The Art of Dissent from the Rhetoric of Silence: The Terror and Promise of *Dao* and *Khōra*

Abstract

This thesis reworks the idea of Chineseness as a translational point in its exploration of the intricate knot of nothingness, a sublimity which makes Chinese culture irreducible to the postcolonial, postmodern or poststructuralist movements because what the West arrogates from Eastern philosophy or contrariwise is simultaneously an interrogative advancement and a detour to selfsameness. Derrida's deconstructive absence in Chinese writing may be surprising to those acquainted with his eloquence on phonetic writing and the Egyptian hieroglyphs. By (dis)locating the commentaries revolving around Derrida's reticence on Chinese inscriptions, I shall launch the argument from what most have put down merely as a "lack" of knowledge, inverted here to expose the always already missing link between the articulator and reality. Derrida's cryptic remark about Chinese writing as "the testimony of a powerful movement of civilization developing outside of *all* logocentrism" can be read as a suggestion of a certain parallelism between deconstruction and Eastern philosophy, accidentally encountering in this paper. The signifying dissemination within writing is most advantageous to the reading of *dao* and *khōra* as synonymous sites and only meeting with a supplementary inversion, an ironic twist, at the divide between the East and the West. This Lacanian knot, a result of the encore of centres, is reconciled provisionally with a *deus ex machina*, the "parallax view" of Slavoj Žižek, the interpretative (l)ink. As part of the many chiasmic encounters, it is the assertion here that Derrida's rewriting of the Heideggerean *Dasein*, "There is nothing outside the text", signals the revolutionary aestheticisation of the ontological contours which gives to a replete subjectivity, political or otherwise. Inversely, the ontological disclosure in and through aesthetics provides impetus to epistemology. And the circular relations between aesthetics and existential ethics are that which provides the possibility of reconciliation with alterity, the trace that inevitably keeps

reading open. Given that we can relate the ethical only to the contextual, the contingency underlying its very definition discloses an indeterminacy that ensures openness to the future, and, coupled with the readiness to respond to the call of the other, prompts a re-reading as reading irresponsibly. In other words, the semiotic coming-to-be reciprocates the coming-to-be of the human entity. Derrida's silence about Chinese writing may be a gesture to the signifying reticence at the heart of discourse, simultaneously the poetic place and moment, which enables this critical traversal, a wayfaring entailing the bearing of the past so that alterity can be imag(in)ed, the "supernumerary" of both *dao* and *khōra*, with the disablement of a fixed discursive trajectory.

Acknowledgements

Contents

Afterword

As an afterword, the introduction encapsulates the various thetic arguments that constitute the thesis here. The first concerns the Western concept of the postmodern and whether China at the turn of the twenty-first century can be called a postmodern society. While various writers have written about Chinese postmodernity, noting, of course, China's place in an international arena characterised by globalisation, this thesis calls to question the idea of a Chinese postmodernity not because China is not modernised in alignment to global capitalist economy but because the features of the postmodern, notably a Western term, are repetitions of Chinese heretical thought proposed by the Daoist masters, Laozi and Zhuangzi, albeit with a difference. Thus, this thesis argues for the chiasmic interface of the Western postmodern and Chinese high antiquity based on the transmigratory movements of signifying elements in cross-cultural translations whereby both the East and the West manifest characteristics borrowed from each other and subsequently transformed owing to their insertion into the specific cultural contexts.

This introduction also takes issue with Michelle Yeh's "Chinese Postmodernism" which speaks of the poststructuralists such as Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida as if they are responsible for postmodernism. Both Lacan and Derrida are not postmodernists and there were occasions whereby Derrida refused to be called a poststructuralist simply because their works are not that easily identifiable. The writings of both thinkers are responses to the metaphysical tradition they inherited, a legacy they have striven to take on although in different ways. At this late stage of postmodernity, the question that is in everyone's mind is: "What's next?" This thesis reworks Vladimir Nabokov's notion of "the present past", a personal memoir, to a memorious discourse that hopes to stimulate and encourage the thinking of, to borrow Rey Chow's title, an ethics after idealism. The double chiasmic encounters of *dao* and *khōra* depicted

in an awesome way by Jackson Pollock's *Lavender Mist* prompt the other chiasmi in this dissertation. While the entourage of writers, thinkers I call "the warriors of the ring", is called upon because of a certain fundamental in their works – the critical attention given to the historical trauma or, in other words, the structural problematic – there are theoretical or methodological differences and, sometimes, marked ones which I have attempted to address in the dissertation proper. If I have not done it in a more comprehensive fashion, perhaps, this is the space to do so.

Slavoj Žižek's parallax view is brought in to complement and boost Zhuangzi's concept of perspective shifts, points of view that give us the parallax error which scientific objectivity itself does not escape. Derrida's *différance*, aptly termed a non-concept, moves in a way that crosses Lacan's psychoanaytic theory: the Lacanian hard kernel and Derridean fluid and feisty *khōra* meet at the heart of a chiasmus. Whereas Lacan's attention goes to the phallic signifier, Derrida's critical engagement with metaphysics lies with the hymeneal ring, although it must be added that the former's *Seminar XX* constitutes a pivotal turn that reinforces Derrida's notion of the hymen as the liminary space for the contact with the other. Michel Foucault's thinking on power is necessary for addressing the ethics of contemporary politics, the hegemonic underpinnings of which must first be exposed before we can move on to socio-political change, a mental decolonisation that will manifest hopefully in revolutionary performativity.

Since the space of conflict, in this thesis, is the square, the thetic focus on Tiananmen Square evinces an instance where power relations are enacted and the dramatisation of the revolutionary activity is linked to its concomitant literary revolution not only because they always emerge hand in hand in China but also the fact that the literary square of the paper is metaphorically reminiscent of the physical square, interstitial spaces where the common can and

should have the freedom to speak and act. These squares, platforms of interpellation, are also signifiers materialised in the form of (wo)man, herself/himself a signifier catachrestically embodying both heaven and earth.

Chapter one provides the design of this critical approach to alterity, a shaping recalling the brilliance and umbrage of the chiaroscuro with the cartography extending to include the double chiasmi. The emphasis on colour is crucial to the signifying refraction mentioned in the concept of chromatic aberration which mirrors the poetic deviance of this thetic structure, a structure of aesthetic revolutions; a rhetorical trope the effectiveness of which is physically manifested in Mao Zedong's tactical intervention of the Nationalists' dominance during the Communist long march, an intervention that spreads horizontally akin to the lateral tropes disseminated in an associative manner here, an arachnid web recalling Martin Heidegger's advice that the saying is the waying. And the waying in this dissertation can be also said to be allegorised by Jorge Luis Borges's garden of the forking paths, coincidentally a tale about Daoist thinking.

Chapter two attempts to crack the cosmic code by overriding the mysticism readers always associate with ancient Chinese thought with recent scientific theories: the chaos theory, the theory of complexity and the string/superstring theories. The correlation between ancient Chinese thinking and recent science goes beyond the analogous since the above theories explain to a great extent the inexplicable, the occurrence of inscrutable phenomena which Chinese high antiquity attributes to the workings of *Tai Ch'i*, a cosmic aether affecting all things and events.

