific ways in which philosophical Daoism has been transformed in North-America literature and criticism.

2.61 In 2005, Ye Shuxian 叶舒宪 published a massive 599-page *Goddesses of the High Tang Dynasty and Venus: Themes of Love and Beauty in Chinese and Western Cultures* (translation ours; 《高唐神女与维纳斯: 中西文化中的爱与美主题》). Taking a literary-anthropological approach mostly in the pre-modern periods to Chinese and Western mythologies, literatures, and arts, Ye applies a variety of Western theories – for example, Freud (p. 470), Frye (p. 540), Foucault (p. 545) – to the study of the themes of love and beauty as constructed in Western and Chinese representations of myths and goddesses. Also on display is a wide array of pictures of nude female figures and goddesses from the West and East as well as techniques and positions of mating in Western and Daoist practice. By foregrounding these formerly repressed female-related pictures and topics in China since the early twentieth century owing to dogmatic and puritanical Confucian, Nationalist (KMT), and Communist ideologies, Ye has broken many sensuous and sexual taboos on the visual, psychological, and cultural levels. Above all, by connecting of Laozi’s idea of chaos as a creative state with such mythical goddesses of (re)production as Earth Mother, Nu Wa, and Mother of Western Heaven (pp. 55–56), Ye establishes Laozi as having colored his philosophy with “sexual politics” (original English) in reaction to the prevailing patriarchal system of signification in the literature and arts of China. In addition, Ye goes further back into Chinese history and literature than he

does in his *Laozi and Myth* discussed above. He also goes further back than N.J. Girardot does in *Meaning and Myth in Early Taoism*. Though Ye does not comment on North-American literature and criticism, he offers fresh insight for our proposed book: he employs Western theory while discussing the theme of “return” in the context of Laozi’s philosophy. He also discusses topics of love and beauty in association with sexual appeal and instinct across cultures. A number of major North- American female writers such as Pearl Buck, Ursula Le Guin, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, SKY Lee, Larissa Lai, and Rita Wong can be re-interpreted with Ye’s insights in mind.

2.62 Qingchuan Wan 万晴川’s 2005 *The Classical Chinese Novel in Relation to the Culture of Fangshu* (translation ours; 《中国古代小说与方术文化》 346 p.) is a *bona fide* literary and cultural taboo-breaker. By appropriating the relevant Western theories of Robert Redfield, Cassia, and others as well as the theories of such Chinese scholars as Ge Zhaoguang and Yang Yi, Wan takes a cultural studies approach to an unexamined area: the classical Chinese novel in relation fangshu. Wan argues that fangshu is based on the theory of the unification of heaven and earth, yin/yang and the five-phase discourse, as well as on the models of Chinese imagery and numerology (8–16). Fangshu culture includes a multitude of specific arts or crafts, some of which are based on religious Daoism; these arts and crafts range from love-making, life extension, numerology, and fortune-telling to fengshui, dream interpretation, and the reading of physiognomies. In fact, each of these arts could have easily formed a branch of knowledge in its own right. Wan has proven that the classical Chinese novel incorporated these high and low cultural practices to produce a wide range of aesthetic experiences and topical material and that this new material changed the structures, dynamics, and themes of the novel. Yet this whole realm of cultural activity in the classical Chinese novel was previously relegated to the margins of academic studies.

Wan’s 2005 work covers a longer historical period than Hsia’s 1968 book, *The Classic Chinese Novel* discussed above, but would complement it nicely since Hsia’s work focuses largely on high religious Daoism and the classical Chinese novel. It is obvious that many cultural practices of fangshu have resurfaced in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Chinese literature as well as in North-American literature – particularly East-Asian, North-American writing. Our proposed cross-cultural study will definitely benefit from Wan’s recent findings.

2.63 Xinjun Li 李信军’s *One Hundred Schools on the Dao* (translation ours; 《百家论道》 (2007) remains probably the most comprehensive collection of sayings or comments about Daoism. Commentators include an impressively long list of politicians, philosophers, literary figures, critics, and scientists from many countries. These people have touched on the far-reaching, positive influence of Daoism on either themselves or a variety of important matters such as ecology, feminism, and equality. Li’s book is a resource that has broadened our understanding of the multi-layered and global impact of Daoism – a field of study not yet fully explored. Though his work does not focus on North-American literature and criticism, it has helped us to develop an interdisciplinary approach and to put our proposed project into a multi-cultural, multidisciplinary, and comparative perspective. We intend to

translate part of Li's text into English in our proposed book – a modest contribution to global Daoist scholarship.

2.64 Minghui Wang 王明辉 published *Qi Theory in Chinese Medicine and its Clinical Applications* (translation ours; 《中医气学说理论与临床应用》; 538 p.) in 2000 to wide critical acclaim. A solid work of qi theory as well as of empirical and clinical science, Wang's thick volume zeroes in on one key concept, qi (chi), as applied to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Citing the *Daodejing* on the philosophical concept of Dao and qi (e.g., 1–2; 43; 370–371), Wang employs some significant statistics. In the *Internal Classic of the Yellow Emperor*, the foundational text of TCM, 2,997 names are associated with the term qi in 271 categories (44). This proves that, for 5000 years or so, qi has not been a figment of the imagination or a mere metaphysical concept, although some skeptics may still question its existence to this day. Qi circulation has been a vital part of the second circulatory system that complements the blood circulatory system known in the West as essential for the maintenance of health and treatment of a wide range of diseases. In a twenty-first-century global context, Wang's work on qi provides a Chinese theory (in the Western postmodern sense of the word of theory) for explaining qi-related phenomena in literary works across disciplines and cultures. By extension, the concept of a protean and multi-dimensional qi can function in manner similar, for example, to Freud's concept of the unconscious, Jung's idea of a collective unconscious, or Jameson's the political unconscious; it can also challenge the boundaries between Western-defined science, medicine, psychology, philosophy, and literature. Consequently, since a large number of writers and theorists have indeed used or lived this concept, numerous issues of health, healing, stress, longevity, and prevention of diseases as represented in North-American literature can also be profitably studied with new qi-related, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural insights from Wang's study.

2.65 Though published some 20 years ago, Yingcai Ge's 葛英才's *A Collection of Research Essays on Qigong* (translation ours; 《气功研究论文集》 1994; 100 p.) is still a cutting-edge interdisciplinary study of qi and qigong. It takes the understanding of qi and qigong from a commonsensical or physiological level to one that is "paranormal" or "supersensory." Through scientific research, laboratory tests, and well-documented clinical cases, Ge's collection convincingly proves the underlying theory and practical usefulness of qigong. Short as it is, his collection offers much to challenge the limits set by both Western and Chinese science, medicine, and philosophy. It seamlessly connects the Dao and qi in *Laozi* (the *Daodejing* 2; 45), debunks Keppler's concept of "Eastern mysticism" (11), and opens up the subject of Confucius's disciples practice of qigong (37). It also confirms the feeling of the non-existence of the self and the unification of the self with the universe in Daoist or Buddhist qigong exercises (60). More importantly, Ge dispels the mystique of qi as an esoteric philosophy and establishes Laozi and Zhuangzi as the initiators of an open-ended qi discourse. They were the true founders of Daoist qigong exercises in ancient China. Ge also maintains that qigong theory and practice in the so-called Axial Age – the Spring-Autumn and Warring States Periods of China – continue to be unsurpassed.

In this collection Ge coins the term *huazi* (华子) to name certain particle-waves that he discovered while engaging in qigong activities. In this sense, we are still confronting the same problem that the alleged author of the *Daodejing*, Laozi did some 2500 years ago – how to name the Dao and bring its bio-spiritual-healing discourse to the whole world.

A biographical comment on Ge is in order. Ge was a Beijing university physics scholar who initially focused on medical healing by magnetism. After suffering from severe, chronic headaches, he was privately mentored by the abbess who presided over a temple on Mount Fragrance in Beijing. With newly acquired Buddhist and Daoist qigong, he overcame this disease and opened his “third eye.” He learned to conduct telepathic healing with miraculous results and became a qigong legend himself. Subsequently, he gave invited seminars to Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners in Canada and wrote many essays with new ideas about medical science, physics, technology, and philosophy. Two members of our writing team, John Ming Chen and Yue M. Chen, have both benefitted from Ge’s direct guidance. Our proposed book promises to be enriched with insights and challenges from Ge’s collection, and we hope these insights will be of interest to several North-American writers and critics who are currently considering the concepts of qi and qigong.

2.66 Jianqiang Lin’s 林健强 2002 *Scientific Proof for Metaphysical-Spatial Fengshui* (translation ours; 《玄空风水科学鉴证》) (353 p.) is an innovative and well-researched book on fengshui – Chinese geomancy. It draws on Daoism (47–48) and Buddhism (49–50) and other ideas to explain fengshui, and it provides scientific proof for the effectiveness of fengshui using related Western concepts derived from modern physics and chemistry. The proof is based partly on empirical data, field studies, bio-spiritual and soul research and partly on geophysical pictures, mappings, and diagrams. Lin extends the concepts of qi, taiji (tai chi), wuji, and meridians to highly sophisticated readings of mountains and rivers, buildings and tombs, and shapes and forms. These natural/cosmic objects serve as macrocosmic versions of the microcosmic human anatomy and represent the miraculous artworks wrought on the geography of mother earth by the vital energy of nature, or qi, which has its own qi-will or qi-mind. Such qi-related phenomena may seem inexplicable in terms of classical Western science yet prove understandable when interpreted in the light of the quantum theory of modern physics. Qi-related phenomena are, of course, perfectly comprehensible with Lin’s well-formulated fengshui theory and Laozi’s Daoist philosophy (43, 244, 248, 251), which, in turn, are substantiated by real-life applications and cases.

Lin’s book resonates, in part, with the key ideas in Stephen Field’s essay, “In Search of Dragons: The Folk Ecology of Fengshui” in N.J. Girardot, James Miller, and Liu Xiaogan, eds., *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, pp. 185–200. In Lin’s as well as Field’s studies, part of the fengshui philosophy involves finding an ideal yin house or grave location to ensure that posterity and the living dead can mutually give and receive each other’s blessings and wishes. The Chinese are an eminently practical people with a rich spiritual life and a re-birthed after-life. Foreigners who practise the art-and-science of fengshui share this spiritual dimension. In such a “living world” (Daniel Overmyer 1983) souls, gods,

ghosts, and spirits form an extended family stretching back hundreds, if not thousands, of years. While Field's essay focuses on the ecological and planning aspects of fengshui, Lin's book goes further to challenge all people to widen their intellectual and spiritual horizons. An impressive number of North- American writers and critics have embraced fengshui, qi, taiji (tai chi), and Chinese bone-and- body burial ceremonies that show respect for the dead, yet much knowledge about these Chinese concepts and practices is required to gain a full understanding of the literary constructions of fengshui.