Chapter three focuses on translation as creation, an important chapter since the entire thesis is a reworking of critical thought from the Chinese ancients and the Presocratics onwards, a translation in the fashion of the Nietzschean "will to power as art". This critique on translation

goes from its traditional manner of a transcription from one language to another, here the ideographic to the phonetic. Then the attention turns to the cultural aspect of translation and, later, translation as power: the transcription of the structural aporia to the actual terror and trauma suffered by those dispossessed or oppressed – the One subtracted raised to the One of this thesis.

Chapter four continues the thetic investigation by examining the politics of representation, scrutinising the structural faults of both liberal democracy and communism, flaws that make the democratic promise the Derridean *avenir*, the yet-to-come. Of relevance to politics is the Subject as "history in the making" which is in crisis now. Thus, the crisis of culture haunting the human condition must be rethought with a subject whose subjectivity bears testimony to alterity. The subject is then a zone of arrivals without the absolute arrival, corresponding to *dao* as an infinite passage, the Ultimate Unity of non-arrival with only moments of arrival as demonstrated by the Chinese homonymous play on *dao* as arrival.

This thesis ends provisionally with a return to geometrics. In this concluding paragraph, the squares where the insurgencies are staged, time and again, and in different locations, are stringed in a circular manner spiraling upwards and down, a double helix. The Grand Ultimate mentioned in *Yijing* is explained here: it is the One of the (wo)man, the dragon riding the moon and the sun, who will find and found the law of inclusion with the revolutionary violence of inscription, an inscriptive translation that also recollects the Marxian impulse. Within this transcendence, the arising and emergence of translation as creation from the structural aporia, resonates both the terror and the promise of the future anterior.

Exordium

A sky burial had just taken place when the three friends arrived on the mountaintop. White khata carves and streamers were fluttering in the breeze; little scraps of paper money danced and turned on the ground like snowflakes. They found themselves in a large gated enclosure in the centre of which was a sunken area paved with stone. There was a walkway flanked by two stone alters.

As they stood talking, a man walked up to them and introduced himself as the sky burial master. He asked if he could help. Tiananmen stepped forward and bowed…

"Humans are part of nature," he began. "We arrive in the world naturally and we leave it naturally. Live and death are part of a wheel of reincarnation. Death is not to be feared. We looked forward eagerly to our next life. When a smoking fire of mulberry colored branches is lit in a sky burial, it rolls out a five-colored road between heaven and earth, which entices the spirits down to the alter. The corpse becomes an offering to the spirits and we call upon them to carry the soul up to heaven. The mulberry smoke draws down eagles, vultures, and other sacred scavengers, who feed upon the corpse. This is done in imitation of the Buddha Sakyamuni, who sacrificed himself to feed the tigers.

Wen quietly asked the master to explain in detail how the corpse was lad out for the vultures.

First the body is washed," he said, "and shaved of all head and body hair. Then it is wrapped in a shroud of white cloth and placed in a sitting position with its head bowed on its knees. When an auspicious day has been chosen, the corpes is carried on the back of a special bearer to the sky burial alter. Lamas come from the local monastery to send the spirit on its way and, as they chant the scriptures that release the soul from purgatory, the sky burial master blows a horn, lights the mulberry fire to summon the vultures, dismembers the body, smashing the bones in an order prescribed by ritual. The body is dismembered in different ways, according to the cause of death, but, whichever way is chosen, the knife work must be flawless, otherwise demons will come to steal the spirit."

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Xinran
Sky Burial

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From philosophy, rhetoric. That is, here, to make from a volume, approximately, more or less, a flower, to extract a flower, to mount it or rather to have it mount itself, bring itself it light – turning away, as if from itself, come round again, such a flower engraves – learning to cultivate, by means of lapidary's reckoning.

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Jacques Derrida
"White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy"

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This dissertation is written in answer to Michael Naas's invitation to sign on the tradition: "In each case, the tradition is established across generations – and if mothers and daughters are absent here, it is perhaps because they have been for the most part cut out of this inheritance. This absence provides yet another reason to interrupt the testamentary scene and to read Plato, for example, with an eye not only for father figures but for the other thoughts of legacy and inheritance, for daughters and mothers like Pharmacia and Khōra".[1] Pharmacia is another name for *khōra*, the third genus embodied by the figure of the third – the flowers of rhetoric: the

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[1] Naas, Michael. *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. pp. xxiv.

heliotrope – which allows the crossover to the third figure of Chinese writing – *dao*. However, Jacques Derrida cautions: "let us not hasten to make this the truth of the metaphor. Are you sure that you know what the heliotrope is?"[2] The ambiguity of the word becomes obvious when both the "bloodstone" and "turning away from the sun" or both "turning of the sun *and* the earth" are thought at the same time, which Naas explains elegantly.[3] Quoting from Xinran's *Sky Burial* before the dissertation proper serves to indicate the manner chosen to read humanity and its habitat – a cartographic endeavour that privileges the feminine sites of pleasure – a chiaroscuro not unlike Anthony Minghella's visual depiction of the undulating expanse of the desert, the sea of sand, in *The English Patient* (1996).

Sky Burial describes a woman's journey to Tibet, a land considered geo-politically marginal to China, in search of her husband who is dispatched as a doctor in a military contingent commanded to invade the country. Set in the midst of an era of Chinese colonisation, Shu Wen's "autobiographical" tale orally conveyed to Xinran, a radio journalist in China, is also a recount of another woman, Zhuoma, a Tibetan aristocrat, who travels with the protagonist, seeking, too, a lost love, Tiananmen, named after the gate in question who becomes a Buddhist monk at the tale's conclusion – the very embodiment of the sign that bridges heaven and earth.

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[2] Derrida, Jacques. ""White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy". *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. 251.

[3] Naas, Michael. *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. pp. 45-46. Naas's commentary on the "both… and" of the heliotrope: "Hence we can never be sure what heliotrope *means*, or it "is" both anthology and lithography, both sun and stone, not alternatively but at the same time – both at once, since reducing the ambivalence of the heliotrope to a masterable polysemy determined by context would be to turn away from the earth, away from the stump, to the sun alone. In other words, it would be simply to repeat the heliocentric gesture of philosophy that aims to reduce the "both… and" to an "either… or" in the name of univocity, which is to say, in the name not of the name but of meaning. Derrida thus turns toward us as if he himself were a heliotropic plant and we were the sun, as if the reserve of turning cold itself turn or heliocentric desire to find the truth of metaphor back to earth, back to the lithographic text. With this question, this apostrophe, Derrida turns us away from meaning back to writing, toward an unmasterable graphic ambivalence. In this apostrophe Derrida is in our face, there to blind us with the stake of writing, there to drill writing into us by crossing out or Cyclopean eye, to turn us to the blindness at the root of all our vision, all our wanting to know".

Sky Burial is read here as an allegory of inscription, thus making Tiananmen a metaphor of the threshold between transcendence and immanence – inscription as the very embodiment of the opening to the beyond. In the section, "Flowers of Rhetoric", Derrida discusses that which is overlooked in the tradition of rhetoric or translation, the Trope of tropes, the figureless, read here as the Kantian Sublime, that bestows the figure – the catachresis: "These "ideas" already existed, Fontanier seems to think, were already in the mind like a grid without a word, but they could not have been retraced, tracked down, brought to daylight without the force of a twisting, which goes *against* usage, without the infraction of a catachresis. The latter does not emerge from language, does not create new signs, does not enrich the code, and yet transforming its functioning, producing, with the same material, new rules of exchange, new values. Philosophical language, a system of catachreses, a fund of "forced metaphors," would have this relation to the literality of natural language…".[4] As to these metaphors appearing as "correct and natural", Derrida's citation of Fontanier's take on tropes in philosophical writing, they *appear as such* owing to the repression of the so-called *incorrect* and the *unnatural* which also explains why the Freudian breaching as pathbreaking cannot and will not provide an investigator of knowledge with the metaphysical origin. One has to recognise the trope's "irreducibly original place" and, yet, use it in such a way that communication is achieved, dependent on shared assumptions which make the (ab)use "no more a form of usage than an application of the code".[5]

In this comparative project of the East and the West, the focus goes to the feminine in writing, which explains the choice of Xinran's literary text which is a written account of an oral recount, since the mythic associated with the pathos of orality has always been the woman's discourse. However, the above is not the only reason why the tale starts the writing here;

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[4] Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy". *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. 257.
[5] Ibid. pp. 256.

Xinran's "autobiographical" tale can be said to be an allegory of writing, inscriptive structures that depend on remembrance and a certain forgetting, the breaching as pathbreaking. In addition to the fact that God's Chinese daughter, Shu Wen, means Chinese for "book" and "writing", like *The Pilgrim's Progress*,[6] written by John Bunyan in 1678, *Sky Burial* is elegiac of the loss in *translation* because of the redaction required for the structuration of the signer and reconfiguration of the countersigner.

Translation, used here in its broad sense, is arguably the very nature of metaphysics, the *going beyond* of *physis* in order to understand existence which is also a *coming after*. In other words, at play is the prefix *meta-*, which is denoted as a prefix appearing in loanwords from Greek, with meanings such as "after," "along with," "beyond," "among," and "behind" – thus, a transcendence tied to an immanence aptly metaphorised by the stone-paved dent in the middle of the gated enclosure cited in the epigraph. Crucial to this thesis are the other definitions of *meta*: the turning post or column of Roman racetracks and involving a substitution at or pertaining to two positions ([1, 3] giving us the four sides of the square and also implying the 2 within the divide) in a benzene ring that are separated by one carbon atom in biology; the first is an analogy of the charting of the inscriptive voyage and the second figures strangely the chiasmic encounters of the third kinds which are *two becoming one* in this thesis. By way of Heideggerean ontology (influenced by Eastern philosophy), whose focus is on poetic language, translation, the keyword in this dissertation, takes on a dynamic interaction, if not integration, between the ideational and the material of writing. The concept of translation then shifts, at some point, to the interrelation between metaphysical and the physical aided by the third zone which gives to the ephemeral

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[6] In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian has to go through a gate called the Wicket Gate and he meets people named after virtues such as Charity, Faith and so forth, just as Shu Wen meets Saierbao who has mothered six children with her two husbands, Ge'er and Gela, each taking a sound unit of the Buddhist mantra, "*Om mani padme hum*", as their names, a Buddhist chant that provides solace in times of turmoil and need similar to the twenty-third psalm Christian recites as he goes through the Valley of Shadow.

fourth side of the apparatus or frame found in "Dissemination", Derrida's reading of Phillippe Sollers's *Numbers*, a poetic treatment of Chineseness, where the Drama of life is enacted on a stage and once the curtain is drawn:

> Out. Any attempt to return toward the untouched, proper intimacy of some presence or some self-presence is placed out in illusion. Because illusion, as its name already implies, is always an effect of play; and also because illusion entails a theater in which a certain definite relation between the unrepresentable and representation is engaged. And lastly because the whole of the text as in *Drama*, is through and through put into play, powerfully reinstituting the square horizontality of the page, of the "checkerboard serving as a figure for time," of that "invisible chessboard," within the theatrical volume of a certain cube. Within this hanging-in-the-balance with its numerous intersecting planes, he who says *I* in the present tense, in the so-called positive event constituted by his discourse, would be capable of only an illusion of mastery.[7]

The one-word utterance "Out", coinciding with the definition of the prefix *ex-*, in the above citation is emphatic of the irrecoverable exterior which makes any grammatological attempt to stake a complete claim on the subject of discourse or bring it on an inward journey home impossible. As illustrated by what Derrida says in the last line of the above quotation, "discourse", in the simplest and most general sense, means language in action. Thus, the *I* in the present tense is presented positively as *constituted by the performativity inherent to the individual's linguistic use*. In other words, the individual's subjectivity relies on her/his operation in/through language attentive to the subject (as topic). Derrida's allusion to "event" certifies what Andrew Benjamin says about the "pragma" – the "thing/event" – described as the "moment of

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[7] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 297-298.

comprehension, interpretation and translation" which "both constructs and takes pace in *situ*"[8] and residing within the said, the interpreted and the translated as "the potential for difference".[9] Benjamin further informs us that it also "forms the ineliminable element of its presentation. Agreement – *pragma*-tic agreement – holds it at bay though not eliminating its potential".[10] Benjamin's statement on "pragma" applies to both the performativity of writing and the actual burgeoning of the individual subject; it verifies the all-encompassing Lacanian/Daoist One and the quasi-One of *khōra*, thus *the two of this thesis – the one of (re)presentation and the one of the trace – reenveloped as One*.

China and the Chinese culture cannot be determined easily as postcolonial, postmodern or poststructuralist simply because what the West arrogates from Eastern philosophy, or the other way round, is an interrogative advancement which is also a reduction to the selfsame. Derrida's deconstructive absence in Chinese writing may be surprising to those who are acquainted with his eloquence when it comes to Western metaphysics and the Egyptian hieroglyphs. By (dis)locating the commentaries revolving around Derrida's reticence with regard to Chinese inscription in his interrogations into the metaphysics and writing, I shall launch the argument from that which most have put down merely as his "lack" of knowledge, which will be turned around to expose the always already missing link between the articulator and her representation and the icon and the truth – the present absence of the Derridean *trace*. The conjecture that his silence is a refusal to open himself to attacks from sinologists may be undeserving criticism for it is difficult to imagine Derrida, who advocates openness to the call of the other, to be anxious of critical assaults. This address based on his silence is no easy way out; instead, the thesis