Lin also applies his fengshui theory to the yang house and the yin house, each meant respectively for the living and the living dead. He maintains that the environment is equally important for the living and the dead and that the living dead have certain connections with the living in ways that need exploration rather than rejection. Lin's work will help explain holistically and macrocosmically why so many Chinese and foreign practitioners of fengshui have persisted in it for millennia despite the skepticism of Western scientists and the Chinese authorities.

A fengshui practitioner and creative writer of Daoist-related poetry in America, Lin is currently completing his third book on related aspects of fengshui. His fengshui studies rank as "scientific" by Western standards. John Ming Chen has known Lin for some 30 years and has followed him in the pursuit of fengshui since 2007. At John Ming Chen's invitation, Lin has agreed to join the writing team for the proposed book.

2.67 Editor Richard Lane published *Global Literary Theory: An Anthology* in 2013 to wide critical acclaim. He struck a good balance of representation between different theoretical voices from the West and East. One of the many commendable features of this 944-page tome is its inclusion of several extracts in relation to Asian people, including the Chinese. This work also discusses Asian philosophy, literature, and culture. Section 2, "Deconstruction & Post-Structuralism," provides an extract by A.T. Nuyen entitled "Levinas and Laozi on the Deconstruction of Ethics." Nuyen's essay appeared originally in his *Deconstruction and the Ethical in Asian Thought*. Nuyen's comparative piece is, of course, not the first to offer a cross-cultural study of Western and Chinese-Daoist modes of deconstruction with respect to ethics. As our proposed book promises, similar East-West comparisons may be made in matters ranging from Daoist poetics and aesthetics to Daoist politics, ethics, and ideology. Section 5.7 in Lane's anthology features Daria Berg's "What the Messenger of Souls Has to Say: New Historicism and the Poetics of Chinese Culture," which appeared originally in *Reading East Asian Writing: The Limits of Literary Theory*. We have discussed the latter book above, noting that it puts a spiritual dimension back into discursive "high theory" (Eagleton, *The Event of Literature*, 2012: ix-x). To Lane's further credit, Section 6.6 cites Rebecca E. Karl's "Race, Colonialism and History: China at the Turn of the Twentieth Century." This essay appeared originally in *Philosophies of Race and Ethnicity* and, like the book of which it is a part, brings increasingly racialized, politicized, and historicized dimensions to the study of China. Similarly, Section 9 offers Sonia Shah's "Introduction: Slaying the Dragon Lady, Toward an Asian American Feminism," which was first published in *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire*. This discussion

of the conventional image of the Asian dragon lady agrees with our idea of a constructed, Daoist-feminist politics and poetics in American literature and criticism. Last but not least, Section 11 of Lane's work, which covers Globalization and Global Studies, features Shaobo Xie's "Is the World Decentred? A Postcolonial Perspective on Globalization." This essay first appeared in *Global Fissures: Postcolonial Fusions*, where Xie was a co-author with John Ming Chen of an essay on Zhuangzi and deconstruction in relation to language and truth. Xie's recent post-colonial focus on globalization continues to shed light on constructed Daoism in a global context.

Compared with Vincent Leitch's anthology (2010 2nd edition), Lane's represents non-Western critics much more strongly in a discussion of the cultural theory of the East, especially as this theory touches on the rising power of China. To the present writers, Lane's representation remains, however, as incomplete as the vast majority of anthologies of literature and literary theory published in Western countries. Nothing is included from such preeminent scholars as Zehou Li, Zaifu Liu, or Gao Xingjian. Likewise, Jameson's essay on third-world postmodern theory in relation to late capitalism, which is based on well-researched facts about China, was not included.

On the whole, Lane's anthology opens up new theoretical possibilities for exploring ethnic, racial, gender, and high-technological issues. This expansion of a field of study concurs with our proposed, cross-cultural study of North-American, Daoist literary and cultural problems. In addition, the quintessentially Daoist philosophy of the interdependency of things, which will be examined in our proposed book, coincides with current, North-American research into contemporary global realities. In spite of these perceived deficiencies, Lane's work has supplied us with an up-dated definition of globalization and with helpful theoretical comments.

2.68 Saussy's 296-page *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic* (1993) is a comparative study of Chinese and Western constructions of Chinese aesthetics. It is deconstructive rather than destructive in its approach – somewhat like Paul de Man's close reading of a text. In Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 13–46; 47–73), Saussy refers to the "results of several years of [his] experiments with translation" (Introduction, 1) in order to challenge several scholars about the translating and constructing of "Chinese Allegory." His comparative critiques of the interpretations of China, Chinese aesthetics, and the Chinese language by Matteo Ricci (pp. 36–37), Hegel (pp. 151–184) and Leibniz (pp. 37–39) are still relevant today. Saussy also discusses the interpretation of an ancient Chinese text – the *Book of Odes* – by Confucius and others (74–150) to point out the ideological underpinnings of any exegesis that describes the meaning and aesthetic structure of these poems. He cites approvingly the comments of the Daoist scholar A.C. Graham on Daoist philosophy and language (7–8) yet questions the cosmological assumptions about Chinese literature in the critical works of Pauline Yu, Stephen Owen, and Andrew Plaks. In particular, he calls attention to the debate about monism versus dualism.

Saussy discusses problems associated with the translation of the concept of chi/qi into "air" (40), or into "pneuma[breath] = pneuma [spirit](?)" (45–46), observing that such translations do not do justice to the polysemy of qi's Chinese meanings.

He faults Hegel for translating “Chinese aesthetic” into “aesthetic China” (188). His most scathing critique, however, is levelled at some of Hegel’s conceptualizations, especially Hegel’s eurocentric and idealistic comments on Chinese history, philosophy, and religion. Saussy’s critique is often substantiated by the same set of examples and facts cited by Hegel himself (179–184). (This book is similar to the essay by Saussy written for *Reading East Asian Writing: The Limits of Literary Theory* (2003), pp. 39–71. This essay also attempts to compare and combine Chinese poetics and Western theory (in its postmodern sense) in order to study Chinese literature and philosophy.) Although Saussy does not include North-American literature and criticism in his 1993 book, his insights, which are deconstructive, anti-Orientalizing, and cross-cultural, can benefit our proposed work on globalized Daoism.

2.69 Shenglong Li 李生龙 substantially revised his 1998 *The Daoist School and its Influence on Literature* (translation ours; 《道家及其对文学的影响》 390 p.) and issued a second edition in 2005. This latter interdisciplinary work moves beyond the two oft-cited foundational Daoist texts—the *Daodejing* and the *Zhaungzito* to several others, including *Huanglao Boshu* (《黄老帛书》), *E-Guanzi* (《鹖冠子》), *Wenzi* (《文子》), and *Lvshichunqiu* (《吕氏春秋》). Li’s goal is to construct an expanded Daoist school of thought in relation to Chinese literature. He spells out key Daoist principles in his book and studies their historical development in four main parts. A fifth part consisting of eight chapters offers in-depth analyses of this enlarged Daoist school in relation to literature and art in each major historical period of China over 2000 years of literary history. In these eight chapters, Li establishes several categories of Daoist aesthetics that previous scholars have neglected. His study of Daoist thought in practically all Chinese literary genres and in several forms of critical theories is detailed and enlightening. In fact, it makes the work of many other scholars appear rather shallow and biased.

Li also repudiates the received view of Daoism as passive or quietist philosophy. He highlights the Daoist school’s successful strategies for saving humanity from rigid social formalities, ecological imbalance, and over-weening confidence in human rationality. Above all, such a newly constructed Daoist school offers a refreshing literary and cultural vision of a sustainable Daoist society, which places human beings in a proper perspective. They are part of a universe that cherishes the unification of Heaven and Humanity, broadly and newly conceived.

Compared with Binghai Li’s 1993 book discussed above with a largely thematic treatment of Daoism in relation to classical Chinese literature and art, Shenglong Li’s 2005 monograph covers a longer historical period and follows a strict chronological order. These two major studies in Chinese complement each other nicely and overlap minimally. It is true that Li’s 2005 study does not cover North-American literature and criticism. Nonetheless, his sophisticated interpretation of the evolution of Daoist thought in Chinese literary and artistic products and his interdisciplinary approach may serve as an inspiration for our proposed comparative, cross-cultural study of Daoism’s literary and cultural globalization in North-America.

2.70 Zehou Li’s *Four Essays on Aesthetics: Toward a Global View* (204 p.), excerpted in Vincent Leitch’s 2010 Norton anthology (2nd edition), offers a

ground-breaking theorization of the subject at the time of its initial publication in Chinese in 1988. These essays were the result of several revisions (translated into English by Li and Jane Cauvel, an American aesthetician) and a noticeable expansion in 2006. The most recent text keeps much of its original flavor and rigor from an East-West comparative perspective. For instance, Li touches on North-American arts in connection with a French practitioner of Dadaism and surrealism (e.g., Marcel Duchamp; see Dutton above, 2009: 83–84; 193–202) from another aesthetic angle (see *Four Essays on Aesthetics* (2006: 127; p. 1749 in Leitch). More importantly, Li explores several fundamental concepts of qi (137, 172, 177) of emotion (134; 86–88; 92–94; 109–110; 143–147) and of sexuality (92–94; 147–49) as three characteristics or essences developed throughout Chinese culture and history. Laozi (27), Zhuangzi (18, 57, 70, 121, 164), and Daoism (24, 66, 90, 122, 175) are also discussed. The implications for non-Chinese readers unfamiliar with these Chinese interpretations of these concepts and figures are many, and Li's cross-cultural understanding offers much food for thought. In a broad stroke, Li spells out the key differences between Chinese and Western aesthetics (9, 11–13; 19–20, 24–26) including Marxist aesthetics (2–4; 22–23, 31–39, 53–55, 90–94). Li also posits and substantiates this point subsequently: “According to the Chinese tradition, including Confucianism, Daoism, and Zen Buddhism, the aesthetic experience is an experience of the highest state of mind-heart. It holds a position of importance similar to that of religious experience in Western cultures. Confucius says it is ‘building up (your personality) through rites but completing it through music.’ It is a wholly *human* experience, which gives a person the feeling of transcendence, of a higher level of being. It is not an experience of Plato’s world of ideas, or of a transcendental world of God, or a pure spiritual experience. It is a wholly human experience of this world without dual realms” (24). Another delectable passage of summarizing his seminal ideas is worth quoting; it falls largely in line with the conclusions drawn by American literary critics such as Pauline Yu and Cai Zongqi respectively (see above): “This [aesthetic experience] is the naturalization of the human manifested not only in physical activities such as Chinese *qigong*, *taiji*, and *practice of longevity* but also in the formal stratification of artworks, including *qi* (vital force) and *bone strength*. These do not express natural physiology, but result from human self-cultivation over long periods. In theory, from Mencius’s cultivating qi to guqi (literally “guqi” means bone-strength, but actually means something near noble vitality), in later times it takes great effort to get the formal stratification of artworks to tally with the rhythm of the universe and thereby to form an isomorphic structure. In Chinese literary works and arts, the emphasis is to embody the Way [Dao], ...” (138–9).

On the whole, however, Li’s 2006 work is long on the Confucian, Kantian, and Marxist aesthetic traditions and short on the Daoist, Buddhist, and Zen Buddhist ones. Although Li’s 2006 work does not cover North-American literature and criticism, it does shed much light on Western and Chinese aesthetics. It offers a counter discourse against “constant government cutbacks on aesthetic education that is in jeopardy of losing its soul to technology and consumerism” (Foreword by Judith Genova, ix), and provides a theoretical framework for our interdisciplinary and

cross-cultural construction of North Americanized Daoist, Confucian, and (Chan/Zen) Buddhist aesthetics in North-American literary, critical, and cultural reconfigurations.

2.71 Heintzman's *Rediscovering Reverence: The Meaning of Faith in a Secular World* (2011; 291p.) offers an intercultural study of religions and spiritualities in the West and East. Though most of the book focuses on Western religions, it does place some emphasis on Eastern spiritualities or religions: Daoism, Confucianism, Zen Buddhism, and Buddhism. In terms of Daoism and Confucianism, Heintzman discusses Tao (25–27, 35–38, 74–75, 95–96, 119–120, 143, 201–202), the *Yin* and *yang* (36), *Tao Te Ching* (90, 95, 201), the *Book of Chuang Tzu*; and Confucius (23–24, 36, 106, 190). Regarding Zen Buddhism, he embraces Zen (37, 53, 82–84, 100–1) and covers Buddhism and Indian spiritual exercises such as yoga (30, 35–36, 76, 79, 189–91). To his credit, the book spells out the key differences and similarities between Western and Eastern religions or spiritualities (38–45; 83–84; 94–102; 165–166; 199–202). He also stresses actions and habits, and distinguishes between faiths and beliefs.

Finally, Heintzman puts his hope in a trio of values: reverence, hope, and trust, and ends by citing Samuel Johnson and others on trust (205–208). In what some scholars have called “the post-secular world” (the ACCUTE conference program of the 2013 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Canada), he emphasizes the recent religious turn. In the current age after philosophy or “theory” seems to have exhausted itself, we believe that this religious turn can be linked with the return to classical rhetoric, ethics, and poetics in current trends of theory and criticism (see Culler 2011; Eagleton 2011). In our view, these new turns offer refreshing theoretical or critical approaches for twenty-first-century literary criticism in a global context.

Heintzman's work on religion and spirituality can be profitably read in conjunction with Victoria Harrison's *Eastern Philosophies* (2013) discussed above. Though neither book deals directly with North American literature and criticism, both offer insightful and cross-cultural observations on Daoist philosophy and religion from a comparative perspective. We can definitely make good use of these insights for our proposed work.

2.72 Editor-in-Chief Tianjun Liu's 2010 *Qigong Study in Chinese Medicine* (673 p.) is a long-awaited English translation of the 3rd edition of this book. (Earlier Chinese versions appeared in 1994, 1999, and 2005.) The Ministry of Education has authorized this Chinese work as a textbook for medical students in colleges and universities.

Published in the United States under a new title, *Chinese Medical Qigong*, the English version covers five main kinds of qigong. Daoist qigong is placed second, after medical qigong and before Buddhist, Confucian, and martial qigong. However, Daoist philosophy as championed by Laozi and Zhuangzi in the Spring and Autumn period is credited with laying the theoretical foundation for other kinds of qigong, since Chinese culture is syncretist. Liu's book also provides qigong recipes for specific diseases, with a consideration of symptoms, pathology, and diagnosis much as in standard Western medical textbooks.

The English translation breaks new ground by assisting English speakers in understanding the philosophical and semi-religious discourse undergirding a branch of Chinese medicine; it also challenges orthodox Western concepts of science and medicine while proving the permeability of the artificial boundaries between current Western disciplines in the sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities. Furthermore, it helps strengthen the relationship between literature, Daoist theory, and medicine in new ways that are not unlike those described in Linda and Michael Hutcheon's interdisciplinary essay, "Why Disease and Opera" (2013: 731–737), which is published in Richard Lane's anthology.

In addition, Liu's book ties in with Zehou Li's observations about "the practice of Daoist qigong and Chan [Zen] Buddhism" (2006: 122) and with Li's one-world theory. Though Li focuses on the sensuous element in aesthetics by identifying the self with heaven and earth, a case can be made about the transferability of the polysemic concept of qi to fields of medical, literary, martial, and cosmological studies. In this context, Liu's book serves to connect Daoist qigong theory and practice with literature, aesthetics, and medical theory.

Liu's translation is also significant in another way: Daoist discourse defies time, space, and the disciplinary divisions in the West and East. Though first founded or constructed over two and a half thousand years ago, Daoist philosophy also qualifies as a theory in the Western postmodern sense. Although Liu's work does not cover North-American literature and criticism, it expands the theoretical, interdisciplinary, and cultural horizons of our proposed study. It enables us to assess anew the fact and significance of North Americans practicing Daoist qigong or Chan/Zen meditation. Indeed, there exists a need and market in North America for Daoist philosophy and exercises as well as for Daoist literature and theory.

2.73 Editor Jacob Neusner published the 4th edition of *World Religions in America: An Introduction* in 2009 (449 pages) to wide popular and critical acclaim. In a chapter entitled "East Asian Religions," several key concepts and figures are considered in the context of their Americanization. They range from Yin and Yang (160, 330), Zen Buddhism (143, 151–52, 115–117, 163, 167, 168 n. 2, 331), and Laozi (159–60, 326) to Daoism (158–60, 325), East Asian Religions in China (155–71), Confucianism (157–60, 324) and the *Dao de jing* [*Laozi*] (159–60, 325). This chapter provides needed information on East-Asian religions in the United States and shows that they have become an integral part of the multicultural, multi-ethnic reality of world religions or spiritualities in American life. East-Asian religions are no longer something marginal; there is indeed a material or cultural base of practitioners of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism (often dubbed collectively the "three teachings of Asia and China." However, there is a lack of focus on Daoist-inflected practices such as Daoist qigong, tai chi, acupuncture, and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Given the context of the American publication of works by eminent Daoist scholars (including Olivia Kohn) on these Daoist practices, Neusner's work could have expanded its scope.

Though Neusner's book does not discuss North-American literature or literary theory, it is a great inspiration for us. Our proposed project would, we hope, stimulate

new, interdisciplinary, and focused engagement with Daoism as a philosophy, a religion, and a theory in the postmodern sense constructed in North America. We will also demonstrate that North- American Daoist literature and criticism have a place in North-American academic and real life, and that Daoist-inflected practices as mentioned above also have bearing on North Americans.

2.74 Inspired by Donovan and Elsmore's *The Religions of New Zealanders* (1992) and galvanized by Neusner's *World Religions in America* (1994, 2009; 4th ed.), Jamie S. Scott edited *The Religions of Canadians* in 2012 (468 p.) (See Acknowledgements, ix). Though no chapters in Scott's book are specifically dedicated to Daoism in Canada, a range of Daoist-related subject is discussed: Daoism (270, 274–77, 388); Laozi (270); Zen Buddhism (273, 285); Zen Buddhist Temple (296–98). Scott regrets the absence of a focused study on Daoist religion in Canada, but does not offer a full explanation. For us, however, a passage from Chapter 3 entitled "Protestant Christians" by University of Toronto Professor C.T. McIntyre is illuminating and points to the complexity or difficulty in defining a religion with regard to Chinese practices. McIntyre writes: "It is ... significant that the people claiming to follow 'no religion' in the 2001 census amounted to about 16 %. Many of these were Chinese immigrants who had arrived since the 1960s, and for whom the census category 'religion' made no sense, but who practiced what others regarded as religions, including Chinese popular religion, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Falun Gong"(p. 108).

The recognition of a Daoist or Chinese religions in Canada aside, our research has revealed a different story. There are indeed properly named Daoist temples or institutions in Canada, and different denominations under the umbrella term Daoism/Taoism exist as well. Take the Greater Vancouver and Victoria areas, as well as the Greater Toronto area. We have found a strong material and cultural base for a variety of Daoist religion, broadly conceived. Inside Vancouver's Chinatown and in its vicinity alone, three properly named Daoist temples stand prominently on Keefer, E. Pender, and Powell streets. At the corner of Gore and Pender, looming large and lofty is a huge mural of Laozi riding a water buffalo and holding a scroll of the *Daodejing* in both hands. These visible signs are in addition to numerous Daoist gods and goddesses enshrined in the ancestral halls of Chinese-Canadian clan associations and in the entrances or hallways to various Chinese businesses inside and outside Chinatown. Self-identified practitioners of Daoist arts for spiritual enlightenment, health and healing are many; they include world-famous figures and scholars such as Chan Lin-xin, Ge Yingcai, Chin-sheng Tu, Jan Walls, and Mason Lok, to name but a few. Most prominently, the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Canada founded by Torontonion Moy Lin-shin has staged many free, public performances on Health Day, with thousands participating across Canada in the streets of cities such as Toronto and Vancouver – not to mention its numerous branches in many countries.

In sum, in Canada there is a wealth of Daoist religious/spiritual materials to cover, and Daoist-related poetics, ethics, and politics to theorize in an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural manner. The yield promises to be good for our proposed book.

2.75 In brief, the above-mentioned 74 English and/or Chinese books on religious and philosophical Daoism have not only laid solid theoretical foundations for our proposed interdisciplinary study; they have also set fine examples of literary, poetic, and aesthetic textual analyses. In addition, a few have started to approach Daoism as a critical theory in both the postmodern and traditional senses. Nonetheless, we will break much new ground in several ways. The first is by describing literary, poetic, and aesthetic matters that are Daoism-specific. The second is by discussing nearly 150 North American translators, writers, and critics/theorists over a century. The third is by bringing a literary-cum-cultural, interdisciplinary, and comparative perspective that can overcome the gaps and divides separating the disciplines of philosophy, religion, literature and criticism. The fourth is by combining Western and Chinese aesthetic and genre theories. The fifth is by building bridges for sustained literary and cultural exchanges between North America and China and, to a lesser extent, East Asia, all of which have been involved in Daoism's globalization.