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[8] Benjamin, Andrew. *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: A New Theory of Words*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. pp. 148.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

elaborates the difficulties encountered on the way in to the idea of Chineseness to which his deconstructive silence attests - the thick void at the heart of logocentrism. Derrida's cryptic remark about Chinese writing as "the testimony of a powerful movement of civilization developing outside of *all* logocentrism"[11] suggests a certain parallel between deconstructive thinking and Chinese writing, accidentally encountering in this dissertation. Perhaps, Derrida intuits the irreducibility inherent to Chinese writing and, by extension, alternative Chinese teachings. To speak of this movement without lodging oneself within its metaphysics may mean the performance of a great injustice to its writing and philosophy, thus succumbing to the reductive violence against which he has spoken. Derrida's deconstructive focus may be on difference but it is a focus on the *irreducible polysemia,[12] the fundamental* that confers "presence" with form; the use of the word "fundamental" encompasses both its nominative and descriptive syntax, thus making the character of signifying irreducibility also its fate. Derrida explains: "Language is what it is, language, only insofar as it can then master and analyze polysemia. With no remainder. A nonmasterable dissemination is not even a polysemia, it belongs to what is outside language".[13] In other words, the identity of self is made possible only with the rejection of the other, a rejection that implies, first, the dependency of self on the outcast which evinces as a need to dominate the other and, second, the mastery paradoxically recalls the other as the apparitional trace, a reverse parallel of the Lacanian splitting of the One. The "nonmasterable dissemination" cannot be just a polysemia contained within the signifying matrix; it belongs to the linguistic exterior as some uncontrollable "nothing", a third location and

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[11] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974. pp. 90. Emphasis mine.

[12] Derrida, Jacques. ""White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy". *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. 248.

[13] Ibid. This nonmasterable dissemination which is also Derrida's "supernumerary" is the One of Zhuangzi's *Dao*, a so-called mystical One with no remainder, mystical, perhaps, because it can be thought only outside of language.

duration that Lacan indicates as impossible or possible only at an immense expenditure. The doubling of which he speaks may and most likely will conclude in a contestation between mirror opposites. Thus, the two sides of the same coin meet precisely because they will never meet in a face-to-face encounter. This tension between conceptual opposites, in this case, the silent partners of the East and the West, can be read as *différance* speaking of a certain sameness within the inversion – an inexplicable secret link indirectly given to us in "White Mythology" when Derrida states: "The transported significations are those of attributed properties, not those of the thing itself, as subject or substance. Which causes metaphor to remain mediate and abstract. For metaphor to be possible, it is necessary, without involving the thing itself in a play of substitutions, that *one be able to replace properties for one another*, and that these properties belong to the same essence of the same thing, or that they be extracted from different essences. The necessary condition of these extractions and exchanges is that the essence of a concrete subject be capable of several properties, and then that a particular permutation between essence and what is proper to (and inseparable from) it be possible, within the *medium of a quasi-synonymy*".[14] Thus, the coincidence between signs can never be permanent simply because it is *forged* through the violence of a letter, an attributed commonality provided by the *as if* – the *quasi-synonymy* – a structural problematic attesting to the "supernumerary" of *khōra* and *dao*. Here, the Lacanian knot, a result of the encore of centres, is reconciled temporarily with the "parallax view" of Slavoj Žižek playing the *deus ex machina*, questioning the hopeful notion of Hans-Georg Gadamer's "fusion of horizon", also the "final destination"[15] of Zhang Longxi's *The Tao and the Logos* with a gesture to the possible deadlock of the two. Then, all representations

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[14] Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy". *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. 249. Emphasis mine.
[15] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. xiv.

are merely illusory cords linking the self to the Other, open to discordance because of the Real, a witty distortion of the human need for the reassurance of a stable and univocal measure of reality. Postmodernist culture and poststructuralist thinking are transliterated by the East to forms that are doppelgangers retaining the silhouettes of the West but, perhaps, rebutting the West with the radical violence of desubstantiation, an astute use of the inherent possibilities of signifying permutation. The thetic allusion to the postmodern owes to the fact that much has been written about the Chinese postmodern but this inscriptive attempt is to relate the Western postmodern to that which is considered Chinese heretical antiquity. What we have instead are chiasmic cultural transferences, oscillations that see Eastern philosophy making a transmigratory return to China, a turning back which is simultaneously a turning away, different and, yet, strangely the same.

Haun Saussy's critique of Ernest Fenollosa directs our attention to the sixth century literary critic, Liu Xie, and his description of writing as "the power of *wen*" in the chapter entitled "*Yuan dao*" ("*Tracing* the Way"), felicitously supporting the argument of the significance of the chiasmus between Chinese writing or literature and Chinese philosophy, an ephemeral interconnection facilitating the reading of Chineseness. Chinese philosophers have never been just philosophers; they, kin and kith of the Chinese poets, have always been referred to as pathfinders and trailblazers, the bringers of civilisation and culture. *Yijing* indicates the manner in which the Chinese perceive the union of transcendence and immanence: the Way of Heaven is the work of (wo)man; (wo)man is Heaven made manifest. Saussy remarks on the traditional invocation of Chinese writers as dragons, an important note to Chinese inscription as heavenly writing, *inscribed by flashes of lightning, fiery imprints on the earthly body*, which recalls *Memento* (2000), whereby Leonard Shelby, the protagonist, tattoos his body in front of a mirror. The words on his body are printed in the reverse so that they make sense. *Tian Shu* (*A*

Book from the Sky), an equivocal phrase describing inscriptive traces as sense emerging from non-sense, is the title given to Xu Bing's (a world-renowned Chinese *avant-garde* artist) masterpiece installation of carved pseudo-Chinese characters, showing the arbitrary nature of Chinese writing. *Tian Shu* comprises three to four thousand invented characters in approximation of the number of graphs in Chinese writing; the fact that they remind the Chinese viewers of the heavenly branding on human flesh during Xu's solo exhibition held in Beijing's China Art Gallery (1988) that the viewers suggested the use of the title *Tian Shu*. Although *Tian Shu* aroused passionate but also pessimistic responses in China, with viewers perceiving the installation as a disavowal of not only Chinese culture but also human pursuits, this thesis reads the carvings as an affirmative indicator to the transferential potency of *Wen*; Chinese writing gains its power as the mediator of heaven and earth.

While Saussy objects to Fenollosa's comparative endeavour as fantasy not grounded on the reality of Chinese poetry, he does not reject the latter's perspective of the re-energising possibility of *wen* as a medium between the ideal and material: "For the idea that writing, in its most sublime manifestations, speaks with the authority of nature is both inspiring to people in the Chinese tradition and impressive to people out of it. "Nature" is, after all, the one thing that ought to hold constant across differences among "cultures." But what happens when a pattern of thought – even thought about Nature – crosses into a new context of ideas? The next stage to which the term *wen* (as *italicised* and *appropriated* into the European languages) leads to a certain articulation, held to be naturally, culturally, or historically guaranteed, of the things signified by the characters, when those characters meet in a *representative* Chinese poem".[16] Saussy's commentary is crucial to the understanding of the translational process which arises

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[16] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 58. The emphases, here, are significant to the comprehension of the thetic description of representation in translation.

from an indescribable "essence", intuited by writers working on the philosophy of language, this space called *khōra* in the West and *dao* in the East, sites that unsettle the hierarchical order of nature and culture and surpassed by what this thesis here calls the "super-natural", given by the "supernumerary". Unlike the normative use of the word, "super-natural" has a spacing in-between the compound word, functioning in a way similar to the description of *dao* residing in the site above the graphic form in *Xicizhuan*. In the stead of the transcendental location of *dao* in *Xicizhuan*, the site is shifted to the space *beside* and *in-between* the two words, demonstrating the use and the function of the word "and" in the title of the first chapter of this thesis. As the objected unrecognisable, *dao* and *khōra* challenge Christopher Morris's ironic remarks on Derrida's "figure of the figureless" in *The Figure of the Road*; in contradistinction to Gayatri Spivak's description of deconstruction in *Hence Outside in the Teaching Machine* as a line down the middle of the road, this thesis insists that Derrida's figure of the figureless disseminates into an infinite labyrinth, marked with multiple broken trails and dotted with dunes, the range of plateaus upon which my theses rest. These raised spaces make our designation of what is considered nature always already tainted by culture as they are made voluminous with writing. Like *khōra*, which gives silhouette to phonetic writing, *dao* provides graphic contours to Chinese inscription. Saussy's use of the italiscised word "representative" is, to cite Derrida again, "the medium of the quasi-synonymy".