Appendix II: A Glossary: Philosophical, Religious, and Literary Terms in Daoist Studies (Alphabetized in Pinyin, Chinese, and English)

The head entries, highlighted in bold face, are presented in the order of pinyin, Chinese characters, and English translations (or transliterations). Each head entry is followed by its respective definition in English. A conversion table of pinyin and the Wade-Giles system is appended for cross-references.

Unlike the head entries of many glossaries about Daoism, ours have a particular emphasis. They are concerned primarily with the aesthetic and artistic implications of Daoism for literature and other arts. Furthermore, many of the head entries are deliberately rendered as precise translations or even transliterations of the Chinese original. This mode of presentation enables us to retain their poetic-philosophical flavour in the source language and literature. It also enables English readers to identify easily original Chinese texts in the long Daoist tradition and to be aware of the source of these texts across languages and cultures. These texts (and their “inter-texts”) include references, allusions, paraphrases, and even whole passages in Chinese and English. They come from three main sources: foundational philosophical and religious Daoist writings; certain expressions of Daoism in literature and the arts; and certain key concepts that form a part of the traditional Chinese criticism of Daoist literature and arts.

We have consulted several recent Chinese and English glossaries in the preparation of this inter-cultural glossary. See References for detail.

1. Buqiuwen yi daixing 不求文以待形 Never seek to adorn natural forms. Originally a sentence from the *Zhuangzi* (the Shanmu 山木 chapter, “Mountain Wood”), this concept has solidified into one of the five ideals in Daoist aesthetics and poetics regarding natural forms or shapes. It is a supplement to the proposition,

“**pusu er mingxing de**” 朴素而民性得 (**simplicity produces good human characteristics**; see head entry) and deepens the theory of pristine simplicity as beauty. This aesthetic principle urges respect for everything in nature in its simple and unspoiled state (see Li 1992: 144–154).

2. Buzheng 不争 Not to contend. This concept of not contending refers to a non-interfering attitude or action under the overarching concept of **wuwei 无为 non-action** (see Shi 2009: 25).

3. Cantan 惨淡 gloom and anxiety. These two qualities constitute the key characteristics that contribute to the metaphysical and mysterious sense of the Dao, or **youniao de xuangan 幽妙的玄感**. For other related qualities, see **mohu 模糊 uncertainty and ambiguity**, and **jingji 静寂 tranquility and quietude** (Li 1992: 36–37; 50–63).

4. Chaoran de chushi zhexue 超然的处世哲学 A life philosophy that holds aloof from the world. This is a philosophy of life that advocates transcendence over mundane matters and attainment of Daoist philosophical and religious wisdom. A Daoist philosophical and religious perspective involves three main concepts: **rouruo buzheng 柔弱不争 Be soft and yielding but not be contentious**, **xuzhou aoyou 虚舟遨游 floating carefree on an empty boat**, **ruoji ruoli 若即若离 seemingly attached and detached simultaneously**. This Daoist life philosophy has been brought into full play in Chinese literature and arts (see Li 1992: 349–387), and in Canadian literature (see Chen 2008, 2010; Chen and Wei 2010; Wei Li and John Chen 2010, 2011).

5. Chaotuo 超脱 aloof and aloft. These two-word concepts suggest a state of aloofness and lofty height or distance. This state or attitude is generally achieved by gaining detachment from things through Daoist philosophical, religious, or aesthetic transcendence over immediate experience. Writers and literary critics inspired by Daoism have traditionally striven to achieve this unique attitude of aloofness (see Yu 2007, Wang 2003).

6. Chaoyi Xiangwai, deqihuanzhong 超以象外, 得其环中 Something transcending imagery but graspable or understandable within the circle. This two-line sentence, first used by Sikong Tu 司空图, suggests that there is something Daoist that lies beyond a perception of images yet within a circle of deep understanding. The concept has been re-vented and reapplied by generations of classical and modern Chinese writers and critics to designate the aesthetics of **xionghun mei 雄浑美, the beauty of the virile and huge**. This is currently an aesthetic concept that champions the beauty of great strength and vast dimensions; it is a counterpoint to the concept of the beauty as something feminine and small. For more discussion, see Yip 2006: 65.

7. Chonggao 崇高 sublimity. The Dao is said to be great in its power and dimensions (see the *DDJ*), a concept that is similar to the Western, Longinian concept of the sublime (Li 1992: 102).

Li Binghai also links the sublimity of the Dao with the Chinese system of pantheism prevalent in ancient Asia. Sublimity is thus one of the three characteristics of Daoist pantheism (see Li 1992: 102–114). The other two characteristics are **liudong 流动 fluidity and mobility** and **wuhua 物化 things transforming (into each**

other) in the process of change and interpenetration. Chen Penghsiang has convincingly argued that Zhuangzi's style is sublime (see Hsia, ed., *TAO: Reception in East and West*, 1994). For a different view on the lack of the sublime in Chinese traditional culture, see Li 2003: 380.

8. Chongqi yiwei he 冲气以为和 blending the yin/yang qi to reach harmony. In the *DDJ*, this line can be interpreted thus: Blending the yin/yang qi to reach an equilibrium or balance that is a state where all things can be harmonized and be productive or creative. See the **yin**, **the yang**, and **qi** under chief headings. In wider usage, this five-word line suggests an achieved ideal state of harmony and creativity, through the interactions of the yin and the yang qi, in cosmological formation and in human endeavours. Rather than conflicts, contradictions, and clashes, Daoist thought strives for a state of harmony that allows for optimum creativity, peace, and harmony. For a diverging interpretation of a similar – but not identical – phrase, see **Zhongqi yiwei he 中气以为和** [Blending the middle yin/yang qi to reach harmony] and Hu Fuchen's interpretation (2009: 49–53) based on the Guodian version of the *DDJ* unearthed in 1993. See also **He 和 harmony or harmonization**.

9. Chongshang ziran de lixiang 崇尚自然的理想 (Five ideals or goals related to) advocating the cause and course of Nature. Daoist philosophy, according to Li Binghai, advocates five ideals or goals with respect to nature, the cosmos, and ecology. For related ideals under this general heading, see **pusu er minxingde 朴素而民性得** [Simplicity produces good human characteristics English translation], **buqiuwen yidaixing 不求文以待形** [Never seek to adorn natural forms], **diao Zhuofupu 雕琢复朴** [sculpting and chiselling to return to simplicity], **yitian hetian 以天合天** [using the humanly achieved standards or state of Nature or Heaven to emulate those of Nature or Heaven], **zhenzhe jingchengzhizhi 真者精诚之至** [A person of integrity possesses the utmost sincerity and loyalty] (Li 1992: 134–180).

10. Daxiang wuxing 大象无形 Great images are formless or amorphous. The Dao is described as being great or grand, and as being formless or shapeless in the *Daode jing* (*DDJ*) and the *Zhuangzi* (*ZZ*). This visual attribute of the Dao has become one salient dimension and, indeed, one of the several standards in Daoist aesthetics and poetics. The phrase has also come into use in critical analyses of the great and formless imagery in artistic works. In Li's categorization, this key concept has been concretized into one of the three characteristics of his conceptualization of **Kongling de jingjie 空灵的境界, the realm of the empty and luminous**. (See Li 1992: 181–191)

11. Dayin xisheng 大音希声 Great music produces rare sound. This auditory attribute of the Dao as described in the *DDJ* has become one defining dimension of Daoist aesthetics and poetics.

12. Dao 道, the Way, formerly **Tao** in the Wade-Giles system, means literally “road,” “path,” and “method,” in Chinese etymology. In the most popularly used Chinese version of the *Daode jing*, the Chinese character 道 recurs 74 times in 37 chapters. The version on silk, excavated near Changsha, Hunan, China in 1973, and another version, unearthed in Guodian, Hubei, in 1993, also feature the word Dao prominently (see Henricks 2000: 17–22). Throughout two millennia and a half of its history, the over-arching and seminal concept of the Dao has become richly preg-

nant with multi-layered meanings or polysemy on at least three levels relevant to this study: the philosophical, the religious, and the literary or artistic. The very word, Dao, has indeed become both a cornucopia and conundrum for generations of interpreters and translators in Chinese and English all over the world.

1. The philosophical meanings of Dao are manifold and hierarchical, as follows.
 - (A) As prime mover and creator of the universe, it is born before the “emperor” (**di**) or 帝 in Chinese, and gives rise to **ten thousand things and beings** (**wanwu** 万物). Philosophically, it means ultimate reality, which is self-creating, self-generating, and self-regulating. Adrian Hsia, the editor of *TAO: Reception in East and West* (1994), characterizes the Dao as “the metaphysical soul of China” in a blurb on the back cover. The Dao in this sense appears first at the very beginning of the *Daode jing*, and recurs many times subsequently (see the *Daode jing*, Chapters 1, 4, 21, 25, 41; Zhao 2007: 15–17; Zhang 2004, 25–33; Liu 1975: 16–27; Wang 2011: 1–17).
 - (B) The **Dao** refers to the laws governing **ten thousand things and beings** (**wanwu** 万物) in the universe, including the laws governing social development of human society. The **Dao** in this sense recurs with the highest frequency in the *Daode jing* (see Zhao 2007: 17–18; Wang 2011: 1–17), the *Zhuangzi*, the *Leizi* (LZ), and the *Huananzi* (HNI).
 - (C) The **Dao** means the highest ethical and moral standards in ancient societies; it is tantamount to morality or ethics in current parlance. The **Dao** in this sense resurfaces nearly ten times in the *Daode jing* (Zhao 2007: 18–19). In the *Daode jing* text proper, four major categories of the Dao are clearly spelt out: the Dao of Heaven, of Earth, of Humanity, and of Nature.
2. The religious or spiritual significations of **Dao** are extensions or derivations from the philosophical meanings; they are equally rich and multi-layered. In fact, philosophical Daoist theories from Laozi and Zhuangzi form the very “soul” of religious Daoist culture (Shi 2009: 15). In Daoist religious writings, however, the **Dao** has been assigned over the course of some 1,800 years of Chinese history several extended meanings of a religious or spiritual kind. The same holds true for **religious Daoism**’s journey to the West. Notably, multi-theism and pantheism are two phenomena prevalent in traditional Chinese culture; they have been revived in the past decade after China’s state control was lessened in the late twentieth century and first 12 years of the twenty-first century. So far, several more levels of the Dao in a religious sense can be identified as distinct from those in a philosophical sense.
 - (A) The mystical Dao that begets everything, the universe, even gods and God;
 - (B) (i) The god-like Dao; (ii) The God-like Dao in pantheism;
 - (C) The Dao personified or embodied by Laozi or Zhuangzi;
 - (D) The Dao as qi, or vice versa;

In many English translations, the **Dao** has been equated with **God**. In Chinese religion, Laozi, renamed Taishang Laojun 太上老君, appears as one of the three

main gods in the Daoist pantheon. One should be mindful, however, that in the *Daode jing* itself, the **Dao** predates western concepts of God or divinity; it gives birth to God or everything else in Daoist cosmology. In religious Daoism as practised in both China and the West – a religion now very much alive in the new millennium – Laozi has been transformed into one of the three gods of the Chinese pantheon,. Similarly, Zhuang Zi has also been deified in Daoist religion. It may be ironic to scholars insistent on the philosophical breakthrough of the *DDJ* that both Laozi and the *DDJ* have, in effect, been turned to religious use.