The key words in the above citation are "italicised" and "appropriated" in the linguistic transfer of *wen* from culture to culture. With translation, the term undergoes the necessary transformation so that it makes sense to people foreign to the language. Its appropriation means that the word "*wen*" is taken and absorbed into the foreign culture functioning as a symbol of difference. We have, here, an instance of a signifying unit lodged at the boundary between inside

and outside, a word representing certain ideas in its use in a new context and recognisably distinct from the rest of the signifying units. The commentary on *dao* in *Xicizhuan* where "'What is above the form is called dao, what is within the form is called the vessel' (*Xi-Ci* Part 1, 12)"[17] exemplifies the signifying adaptability of words, making them vessels seemingly unchanged on the outside but the inner substance stretches and mutates according to its contact with a new cultural environment, supporting my proposal that Chinese culture is a type of "inverted" culture in its move toward modernisation and globalisation, receiving Western postmodernity, which is underpinned by philosophical thoughts migrated from the East, and, then, revived and returned to China in a *novel* form as a consequence of the trans-migratory movements round the globe. Thus, signifying units cannot and will never be presentations with a direct referential function. They are, as Derrida suggests, self-reflexive rather than referential, revealing their intrinsic capacity to transform in their adjustment to different contexts and, yet, uncontainable by the context. Here, I shall describe the way in which this comparative study is carried out: it corresponds closely although not entirely to Zhang Longxi's supportive remarks in "*Pensur d'un dehors*" of Saussy's efforts in the 2004 report on Comparative Literature: "When Saussy equates thematics with enumeration and says that "with a horizon of universality, one has never finished enumerating," I feel that thematics gets short-changed. To be sure, "it is never enough simply to discover the same themes appearing in different places," but thematic worth its name is never simple juxtaposition or enumeration; it can be a careful way to negotiate the balance between

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[17] Cheng, Chung-ying. "Inquiring into the Primary Model *Yi-Jing* and the Chinese Ontological Hermeneutics". *Comparative Approaches to Chinese Philosophy*. Ed. Bo Mou. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Private Limited, 2003. pp. 46. The above citation can be said to be further explained by what Derrida says about the metaphor, again cited in Naas's *Taking on the Tradition*: "Metaphor has always been defined as the trope of resemblance; not simply as the resemblance between a signifier and signified but as the resemblance between two signs, one of which resembles the other" ("WM," 215). The metaphor of resemblance seems to elude the system that is supposed to contain it. As Derrida demonstrates, the foundational metaphor that would claim to be the origin of the figurative as well as literal language "cannot dominate itself cannot be dominated by what it itself has engendered, has made to grow on its own soil, supported on its own base [*socle*]" ("WM," 219)".

specificity and relation and to engage in just the kind of comparative work Saussy calls for, which creates relations among different texts and establishes a new perspective to read them beyond the specialist's limited horizon. When you engage in imaginative readings and can discern the thematic patterns arising from the encounter of different texts and textual traditions, then you have something to show the specialist that is unavailable from the perspective of each of the textual traditions in isolation. That is, I think, a good enough justification of our discipline, which is more than one specialization".[18] Zhang remarks justify the maner in which this issertation is written, although they can be undermined by Jorge Luis Borges's mysterious Chinese encyclopedia whose manner of listing appears to be random juxtaposition. More important to this thesis is not merely the jarring effect of estrangement which gives to the pause encouraging critical thinking; the chaotic assemblage of animals gesture to the "bringing together" as an enactment of violence, the forceful merging with the conjunctive "and", a potency bestowed by Saussy's "linguistic literariness". Zhang's suggestion on specialisation relates, in a way, to Lacan's phrase "not whole and more" that describes the other satisfaction, the feminine within writing.

For those who insist on the constructive mastery of writing, the unfaithfulness of the Chinese graph, as in all other signifying units, disrupts the autocratic intention, mastery predicated upon the materiality of the sign. Lacan notes this existential support in his discussion of institutional writing; "none of it would stand up if I didn't prop it up with an act of speaking that involves language (langue), and with a practice which is that of people who give orders in the name of a certain knowledge",[19] comprising rhetorical knots which unravel when the

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[18] Zhang, Longxi. "*Pensur d'un dehors*: Notes on the 2004 ACLA Report". *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Ed. Haun Saussy. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006. pp. 235.
[19] Lacan, Jacques. *On Female Sexuality: the Limits of Love and Knowledge*. Trans. Bruce Fink. London: Norton, 1998. pp. 122.

fantastic core complicates with the multiplication of facets: "Regardless of what you do with the surface of a torus, you cannot make a knot. But, on the contrary, with the locus of a torus, as this shows you, you can make a knot. It is, in this respect, *allow me to tell you*, that the torus is reason, since it is what allows for knots".[20] Like Derrida's aporia, Lacan's knot, the traumatised heart of logocentrism, resulting from the synecdochal aspect of linguistic units, is that which allows for projections, verbalisations both adding to and complicating knowledge. Significant to this thesis is Derrida's reminder that "deconstruction" *as a word* is not immune to its own work. More importantly, his focus on the "word", *logos*, aids my thetic argument that what disturbs and unsettles *lies within* the word or the graph; in other words, the typography of a stroke he avers in his reading of Stephan Mallarmé's poetics. Whereas the "word" is the rock upon which translation rests, the "letter" aids translation in weaving its way to another signifier which takes on meaning through the force of a desire.

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[20] Ibid. pp. 123. Emphasis mine.

Chapter 1

Dao and Khōra: Chiasmic Encounters of the Third Kinds

He who has the knowledge of that which is oldest and greatest himself becomes oldest and greatest.
The Upanishads

All great problems demand *great love*, and of that only strong, round, secure spirits who have a firm grasp on themselves are capable. It makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an "impersonal" one, meaning that he can do no better than touch them and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought.

Friedrich Nietzsche
The Gay Science

The emergence of China as the next noteworthy economic power of the twenty-first century has drawn increasing attention to its culture, with writers, both Caucasian and Asian, contributing to the debate on the ontological status of China and the construction of Chinese identity. The contentious textual field that informs the idea of Chineseness had some Chinese writers protesting the subsumption of China and Chinese identity to the white *a priori* categories of Western sinologists; there are also those who have noted the sinocentric perspective of the contributions from a few mainland Chinese scholars. The rest of the dissertation is an attempt to *demonstrate*, both "to show" and "to critically resist", the always already intended mastery of the above ethnocentric and sinocentric writers.

Michelle Yeh questions the privilege given to classical poetry by scholars of Chinese culture and language, a privileging that repeats the hierarchy of the classical over the vernacular, the traditional over the modern. The dichotomous list she quotes from Zheng Min's "Retrospect at the End of the Century: Chinese Language Reform and Modern Chinese Poetry" is significant here because speech is classified under the vernacular and writing with the classical. According to Yeh, Zheng's sinocentric valorisation of classical poetry is based on the presupposition that the vernacular poetics of contemporary Chinese contributors have been influenced by the West.

Although Zheng's privileging of the classical texts makes her reading polemical since the classical is used to push her concerns for Chinese culture and its national identity forward, the similarities between Chinese philosophy of writing and the poststructuralist's emphasis on writing cannot be ignored. This thesis explores the above-mentioned complementarities without the political agenda that underscores Zheng's interpretation; the agenda here is to display the complex chiasmi always already at play.

Yeh argues that the vernacular and the classical ought to be seen as complementary instead of antagonistic and one can add to her argument that Derrida's dismantling of the logocentric privilege of speech as presence foregrounds the notion of form as inscription, verbal or otherwise, especially his qualification that speech and writing are both forms arising from *archi-écriture*. Yeh's reading of contemporary poetics is evidence that logocentrism is not just an issue that troubles the West; the Chinese themselves can be said to be logocentric too: "In the foregoing analysis of Zheng's "Retrospect" essay, I have already pointed out its inherent logocentrism in ignoring the fact that tradition itself undergoes constant transformation and is always subject to negotiation and reinterpretation. However, radical it may seem, modern Chinese poetry is very much part of Chinese tradition, which is going through its latest phase of transformation and being subjected to the latest round of reinterpretations".[21] In my view, it is all a matter of opening the door to new ways of thinking and writing. Her reading of Orientalism supports my argument that the idea of Chineseness cannot be explored without any allusion to the West: "Orientalism goes both ways. To the extent that the critics in question essentialize Chineseness, they also essentialize Westernness".[22] The tendency to essentialise, according to

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[21] Yeh, Michelle. "Chinese Postmodernism and the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Poetry". *Cross-cultural Readings of Chineseness: Narrative, Images, and Interpretations of the 1990s*. Ed. Wen-hsin Yeh. Berkeley: University of California, 2000. pp. 118.
[22] Ibid. pp. 119.

Gayatri Spivak, is unavoidable, which is the reason for her proposal of the Derridean concept of strategic essentialism. Spivak's concept is appropriated here in the reading of Chineseness, exposing and unsettling the ethnocentricism underpinning the metaphysics of presence by alluding to the essentially inexplicable nature of Chineseness, which can be expressed merely as a "byproduct of language", to use a Lacanian phrase. Spivak's "strategic essentialism" is a deconstructive way of speaking about writing with a critical awareness of one's political positioning and clearly stating it. The phrase is misunderstood, according to her. It is not about the exposure of error but an inquiry into the ways the essentialised terms are used. A uncritical use is considered an abuse while a strategic critique of essentalism can dismantle the grounds of essentialist readings and enable the necessary resistance to the violence of mastery. The phrase, then, is *deployed* critically here to undermine the dominance of the idea of Chineseness by the mainland Chinese where the focus is shifted not only to Chinese diasporas but also readers of Chineseness. The word "deployed" with its military implication is most appropriate to the use of martial tropes in my critical intervention of the empiric aspirations of logocentric writing translated later in the dissertation to the revolutionary activity of 1989 against the Communist regime on Tiananmen Square by way of the analogy.

Adding to what is considered biased and, sometimes, adversarial vocalisations from the orientalists and sinocentrists are the arguably more nuanced critique from diasporic Chinese whose experience of living "overseas" provides a distinctively expansive view of the notion of Chineseness. Given the geographical distance from their roots and an upbringing that exposes them to different cultural tenors, these diasporic writers actively problematise both the classifications of whiteness and yellowness, seeing these crossings of categories as steps to be taken toward a more astute comprehension of what it means to be Chinese. Instead of

interpreting the construction of Chinese identity as one strictly determined by the East/West divide, diasporic Chinese writers recognise identity as not just an amalgam of elements; it is also a situating that requires a meditation of the cultures considered the East and the West.

Should the label "Chinese" be a matter of ethnicity, topography, language and aesthetics? Must Chineseness be defined solely by a return to the soil and tradition of China? These questions encapsulate the spirit of inquiry in the compilation of essays edited by Rey Chow in *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*. In response to Chow's title for her introduction, "On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem",[23] the thesis foregrounds, first, the idea of Chineseness as a Derridean aporia, and, second, argue that to epistemologically pin down Chineseness by resorting to predictable *aspects* such as ethnic markers, geographical location, linguistic indicators and cultural productions may be a reduction paradoxically violent and, yet, necessary. It is in my interest, as a diasporic Chinese writing in English, to bring to the fore the inescapability of labels but one ought to be conscious of the fact that there is always more to the object of observation than one thinks. More precisely, what is important to my discourse is the pos(t)ing of a crucial challenge to the accoutrements of hegemony so that space is created for greater verbal negotiation or critical resistance. Chow, in the above essay, remarks upon the inexhaustibility in the articulation of Chineseness as a theoretical problem. It is part of my argument that Chineseness has to be theoretically intractable, a theoretical resistance kith and kin to deconstruction whose focus is on what remains to be said.

In *Aporias*, Derrida speaks of the Greek etymology of "problem", *problēma*, defined as a projection as well as protection.[24] Working with Derrida's definition of "problem", this thesis directs attention to the very act of representing Chineseness. Chineseness is a theoretical problem

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[23] Chow, Rey. (ed.) *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000. pp. 1-25.
[24] Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias*. Trans. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993. pp. 11-12.

because the inscriptive performance may say more about the commentator and her/his socio-political positioning than it does the represented. Thus, the conceptual materialisation of China and Chineseness is tied closely to the articulator. Any representation is but a simulacrum inadequately manifesting the object's reality, the thingness-in-itself, because the depiction is an interweaving of the object's contextual location and the interpreter's agenda and her/his perspective on the political and cultural issues of society. As a diasporic Chinese, reading the conceptual construction of Chineseness with deconstruction, I want to foreground the unanticipated and contingent in reading the Chinese culture. Derrida's pun, "*Il y va d'un certain pas* (It involves a certain step/not; he goes along at a certain pace)",[25] gestures to the naughts/knots countenanced when defining identity while making border crossings, which, to a great extent, mark the double chiasmic paths chosen here. Derrida's other definition of the word, "problem", is more important to this dissertation. The projection is also a protection from the unspeakable. As beings-in-the-world, we have an inevitable epistemological propensity a tendency to move toward the construction of a "text" in order to avoid any unease when confronting an enigma. Thus, the textual construction acts as a shield against the unknown. The inexpressible sublimity of *dao* and *khōra* suspends and problematises the dialectics of identity and difference, self and other. If identity is a matter of discourse construction and a violent act of self-determination, then Chineseness can be investigated with the notion of *transculturation*, a term used in postcolonial discourses to describe *the discursive terrain* upon which cultural clashes and affinities are performed, and this space allowing the address of the imperialist ideologue underlying sinocentrism or eurocentrism, according to Chinese cosmology, is the *square*, a four-sided earthly sanctum rhetorically evoked while the *sphere* represents the cosmos. The synonymous affiliations of the word, "protection", are propitiously descriptive of my