For Daoist gods or for humans and things deified, see *Dao of the God* in Kohn (1998); “Cosmos, gods, and governance,” in Kohn (2009: 66–81). See also Wan *Chinese Religion* (2004; translation from Chinese into English); *An Illustrated Daoist Religious History* (2007; Chinese); and Shi Qiaoping’s *A Complete Guide to Daoist Religion* (《道教一本通:获得今生圆满的千年秘径》 2009; Chinese).

3. The Dao in literature and the arts is represented by its many philosophical and religious meanings. Over the past 2,700 years of Chinese literary history and the nearly 200 years’ of recent transplantations in the West, it has been expressed in various shapes, forms, colors, and hues. The **Dao**, in fact, is the ultimate goal of many philosophical, religious, and literary works. In other words, it is the objectively existing, ultimate, and absolute beauty and ideal. All qualities and characteristics of beauty, truth, and goodness are derived from those of the Dao. Literary and aesthetic standards are likewise derived from the various qualities of the Dao.

In East-West literary hermeneutics across cultures and languages, the **Dao** has been compared, at times rather narrowly, with the Western logos. Moreover, the Beijing- and Harvard University-trained Zhang Longxi cites the numerous findings of his Chinese mentor, the erudite Qian Zhongshu – findings based on decades of assiduous research in the tradition of Chinese exegesis, annotation, coloration, and criticism (see Zhang Longxi 1983, 1992, 2007).

The **Dao** can also signify the source of inspiration, creativity, and peace-tranquillity (和平 in Chinese), a source that gives rise to fecundity in literature and the arts (see *Creativity and Taoism* by Chang Chung-Yuan 1963, 1970 [rpt. 2011: Singing Dragon]); see Hu Fuchen 2009: 37–38.

In literature or arts, the specific ways to embody the **Dao** is by evoking the imagery and symbolism of water and qi. In Chinese, American, and Canadian literature, the Dao is more often hinted at, or alluded to, rather than presented in a glaring light or by direct reference. For appealing aesthetic effect, literary and artistic productions use Daoist imagery or symbolism to lead ultimately to the Dao itself.

For philosophical explications of the Dao, see Wang Keping 2011: 1–36; Hu Fuchen 2009: 37–38, 47; Karyn Lai 2008; David Hall and Roger Ames 2001, 2003: 55–71. For religious, folkloric, and mythological interpretations, see N. J. Girardot 1983, 2001, 2008; Zhong Laiyin 1990; Livia Kohn, 2009; Xie Xuanjun, 1986; Ye Shuxiang, 2005a, b; and Ralph Heintzman, 2011.

For literary and artistic analyses of the Dao in Chinese and North American literatures, see Chang Chung-yuan 1963 [rpt. 2011]; Zhong Lai-yin 1990; Hsia 1994;

Zhang 1992, 2007; Livia 2003; Li 1992, 2005; Chen 1991, 1993, 2008, 2010, 2011; Chen and Wei 2010, 2011; Li and Chen 2010, 2011. For the relationship between Chinese myths and the Dao or Daoism, see Girardot 1983; Birrell 2006; Xie 1986; Ye 2005b.

In addition to ancient Chinese writers and poets, a host of modern to contemporary creative writers in China and the English-speaking countries have directly explored the concept of the Dao. They include, but are not limited to: Lu Xun, Shen Congwen, Lin Yutang, Wang Meng, Wang Zengqi, Zhong A-Cheng, Gu Cheng, Gao Xingjian, and Mo Yan in China; Eugene O'Neill, Ursula Le Guin, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Brenda Paterson, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Frank Chin, and Jianqiang Lin in America; and Malcom Lowry, Fred Cogswell, Yue Ming Chen, Larissa Lai, Rita Wong, and John Ming Chen in Canada.

13. Daofa ziran 道法自然 The Dao models itself on Nature. This line, a motto in fact, comes from the *DDJ*. In literature and arts, this motto has led to the establishment of a Daoist aesthetics of Nature and spontaneity as well as a Daoist discourse on Nature. All Daoist aesthetic ideas are predicated on this cardinal principle. For a philosophical understanding of this principle, see Zhang 2002: 162–169. For a discussion of this principle and ecology, see Wang 2008; Zeng 2003, 2007. The relation of this principle to ecological North American literature is discussed by Chen 2008, 2010 and Wei and Chen 2010, 2011.

14. Daoism 道家、道教 see Daojia, Daoist philosophy, and Daojiao, Daoist religion.

15. Daojia 道家 Daoist philosophy. Daoist philosophy was, according to legend and history, initiated by Laozi some 2,600 years ago. It was later developed further by Zhuangzi and his followers. This philosophy emphasizes key concepts such as non-action, Nature or spontaneity, the yin/yang principle (the feminine and masculine), and tranquillity. See Lai 2008, Chen 1984, 1996; and Hu 2009.

16. Daojiao 道教 Daoist religion. Based on Daoist philosophy and developed from Chinese mythologies and religious movements 1800 years ago, Daoist religion emphasizes several key ideas. They include living contentedly in the here and now, the preservation of life, the worshipping of gods and ancestors, and unity with the universe. Ultimately, Daoist religion seeks longevity and even immortality through inner and outer alchemy. See Kohn ed. 2000, 2009, 2010, 2011; Miller 2003, ed. 2006; Hu 2009; Shi 2009; Qing 2008, 1998; Chau ed. 2011; Raz 2012.

17. Daojia meixue 道家美学, philosophical Daoist aesthetics. This field of study has been divided into several areas: the beauty and power of the Dao; the standards and ideals of aesthetics derived from the Dao's beauty and power; and issues of language and literature in expressing the Dao. The philosophical concept of the **Dao** is elevated and mystified as the metaphysical soul, or as the ultimate transcendental reality that some have compared to the logos in western metaphysics (See Zhang 1992). In literature, the Dao is usually shrouded in the metaphor and imagery of water and qi. In Daoist scriptures and religious murals, the Dao – with its reification in the deified Laozi and Zhuangzi – is enshrined in halos, imagery, and symbolism. Naturally, Daoist arts and literature follow a similar pattern of representation; see Li (1992), Li and Wei (2007), and Chen (2008).

18. Daojia shiren 道家诗人 Poets of Philosophical Daoism. This group of poets treat Daoism as a philosophy rather than as a religion. See Zhong 1990, Chen 2008, and Kroll 2009.

19. Daojia shixue 道家诗学 Philosophical Daoist poetics. This poetics is based on the philosophical principles of Daoism. These include ideas about non-action, nature or spontaneity, and a theory about the concepts of no-name, no-word, non-action, and so on. See Yip 1993, 2006; Cai 2002; Qiu 2005; Chen 2008; and Stalling 2010.

20. Daojia wenxue 道家文学 philosophical Daoist literature. This literature treats Daoism primarily as a philosophy. It has given rise to a variety of literary expressions of, and variations on, philosophical Daoist themes and contents. See Li 1992; Li and Wei 2005; Shi 2009; Zhang 1992, 2007; Chen 2008; and Koller 2009.

21. Daojiao meixue 道教美学 Religious Daoist aesthetics. This is an aesthetics that focuses mainly on three kinds of beauties: the natural beauty of mountains and waters, the bodily beauty of a young girl, and the mind-and-heart beauty of an infant (Hu 2009: 37–38). See also Zhong 1990; Tang 2010.

22. Daojiao meixushi 道教美学史 History of Religious Daoist Aesthetics. This history traces the origins and development of aesthetic values and structures in religious Daoism from its inception in Chinese pantheism and polytheism to the current twenty-first century. See Tang (2010).

23. Daojiao shenhua 道教神话 Religious Daoist mythology. Religious Daoist myths concern the origins of the universe as well as myths about the powers of gods and goddesses in mountains, waters, and skies. These narratives attempt to explain natural forces and mysteries in supernatural terms. The oldest extant collection of Chinese mythology remains *Classics of Mountains and Seas* (《山海经》). See Moeller 2006: 67; Girardot 1983; Xie 1986; Ye 2005b; and Wang 2006.

24. Daojiao shixue 道教诗学 Poetics of religious Daoism. This poetics treats the themes, contents, structures, and formal features of religious Daoism from antiquity to the twenty-first century. See Shi 2009; Zhang 2007; Chen and Li 2003; and Zhong 1990.

25. Daojiao shiren 道教诗人 Poets of Religious Daoism. This is a group of poets who have approached religious Daoism and given it a wide range of poetic expressions from some 2000 years ago to the present. See Shi 2009; Livia 2009; Kohn and Roth eds. 2002; Zhang 2007; Chen and Li 2003; and Zhong 1990.

26. Daojiao wenxue 道教文学 Religious Daoist literature. This literature treats Daoism principally as a religion; it has given it rich and various literary expressions from some 2,000 years ago till the present century. For religious Daoism in literature, see Zhong 1990 and Kroll 2009.

27. Daoshi 道士 Daoist priests. Religious Daoists who have been ordained and who live or have lived in Daoist temples or in the secular world.

28. Daoxian, 道仙 Daoist immortals. Religious Daoists who have practised health and longevity regimens and reached an advanced age. Their life expectancy is longer than that of most people (Hu 2009: 361–368).

29. Daozhuān de fāngfǎ 倒转的思维 Thinking in reverse. This is a term used to characterize a certain mode of thinking in philosophical Daoism. This mode

questions common wisdom and turns commonsensical binaries around or seeks to resolve them (Li 1992: 413–422). Along with this mode, there are three other modes of thinking that also define the reversal mechanism of philosophical Daoism. See **duili de xinling 对立的心理 [the psychology of opposites or complementarities]**, **pipan de fangfa 批判的方法 [critical methodology]**, **qite de yuyan 奇特的语言 [an odd and unique language]** (Li 1992: 388–432).

30. De 德 power or virtue of the Dao. De is described as the power or virtue of the Dao in practice (Hu 2009: 49–53).

31. Dedao 得道 (取道) obtaining the Dao. The concept means a certain high level of apprehension of the Dao.

32. Dedao zhi ren 得道之人 the person who has obtained the Dao. This term is used to describe those who have reached a high level of understanding of the Dao (Jin 2007: 193–196).