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[25] Ibid. pp. 6

approach to China and Chineseness. "Protection" also means "tribute" and "a gift" which, in turn, is defined synonymously as "a debt" or "an obligation". As a Straits Chinese reading China and the idea of Chineseness from a topographical and cultural distance, perhaps, it is apposite that the interpretation is positioned at the limits of the East and the West. This debt owed to China and Chineseness manifests itself in the form of a hermeneutics of accountability to which the alternative meaning of "*pace*" in the Derridean quotation suggests, in *pace* with the Other as it calls for my attention which calls forth the reading, and the gift of Chineseness is interpreted in the light of a cultural bestowal which has enhanced and enriched the hybrid identity of the diasporic Chinese.

Cheng Shao-Chun's essay "Chinese Diaspora and Orientalism in Globalized Cultural Production",[26] refers to the "seminal essay, "Third-World Literature in an Age of Multinational Capitalism" (1987), [where] cultural critic Fredric Jameson brings up the influential theory "national allegory" to examine Third World cultural productions" (10). In order to examine what Cheng calls "transnational national Chinese cinema" and how that fits into Jameson's notion of "national allegory", the chapter, first, addresses the latter's undermining of the transcendence implied by modernism in *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* where space is given to the marginalised image in the hierarchised polarity of idea/image implied by Enlightenment metaphysics. The attempt to overturn the privileged term is of interest here because of the controversy that arose due to the dream of Western sinologists: it is a projection that makes the ideographic nature of Chinese writing a strictly one-to-one continuity between image and idea in the hope of finding a universal language the fixity of which provides reassurance to those who long for a stable and univocal linguistic system. Unfortunately, it has

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[26] http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp04/graduatesp04/gmj-sp04gradref-chun.htm.

been discovered and subsequently argued that their dream of a universal language in Chinese is a misreading since the language lends itself to rhetorical mobility similar to phonetic language. The relentless pursuit is given a climacteric interruption from comparativists who argued that the *poiesis* inherent to Chinese language gives to it a broadening semantic scope which cannot be limited by the Saussurean one-to-one relations between the signifier and the signified. The rhetoric of the image confers upon the consumption of cultural capital a certain unpredictability and potential defamiliarisation owing to the possibility of rhetorical suspension. The argument, then, turns its attention to the implicit ranking given to the binary, image and word. Whereas the "word" has seen its heyday in the Western world owing to theological concerns, the postmodern view places emphasis on the "image" as the mainstay of capitalist societies. The incessant circulation and consumption of images have been criticised by cultural theorists as a vicious cycle promoting capitalism and its consequential reduction of everything in its pathway to commodity reification, the goods of desire. These critiques have given, somehow, the impression that the image, in its efficacy for transmission and re-laying of messages, has triumphed over the word, an impact especially given greater impetus by the dictum: "seeing is believing".

Ang Lee's uniquely varied *oeuvre* is one case study that may yield an answer to the question of the "transnational" within Jameson's "national allegory". While it is undeniable that third-world literature can be read as allegories of nationalism or, perhaps, more precisely, an attempt at the recuperation of national identity in an age of globalisation, what accounts for the translation of texts across cultures may owe much to the migratory elements within the signifier, be it image or word. Lee appears to have to his advantage the flexibility and adaptability associated with the hybridised identity of the doubly displaced – first from mainland China as he is a second generation Chinese whose parents had escaped from the mainland with the defeat of

the Guomindang and second, his decision to stay in the West after his education at the New York University, thus himself a figure of the gift of language – the catachrestic ability of language itself that permits its mobility through tropes. Sheldon Lu's *Transnational Chinese Cinema* poses a question pertinent to the argument for the transnational within the national: "One may ask, Are Ang Lee and his films Taiwanese? Chinese? America? Taiwanese American? Chinese American? … The lack of a clear answer to such questions indicates the very nature of transnational Chinese Cinema".[27] In order to justify his argument that Lee's filmic endeavours are really examples of transnational Chinese cinema, Lu alludes to the foreign production support given to Lee's films are mostly funded by the West and also distributed to the West, making them international box-office hits. Lu's critique gains resonance when one rethinks his use of economic means as verification in terms of identity politics, the circulation and exchange of the signifier "Chineseness" endowed with differential properties in the hands of writers with different agenda. The article "Controversy Swirls around Ang Lee" which covers the Venice Film Festival, reports that Lee is "caught in political tensions between native Taiwan and mainland China" because his latest movie *Lust, Caution* was "originally tagged as a Taiwanese film but was later designated as from Taiwan, China".[28] Furthermore, it reported that "Taiwan said that the change made it appear as if the island is part of mainland China (China and Taiwan split amidst civil war in 1949, but Beijing still considers self-ruled Taiwan as its territory and has threatened to retake it by force".[29] When asked for his response to this political conflict, Lee's answer serves the argument here: he called the change "unfortunate"[30] and it is unfortunate as the

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[27] Lu, Sheldon. H. "Historical Introduction: Chinese Cinema (1896-1996) and Transnational Film Studies". *Transnational Chinese cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*. Ed. Sheldon H. Lu. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. pp. 18.
[28] "Controversy Swirls around Ang Lee". Venice, Italy. August 30 2007. (Accessed 23/10/2007). Http://www.showbuzz.cbsnews.com/tries/2007/08/03/movies_venice/man3222269.shtml.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

"conundrum" of Chineseness is not something easily resolved if it can be resolved at all. The tension between Taiwan and China makes evident the politics underlying national identity in what is purportedly a globalised arena. But fractious relations are necessary to the specific emergence from the *spacing*, an interstitial *interval*, where the foreign is lodged, that which is also required for the paradigmatic transmutation enabling the signing over of the signifying properties – a deliverance that anticipates a countersigning.