33. Di 地 Earth. Earth is one of the trinity or triad of heaven, earth, and humanity. This triad anchors the Daoist understanding of the cosmos in three concrete images; it has served as the philosophical, religious, and cultural backdrop to Chinese literature and arts. See **san 三 three** in terms of the cultural significance. For the Heaven-Earth-Humanity triad and North American literature, see Chen 2008; Chen and Wei 2011, 2012.

34. Di, 帝 Emperor. In the *DDJ*, the Dao is said to predate the emperor and everything in the universe.

35. Dichu xuanjian 涤除玄鉴 cleansing the mirror of one's heart of subjective opinions. This line from the *DDJ* teaches getting rid of one's subjective opinions and desires as well as making one's mind as clear as a mirror for the reception of the Dao. The *Zhuangzi* uses the mirror in a similar way. Yue Daiyun has convincingly argued that Chinese and Western literature has employed this metaphor of the mirror differently. See Yue 2004.

36. Dongtai zhangwo 动态掌握 grasping the dynamics or movement, or viewing things in its dynamic state or process. This is a Daoist aesthetic concept that advocates grasping entirely the dynamics of a situation or its development rather than seeing things in a static condition (Li 1992: 270–278).

37. Diaozhu fupu 雕琢复朴 sculpting and chiselling to return to simplicity. This concept advocates working towards the ideal of simplicity in life and art. It is one of the five ideals or standards in Daoist advocacy of the Natural (see Li 1992: 155–162). The other four ideals related to championing Nature are: **Pusu er minxingde 朴素而民性得 [Simplicity produces good human characteristics]** **Buqiuwen yi daixing 不求文以待形 [Never seek to adorn things]** **Yitianhetian 以天合天 [Using humanly achieved standards or state to emulate those of Heaven or Nature]** and **Zhenzhe jingchengzhizhi 真者精诚之至 [A person of integrity possesses the utmost sincerity and loyalty]** (see Li 1992: 134–180).

38. Duicheng mei 对称美 aesthetics of symmetry. This concept, which is based on the yin/yang principle, emphasizes the pairing and matching of proportions and balances in all things, including literature and arts.

39. Duili de xinli 对立的心理 the psychology of opposites or complementarities. According to Li, this psychology is consistent with Daoist philosophy. It is so

named because Daoist philosophy tends to view things from two sides simultaneously and sets up many binaries – only to reverse or resolve them (Li 1992: 388–399).

40. Duilian 对联 couplet. A couplet is two poetic lines constructed according to tonal demands and antithetical grammar and parts of speech. Couplets are hung alongside doors and windows or are pasted to them for festive or special occasions. They also reflect a yin/yang mentality.

41. Duiou 对偶 parallelism in two lines. In Chinese poetry or prose, this kind of antithetical couplet shows a yin/yang harmonized structure.

42. Duowei shenshi 多维审视 carefully viewing from multiple perspectives simultaneously. This concept defines a certain Daoist way of viewing simultaneously things and situations from several perspectives. It constitutes one of the four interrelated Daoist concepts under the category, **qiwu de guanzhao fangshi 齐物的观照方式 [A mode of viewing all things as equal]** (Li 1992: 278–286).

43. Duyu tiandi jingshen laiwang 独与天地精神来往 communicating with the spirit of heaven and earth exclusively. The sentence comes from the ZZ; it advocates the ultimate stage of aesthetic and spiritual transcendence over the mundane world to reach a carefree state. For a discussion of this concept in the life and poetry of Nobel Prize nominee Lo Fu, see John Ming Chen and Wei Li 2011 (this volume).

44. Er 二 two. The two often means the yin qi and the yang qi in Daoist cosmology. The DDJ features the process of creation of the universe: “The Dao begets One; One begets Two; the Two begets Three.”

45. Fanpu guizhen 返朴归真 restoring simplicity and returning to authenticity. This is one of the Daoist aesthetic principles that advocate a return to simplicity and authenticity in life and writing. This concept takes a critical view of current trends and habits by offering one seemingly simple solution from the Daoist perspective (See Hu 2009: 37–38).

46. Fanshenlun de tixi 泛神论的体系 Pantheistic system. According to Li Binghai, a system of pantheism subsumes the three following concepts: **liudong 流动 fluidity and mobility**, **chonggao 崇高 sublimity**, **wuhua 物化 transforming into things** (Li 1992: 89–133).

47. Fuza de rensheng yishi 复杂的人生意识 Complex consciousness about human life. This consciousness expands on and extends human life as normally understood, and gives it new meaning from the Daoist perspective. Belonging in this category are four key concepts, **yangsheng yu changsheng 养生与长生 [nurturing and extending life]**, **lesi yu busi 乐死与不死 [Content to die and determined not to die]**, **zuishui wu mengjue 醉睡无梦觉 [drunk sleep has no sense of dreams]**, **laishi bu kedai 来世不可待 [One should not wait around for the next life]** (Li 1992: 299–348).

48. Gu 谷 Valley. This is one of the images of emptiness that illustrates the fecundity and productivity of empty spaces in the Daoist canon. See Moeller 2006: 7–20.

49. Guirou 贵柔 respecting the soft. This is one of the Daoist principles that recommends respect for a yielding attitude (Shi 2009: 25).

50. Gushen 谷神 the valley spirit. In Daoist literature, the valley spirit is abiding and gives birth to other things.

51. Guishen chongbai 鬼神崇拜 worshipping of the ghosts and gods. Chinese worship is characterized by pantheism, polytheism, and atheism, an apparently contradictory phenomenon. Daoist religion is derived from ancient Chinese pantheism. It has inspired many Daoist religious poets such as Li Bai and novelists such as Wu Chengen (Wang and Zheng 2004: 132–133; Li 1992).

52. Hanxu mei 含蓄美 the aesthetics of indirection and suggestion. As terms describing the Dao are uncertain and ambiguous, the aesthetics of indirection and suggestion have become one of the standards of Daoist literature and arts. See Zhang 1992.

53. He 和 harmony. The *DDJ* states: “Ten thousand things embrace the yang in front and carry the yin on their back, blending the two qi and reaching harmony.” Harmony in everything – society, nature, human relationships, artistic structures, fictional resolutions, and so on – is thus an ideal desired by all. For the concept at work in North American literature, see Chen 2008, 2010; Chen and Wei 2010.

54. Heweigui 和为贵 Harmony is precious. This expression is a principle in conceptualizing literature and arts.

55. Hexie mei 和谐美 The aesthetics or beauty of harmony. Daoist aesthetics treat harmony as the ultimate end in and of itself. This idea leads to happy endings in life, literature, and art. According to this view, conflict and clashes are to be avoided because they lead to tragedy.

56. He Wei Mei 和为美 harmony is beauty. This idea is in accordance with the Daoist principle that harmony is both productive and aesthetically pleasing. For the workings of this concept in literature, see Wang and Zheng 2004: 297–299; Wei and Chen 2011

57. Hexie shixue 和谐诗学 Poetics of harmony. The Chinese tend to idealize a philosophy of harmony, be it Confucian or Daoist, in literature and in life. To the Chinese, harmony is both a process (harmonization) and an end (See Cai 2002, chap. 2, 33–70; 107).

58. Hongguan fuyang 宏观俯仰 A downward and upward macrocosmic perspective. The Daoist recommends getting a macrocosmic view of things by examining them from several directions and thus gaining several points of view (Li 1992: 259–270).

59. Huigui ziran 回归自然 returning to Nature. In life as in literature and the arts, Daoist philosophy champions a return to nature or Nature in its unspoiled state. It emphasizes the interests of nature rather than those of human beings (Hu 2009: 37–38).

60. Hulu 葫芦 the Gourd. In Daoist philosophy and religion, the gourd is a symbol of empty space and suggestive of productivity and creativity.

61. Jingji 静寂 tranquillity and quietude. This is a state believed to be conducive to the creativity of writers, artists, and ordinary people (Li 1992: 63–83). Li Zehou, citing Lu Xun, also agrees that reading Chinese books written in this vein tends to induce a quiet state of mind in the reader (2003: 380).

62. Jingjie meixue 境界美学 Aesthetics of the Daoist realm. This expression refers to an aesthetic characteristic of literature and the arts that points to a certain

Daoist world view that lies beyond the page or stage and beyond words or pictures. That something is merely hinted at.

63. Juesheng qizhi 绝圣弃智 discarding sainthood and wisdom. This four-word phrase from the DDJ recommends thinking sceptically about sainthood and conventional wisdom. It has become a set phrase in Chinese culture. For a literary treatment of this phrase in Lo Fu's poetry, see Wei and Chen 2012 (2nd edition).

64. Kongbai mei 空白美 the aesthetics of the blank. Derived from the images of the hub, the valley, the bellows, and the gourd as well as from the Daoist discourse on emptiness in the DDJ, this concept has evolved a great deal. It centers on the suggestive power of blank space in literature and arts. In this concept, what is unsaid or undrawn is as important as what is said or drawn – if not more so. See Yip 2006: 57–59; Stalling 2010.

65. Kongling mei 空灵美 the aesthetics of emptiness-luminosity. This concept expresses the idea that minimalism is ideal or even best and that empty spaces can invite more, literally and figuratively, to come into one's purview and experience (Li “空灵的境界” 1992: 180–216; Yip “空故纳万物” 2006: 151–168).

66. Kongling de jingjie 空灵的境界 the realm of the empty and void. This concept conveys the idea about a high realm to attain amid the empty and the void. It is therefore not fullness and substance that should hold our attention. Rather, it is the empty and the void that should be explored to the fullest extent for what they are worth. Under this category are three main concepts, **daxiang wuxing 大象无形 a vast or grand image is formless**, **xushi shengbai 虚室生白 an empty room looks bright**, and **tianji buzhang 天机不张 Heaven's message is not disclosed** (Li 1992: 181–218).

67. Laish bu kedai 来世不可待 One should not wait around for the next life. This line from the ZZ (Renjian Shi 人间世 chapter) is the contrary of a Confucian concept, 来者犹可追, which means that the future can be pursued. The Daoist view holds that a human being can hardly know the indefinite time beyond his own existence, and this Daoist expression conveys the contrast between the definite life and indefinite time. This concept comes under the main category, **fuzhade rensheng yishi 复杂的人生意识, complex human consciousness**. See Li 1992: 337–346.

68. Lesi yu busi 乐死与不死 Content to die and determined not to die. This phrase expresses a paradoxical attitude toward death: if one has to die, die content; meanwhile, try to extend one's life for as long as possible. Daoist philosophy advises that one should die from a natural life happily, while Daoist religion teaches that one should extend one's natural life for as long as possible (Li 1992: 317–325).

69. Lianse 敛啬 In-drawing and contracting. This phrase suggests a Daoist concept of modesty and of not showing off beauty in an intrusive way (Li 1992: 231–244). See also **tiandi you damei er buyan 天地有大美而不言 Heaven and Earth possess great beauty but never speak of it**.

70. Liudong 流动 fluidity and mobility. These qualities are three salient characteristics of the Daoist pantheistic system, which gives fluidity and mobility to things as well as humans. Daoism also gives consciousness and god-like qualities to fluidity and mobility (Li 1992: 89–102). See other related Daoist concepts, **jingji 静寂 tranquility and quietude** (Li 1992: 63–83, 92–97).

71. Mei 美 beauty, beautiful. What is beauty and what is beautiful? To these questions the *DDJ* provides answers different from those given by its contemporaries. For Daoists, beauty lies in nature with its simplicity, plainness, and harmony, and standards of beauty are based on these qualities. See Wang 2011: 59–66.

72. Miaoli xuewen 妙理学问 mystical principles and learning. Zhong studies Su Dongpo's life and writing and uses this term with reference to Su Dongpo's absorption of religious and philosophical Daoism (Zhong 1990: 384–389).

73. Mohuxing 模糊性 uncertainty and ambiguity. Li credits Daoist literature with inheriting this quality or state from primitive mythologies (Li Binghai; he also shows this quality at work in classical Chinese literature (1992: 37–49)). For the same kind of quality in Eastern and Western literary hermeneutics regarding the Tao and the Logos, see Zhang 1992.

74. Nifan de jizhi 逆反的机制 reverse mechanism. This term is used by Li Binghai. In his view, Daoist philosophy reverses conventional, pre-existing Confucian ways of thinking. Four key concepts fall into this category: **duili de xinli 对立的心理 the psychology of opposites or complementaries**, **pipan de fangfa 批判的方法 Critical methodology**, **daozhuan de siwei 倒转的思维 Thinking in reverse**, and **qite de yuyan 奇特的语言 an odd and unique language** (Li 1992: 388–432).

75. One — see *yi*.

76. Pipan de fangfa 批判的方法 critical methodology. This term is used by Li Binghai to characterize a certain Daoist way of thinking that combines critical realism and romanticism, historical and mythical materials, humour and satire. See Li 1992: 400–412.

77. Pingheng mei 平衡美 the aesthetics or beauty of balance. Based on the yin/yang principle, Daoist philosophy favours balance over the lack of it, and symmetry over asymmetry. As balance is also viewed dynamically, the need for re-balancing exists most of the time.

78. Pu 朴 simplicity. Pu, like One or *yi*, is sometimes equated with the Dao. Simplicity is associated with original wood – one of the five elements in TCM. This concept has been emphasized in the *DDJ* many times in Chapters 15, 19, 28, 32, 37, 57 (see Henricks 2000: 17); it is therefore an ideal for life, literature, and the arts.

79. Pusu er minxingde 朴素而民性得 simplicity produces good human characteristics. This line is originally from the “Horseshoe” 马蹄 chapter of the *ZZ*. Its meaning includes simplicity in both form and spirit (Li 1992: 134–143).

80. Pusu mei 朴素美, supumei 素朴美 the beauty or aesthetics of pristine or natural simplicity. “Pu” means the uncarved block, and “su” means white cloth. Together they suggest things in their natural state. This ideal is important in Daoist aesthetics (Ling 1992: 134–163); see *Supu* 素朴.

81. Qi 气 chi, vital energy. Wade-Giles: chi. Qi is a fundamental concept in Daoist philosophy. It means “vital energy or the primordial material that makes up the universe.” In literature and criticism, one can say the qi of an article means its verve; one can also say that a lively person has a good qi. Since qi permeates everything animate or inanimate, it is sometimes equated with the Dao in the sense of

being the primordial material that comprises the universe (See Kohn *God of the Dao*; Hu 2009: 47–48).

82. Qingleng 清冷 utter coldness. This term is used to describe a style of writing that seems philosophically detached and without feeling. It is one of the three characteristics of a certain Daoist literary or artistic style defined by Li Binghai, a style that is generally named a stern style, **yanjun de fengge 严峻的风格**. Here, Li appropriates Hegel's term (Li 1992: 219–230).

83. Qingxu zhimei 清虚之美 the aesthetics or beauty of the sheer void or emptiness. Daoist philosophy sees something where other philosophies do not and perhaps cannot. See another two concepts, **yinrou zhimei 阴柔之美** and **kongling zhi mei 空灵之美 the aesthetics of emptiness-luminosity** (Li 1992: 12).

84. Qite de yuyan 奇特的语言 an odd and unique language. Li Binghai describes the language of classical Daoist literature as free, liberating, and carefree yet characterized by a large quantity of broken sentences and paradoxes (Li 1992: 423–432).

85. Qiwu de guanzhao fangshi 齐物的观照方式 A mode of viewing all things as equal. This way of seeing the world is advanced in the ZZ and has been applied to literature and literary criticism. In relation to this phrase, four concepts are key: **hongguan fuyang 宏观俯仰 A downward and upward macrocosmic perspective**, **dongtaizhangwo 动态掌握 grasping things from a dynamic perspective**, **duoweishenshi 多维审视 viewing things or situations from a multi-dimensional perspective**, **ziwopingheng 自我平衡 self-balancing** (Li 1992: 259–298).

86. Ren 人 humanity. In Daoist cosmology, there are three entities – heaven, earth, and humanity. As heaven and earth precede humanity, the centrality of human beings is questioned. The ordering of this triad has many possible implications – ontological, ecological, aesthetic, and epistemological.

87 Rendao heyi 人道合一 the unity of humanity and the Dao. Daoist philosophy advocates the view that humanity should be united with the Dao. This view has been expressed in many Chinese, American and Canadian literary texts. (See Chen 2008; Kroll 2009).

88. Renge mei 人格美, the aesthetics of human character. In Daoist philosophy, there are different kinds of beauty in its practitioners. These include such qualities as spontaneity, sincerity, non-action, and tranquillity. See another two aesthetics **yishu mei 艺术美 aesthetics of art**, **ziran mei 自然美 natural aesthetics or the aesthetics of the natural**.

89. Rouruo buzhen 柔弱不争 soft, weak, and not contending. These characteristics or qualities are idealized in the Daoist way of living and writing (Li 1992: 349–361).

90. Ruoji ruoli 若即若离 seemingly attached and detached simultaneously. This paradoxical attitude is basic to Daoist aesthetics and criticism (Li 1992: 371–383).

91. Ruoshui 弱水 weak water. Ultimately water can corrode and smooth the hardest of elements – even rocks and stones. Although it may seem weak, it is a symbol for greatness of power.

92. San 三 Three. the intermingled and balanced yin/yang qi; the number three is important for several reasons. In Laozi's cosmology, it is the stage where the blended yin/yang qi gives rise to a multitude of things – both animate and inanimate. The generative and creative quality [property] of the number three is embedded in the structure and understanding of Chinese culture (Hu 2009). This number is also key to a typically Chinese method of overcoming binaries or dichotomies (see Yu Dan on *The Romance of Three Kingdoms* with its discussion of the grey area between black and white and of the fact that often life presents more than two choices or options; 2007; see Wang and Zheng 2004: 300–306 on three kinds of scenic imagery; see also Wang and Zheng 2004: 133–134)

93. San sheng wanwu 三生万物 Three gives rise to ten thousand things and beings. This four-word expression from the *DDJ* refers to a process of Daoist creation from the Dao to the One, Two, and Three. “Three” is an important stage, for it anticipates a sudden and exponential leap from a very small number of things to a host of others. Thus “Three” is not just a number: it signals a significant change or the next stage of exponential changes to the ten thousand things or events. In Chinese literature and arts it often gives shape to formal and developmental matters. See Hu 2009: 154–155; Hu 1998: 65. Furthermore, three can mean the yin/yang qi harmonized – the process that produces everything under heaven. In Daoist religion, stress is laid on two giving rise to three (Hu 2009: 47–48). See also Lin 2012, for the Daoist emphasis on the number three and Confucian emphasis on the number two, in terms of the principle of change based on the *Yijing (I Ching)*.

94. Shanshui 山水 mountains and waters. These are Daoist examples of synecdoche for symbolizing the yang (mountains) and the yin (waters) in the natural world. See **Shanshui shi 山水诗 poetry of mountains and waters.**

95. Shanshui shi 山水诗 poetry of mountains and waters. This kind of poetry takes for its subject matter the mountains and waters but demands an obliteration of the division between the subjective and objective worlds. In other words, the poet expresses the totality and interrelatedness of the world and things by such processes as “sitting in oblivion.” See Wang and Zheng 2004: 299–300; Yip 2006: 80–94.

96. Shui 水 Water Since the unearthing of the Guodian version of the *Daode Jing* carved on bamboo strips in Hubei Province, China, in 1993, with “Taiyi shengshui” (“The Great One Gave Birth to Water”) focusing on the One and water, both the concepts of One and of water have been given new cosmological meanings (see new translations by Henricks (2000: 3), and an appendix with commentaries by Ames and Hall (2003: *Daodejing: Making this Life Significant*). The Dao is presented as possessing the qualities of water; therefore, imagery, symbolism, and discourse involving water are highly suggestive of the Dao's presence in literature and arts (see Zhou 2008: 6–7).

97. Supu 素朴 pristine simplicity. These two words express a Daoist ideal for life, literature, and arts. See Chen and Li 2003: 6–8.

98. Tao, see Dao 道.

99. Taohuayuan 桃花源 the Peach Blossom Spring. This is a well-known, utopian, Daoist image created by Tao Qian (Tao Yuanming) 陶渊明. From Laozi and Zhuangzi through Tao Yuanming to Lu Xun, Shen Congwen, and Ah Cheng, classi-

cal and modern Chinese literature has witnessed a host of writers contributing to this Daoist motif. For the appearance of this expression in Canadian literature, see Chen 2008. For a reinterpretation of the Daoist utopia – the Daoist ideal world, see Wang 2011: 117–118.

100. Taoism, see **Daoism**.

101. Ten thousand things and beings, see **Wanwu**.

102. Tianran 天然 unadorned nature. This ideal includes naturalness in style and in character.

103. Tianran qu diaoshi 天然去雕饰 pristine nature without adornments. Originally from Li Bai (Li Po)’s poem, this ideal often refers to literary works or beautiful women.

104. Tianren heyi 天人合一 the unity or unification of Heaven and Humanity. This state includes the unity of spirit and body and of the subjective and objective worlds. This achieved state ranks second to none. It is considered the highest achievement for the religious Daoist (Shi 2009: 186), the highest realm attainable in Daoist culture (Hu 2009: 37–38), and most transformative joy in human life for Tang poets (Chen and Li 2003: 10). For the relationship in a global context of ecology and this Chinese concept, see Wang 2008: 233–235. For ecological aesthetics, see Zeng 2003, 2007.

105. Tiandi you damei er buyan 天地有大美而不言 The great beauty of heaven and earth does not speak of itself. The first of three parallel sentences in the Zhibeiyou 知北游 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, this line has been cited on numerous occasions as illustrative of the inarticulate beauty of nature (see Yip 2006: 49–52).

106. Three, see **san**.

107. Valley, see **Gu 谷 Valley**.

108. Wanwu 万物 literally, ten thousand things, or myriads of things, everything. The term has become a two-character idiom to denote a multitude of things and beings. In any work of Chinese Daoist literature, this phrase would have intertextual meanings harking back to the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* – allusions that are often lost in translation. From the *Daode jing* onwards, this two-word phrase keeps resonating in the philosophical and literary writings. In literature written in both Chinese and English the following line from the *Zhuangzi* echoes this two-word phrase an intertext: *Wanwu yu wo wei yi* 万物与我为一 – “the myriad things and I are one” (Liu 1975: 62), or “the ten thousand things and I are one.” (See *wanwu yuwo wei yi* 万物与我为一)

109. Wanwu yuwo wei yi 万物与我为一 literally, this line means: “Ten thousand things and I are one.” The line, originally by Zhuangzi, emphasizes the identification of one with many and the unity of the human and natural worlds. The Daoist state advocated by Zhuangzi has become an ideal situation or world to which many aspire. See Chen and Wei 2012: 398–430, on Lo Fu.

110. Wuhua 物化 identifying with and turning into things. In Li Binghai’s view, this idea is one of three concepts basic to the Daoist system of pantheism. This “thinging” process involves four different levels: *Wuwo minghe* 物我冥合 [the seamless joining of the self and things], *zhuke xiangwang* 主客相忘 [the forgetting of each other by the subject and the object], *wuwo shuangyi* 物我双遗, [the

forgetting of oneself and the things to merge with Nature without realizing it] and shenwaiwuwu 身外无物 [**there is nothing outside the body in the absolute fusion of oneself into Nature**] (see Li 1992: 114–125).

111. Wuming 无名 no name. The *DDJ* states that namelessness is the beginning of ten thousand things. The emphasis on the nameless state leads to epistemological, linguistic, and poetic ponderings. There is a dialectical relationship between the named and the un-named, a relationship worthy of poetic and philosophical exploration. This concept of the no-name or nameless state has been taken up by writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston.

112. Wuwei 无为 non-action. This is a foundational concept in philosophical and religious Daoism. Far from its seemingly innocent and unsophisticated surface meaning, the concept advocates non-interference and then action in the right place at the right time. Letting things take their natural course is not an easy thing to do, for humans tend to (super)impose their wills on nature and natural courses. This concept of non-action is of particular relevance in the current age when high-tech, capitalist globalization is being carried out to the detriment of nature and ecology (See Shi 2009: 25).

113. Xujing 虚静 vacuity and tranquility Based on the characteristics of the Dao, this two-word phrase refers to a state conducive to artistic creation and aesthetic appreciation. See Wang and Zheng 2004: 279–290; 294–295; Zhou 2008: 7; and Yip 2006: 98–100.

114. Xushi 虚实 Empty space and solidity. Emptiness and substance have a dialectical relationship in Daoist aesthetic philosophy. Daoism emphasizes their mutually enhancing and generative dynamics that are applicable even to the process of creating works of literature.

115. Yanjun de fengge 严峻的风格 A stern style. This is a style that has been attributed to Chinese Daoist literature, a style inherited from the implicit and ambiguous literary tradition of the Zhou Dynasty. Under this category of style are three main concepts regarding Daoist literature: qingleng 清冷 [**utter coldness**], lianse 敛斋 [**In-drawing and contracting**], and xiangzheng 象征 [**symbolism**] (see Li 1992: 219–258).

116. Yi — One. The Dao is the One before the one, and the two words can be used synonymously or interchangeably (the *Daode jing* Chapter 39; Li 1992: 88–89). Taiyi, the ultimate one, gives rise to water in the Guodian version of the *Daode jing* (see translations by Henrick 2000, and by Ames and Hall 2003). As a result, oneness is the ideal state to which artists and writers aspire in their vision of the universe and in their relation to it. (See Li 1992: 88–89).

117. Yin 阴 “the female or negative principle in nature” (*A Chinese-English Dictionary*, Beijing: Commercial Publishing House, 1979). In Daoist cosmogony and cosmology, the yin is a principal metaphysical concept set in a dialectical relationship with another principal concept, the masculine in rough translation, the **yang**; the two concepts form a complementary and generative base that gives rise to everything else.

118. Yin-soft aesthetics 阴柔美 the aesthetics of the yin-soft. Daoist philosophy prefers the yin-soft over the yang-firm; Daoist aesthetics shares this tendency.

In contrast with the yang-firm style, it is possible of course for a poet to produce works of yin-soft beauty.

119. Yin/yang 阴阳 the yin and the yang. This is a metaphysical concept first formulated in the *Yijing* (*I Ching*) and developed in the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Huainanzi*. The concept has appeared in numerous literary manifestations throughout Chinese history. Notably, the Song poet, critic, painter, and calligrapher Su Dongpo used this yin/yang concept in his philosophic-poetic ponderings over the phases/faces of the waxing and waning moon in relation to human reunions and separations, fortunes and misfortunes. In the theory and practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the cardinal yin/yang principle manifests itself in five specific ways. These applications are the richest and most elaborate illustrations of the principle. In the past decade, standard Chinese college and university TCM textbooks have clearly recognized and acknowledged the philosophical contribution of the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* to this cardinal concept in TCM as well as acupuncture, and qigong theory; see Wang 2000.

120. Yinyang heyi 阴阳合一 fusion of the yin and the yang as one. Daoist philosophy advocates the interpenetration and unity of the yin and the yang, as do Daoist aesthetics and poetics. In the West, it is the unity of opposites in order to be whole that has appealed to and influenced psychologists such as Carl Jung and poets such as Fred Cogswell. See Wei and Chen 2010, 2011; and Chen and Wei 2012.

121. Youmiao de xuguan 幽妙的玄感 the deep and wonderful sense of the metaphysical. This key concept can be illustrated by three characteristics: **mohu 模糊 [uncertainty and ambiguity]**, **cantan 惨淡 [gloom and anxiety]**, and **jingji 静寂 [tranquillity and quietude]** (Li 1992: 37–88).

122. Youxian shi 游仙诗 Daoist poetry taking wandering immortals and their lives as the key subject matter. This kind of poetry is peopled by philosophical or religious Daoist poets. They enjoy wandering far and wide, writing poetry or prose amid mountains and waters or in Daoist temples in search of the Dao and immortality. (See Shi 2009: 430–432; Chen and Li 2003: 66–83; Zhang 2007: 290–293). See **Xianyou shi**.

123. Youwu 有无 being and non-being. A pair of philosophical concepts set in a dialectical and complementary relationship. The two-word term is also translated as “being and beingless” (Zhang 2002: 156–161).

124. Youwu xiangsheng 有无相生 being and non-being give rise to each other. A line from the *DDJ*, it suggests the mutually generative relationship of the two concepts. In creative writing, the message that something comes from nothing, or that nothing gives rise to something, inspires many to start from the scratch. Developed in her public speech, “Where Does Creativity Hide,” Amy Tan’s concept that something comes from nothing bears much affinity with this Daoist view.

125. Yunyou 云游 wandering like a cloud. This is a stage that Daoists go through in search of the Dao or Daoist awakening. The seemingly care-free wanderings nevertheless stress a committed attitude to search everywhere for the Dao. Lin Yutang’s epic novel *A Moment in Peking*, which is about three family sagas, features a Daoist-turned-Confucian protagonist who takes an extensive journey for the Dao in this manner.

126. Zhenzhe jingchengzhizhi 真者精诚之至 A person of integrity possesses the utmost sincerity and loyalty. The ZZ sets forth the ideal types of Daoist character for others to imitate. Sincerity and loyalty are two key qualities making for greatness in a person (Li 1992: 170–178).

127. Zhengti zhuyi 整体主义 holism . This idea is useful in ecological writing of any kind. Ecological holism in the spirit of Daoism is gaining ascendance. See Wang 2008: 233.

128. Zhonghe zhimei 中和之美 the beauty of the median and harmonious. The aesthetics of the median and harmonious have shaped many philosophical and literary works (Hu 2009: 48–53; Wang and Zheng 2004: 298).

129. Zhuangzhou mengdie 庄周梦蝶 Zhuangzi day-dreaming about a butterfly. This fable asks an ontological question about identity and reality; it takes for granted the unstable and changeable nature of things, as well as of human life and identity. Larissa Lai and Rita Wong's collaborative serial poem, *Sybil Unrest*, intertextualizes this fable, so does Lo Fu's epic poem nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature, *Driftwood*.

130. Ziran mei 自然美 the beauty of nature. Predicated on the essential characteristics of the Dao, the beauty of nature is an extension of the Dao itself. The emphasis on natural beauty has ecological implications, for it challenges Western philosophies about the human will to power and human dominance over nature. In religious literature and the arts, this Daoist aesthetic of nature calls into question the centrality and omnipresence of God as conceived in Western society and casts doubt on related standards for the sublime and beautiful. See **Ziran 自然 Nature, Spontaneity.** See Zhang and Wang 2004: 299–300; Girardot et al. 2001; Chen 2008; Wang 2008.

131. Ziran supu de fengge 自然素朴的风格 a natural and simple style. This expression refers to a style for life, writing, and arts. The style is based on one of the characteristics of the Dao: pristine simplicity.

132. Zisheng 自生 self-generation (see Moeller 2006: 50–52). In Daoist cosmogony and cosmology, autopoiesis is a key concept. Accordingly, everything is considered to be self-generated or self-created because of the Dao residing in or working on it.

133. Ziwo pingheng 自我平衡 self-balancing. This concept refers to a mental kind of self-balancing that may be achieved in three steps: eliminating self-consciousness, transcending sensory organs, and harnessing one's thoughts in a certain manner (Li 1992: 287–295).

134. Zuowang 坐忘 sitting and forgetting. A term from the *Zhuangzi*, it is relevant to philosophical and religious meditation as well as to creative writing and arts. This meditative method clears the mind, calms the heart, and cleanses one of everything unnecessary. It enables one to focus absolutely on the task at hand – even to the point of forgetting oneself and the world in order to become at one with it.

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