Whereas Lu's use of concrete, pragmatic examples as justification is laudable and advantageous to my intention here, this thesis focuses on the fact that Lee, himself, professedly Chinese, is enabled by his cultural displacements to direct films which can be thought outside his scope of cultural experience – the nuanced and brilliantly captured Englishness of *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and the raw homosexual passion and wildness of the Western landscape in *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) – attests to a cultural sensitivity only achievable in a director who has remained, as Lee himself said in an interview, open to the myriad cultures of the globe. Cheng has attributed to the universal element of Lee's *oeuvre* making possible the "authentic" depictions of lives from different cultural milieus and terrains. I agree to this assertion because what makes Ang Lee so Chinese is his ability to intertwine the opposing elements when necessity calls for it and to separate the dichotomous properties when attention has to be given to the specific culture in representation. This can only occur when one knows what *matters* and *moves* the audience in a filmic presentation of life and love in any epoch and culture. Cheng may think that Lee's career appears to be split – a bipolarity which portrays Chineseness and another that gives us a view to the Western world but what he misses is this: one is already always embedded in the other. Lee is able to manoeuvre a so-called double career because of this schizoid space in-between the East and the West, a space which has allowed him to manipulate

the so-called "given" space-time elements into a representative assemblage. In fact, in Cheng's essay, Lee is known to profess his Chineseness although his nationality is Taiwanese. His love affair with China went as far as visiting the "motherland" in order to film there, hopefully to fulfill his "Chinese dream".[31] But, to his dismay, it is not what he thought he would find. Perhaps, the Chineseness of which we dream, each and everyone who is in someway connected to China, be it writing about China, being a diasporic Chinese dreaming of "homecoming" or even a mainlander who is supposedly at home, the dream is just a dream. The real China is unthinkable not because there is nothing per se but there is too much of a Thing to which one has to contend – there is simply "the not quite and, yet, is" due to the economy of differential relations that gives to the parallax view – an always already deferred and differential perspective because of the miniature parallax error, the minimal ontological difference enlarged and made the One here – the parallax object which is really the subject[32] here.

The parallax object is that which unsettles the continuous flow of perception, a displacement allowing a shift in perspective and providing a new line of critical sight. Kant's transcendental illusion starts *The Parallax View* because of the discovery of the gap between the transcendental and the immanent and Žižek names the Kantian parallax the Stellar Parallax, then transposed to the Solar Parallax of Hegelian historical materialism and followed by the Lunar Parallax which exposes the inhuman core of the human, not the not-human but the human who is not quite human, figured in this dissertation as Jackson Pollock's *The Moon Woman Cuts the*

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[31] Cheng, Shao- Chun. "Chinese Diaspora and Orientalism in Globalized Cultural Production: Ang Lee's Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon". *Global Media Journal*. Volume 3. Issue 4. (Spring 2004). hppt://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp04/graduatesp04/gmj-sp04gradref-chun.htm. (Accessed 05/10/07).
[32] In Žižek's *The Parallax View*, he mentions the three denotations of "subject": the subject as an autonomous agent; the subject as the agent in obeisance to some authority; the subject as the topic. Thus, the fourth meaning of "subject" is the combination of the three: the subject as the very matter that gives substance to the abstract. The above extrapolation is an inversion of his correlation of the three meanings to the tripartite of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. Žižek tells us that an "answer of the real" is a subject of the signifier in obedience to the symbolic order: *the subject, then, is a signifier stuffed with the imaginary that provides the matter of a subject.*

Circle. All the parallaxes are premised on the role the imaginary plays in subjectivity – the subject is only a subject moved by the object – thus the subjectivity of the individual occurs with a reflexive twist which stretches the *mise en scéne* to include the *I*. This explains Žižek's cryptic reading of Lacanian psychoanalysis: what is in the individual is more than her/his self. Žižek's reading of the parallaxes is of paramount importance to this thesis: the postmodern is linked chiasmically to alternative Chinese ancient thought owes much to the Daoist phrases, *wu wei* (without work) and the *wu yu* (without desire), mystical terms rethought here as selfless subjectivity propelled by the subject's obligation to the Other. In other words, the characteristics of Western postmodernity are iterations of Chinese heretical antiquity albeit with *différance*. In addition, Žižek's words in the introduction to *The Parallax View* can be read as a reiteration of Derridian deconstruction:

> A short circuit occurs when there is a faulty connection in the network –faulty, of course, from the standpoint of the network's functioning. Is not the shock of short-circuiting, therefore, one of the best metaphors for a critical reading? Is not one of the most effective critical procedures to cross wires that do not usually touch: to take a major classic (text, author, notion), and read it in a short-circuiting way, through the lens of a "minor" author, text, or conceptual apparatus ("minor" should be understood here in the Deleuze's sense: not "of lesser quality," but marginalized disavowed by the hegemonic ideology, or dealing with a "lower," less dignified topic)?… What such a reading achieves is not a simple "desublimation," a reduction of the higher intellectual content to its lower economic or libidinal cause; the aim of such an approach is, rather, the inherent

decentering of the interpreted text, which brings to light its "unthought," its disavowed

presuppositions and consequences.[33]

The Žižekian short-circuit is another way of naming Derrida's notion of economy. However, his take on the network is superceded by Derrida's *wireless network*, supported by the latter's discussion in *Dissemination* on the internet the hyperlinks of which allow the unprecedented speed of information exchange and its increasing interruptibility.

The protests against the immediacy that specular reflection confers upon thinking, a *sciolism*, a superficial knowledge found to be objectionable can be read, first, as an indication of the detractors' proximity to the object of revulsion and, second, *pace* Derrida, what appears superficial may conceal the profoundest truth about man. Nothing is just neither this nor that for, if we remember Derrida's vocabulary clearly on *khōra*, it is both this and that. Thus, the thesis strives, in using the third genera of the East and the West, to bring together, albeit provisionally, the East and the West despite Rudyard Kipling's claim: "Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet".[34] Perhaps what Gilles Deleuze suggests about the act of creation in the scholarly arena adds to the Derridean affirmation of translation and enables the performance of a temporary encounter: "On the other hand, there is something that only a scholar knows how to do: to invent, to create functions. What is a function? One can define it quite simply as I will try to do, as we are coming upon the most rudimentary level. Not at all because you would not understand better, but because it would already pass me by. Let us be as simple as possible. What is a function? *As soon as there is a putting in correspondence ruled by at least two ensembles*".[7] Citing Deleuze here helps to clarify what I am doing with this thesis: *dao* and *khōra* are the white spaces out of which the ink of writing flows. It is an attempt to find a *correspondence* between

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[33] Žižek, Slavoj. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The MIT Press, 2006. pp. IX.
[34] Kipling, Rudyard. "The Ballad of East and West". *The Literature Network*. http://www.online-literature.com/kipling/847/. (Accessed 04/05/08).

the metaphysical rock (and roll)[35] of the two ensembles, the East and the West, with the chiasmic encounters of other ensembles – a correspondence in the multifarious meanings of an agreement, an analogy, a communication, the exchange of *letters*, the letters themselves written and received and, in the mathematical sense, "an attribute of a shape or relation, exact reflection of form on opposite sides of a dividing line"[36] attesting to my comparative thesis above.

With this choral *match*, the "One" of *khōra*[37] and the "One" of *dao* are interwoven in a dance into a "One" of *dao* and *khōra*. The virtual "One" of *khōra* and that of *dao* is similar to the virtual world of our imagination which preempts the cyberspace of postmodernity, a space whose virility lies with the speed it accords to communication around and across the globe, corresponding to the order of word, image and idea in Chinese thought on message reception. The coding and decoding bestowed by cybernetics and virtuality arises with computerised technology making possible the unprecedented advancement in filmmaking, televised photography, and computer animation. Derrida's final interview, entitled *Learning to Live Finally*: *An Interview with Jacques Derrida (Distribution Cancelled)*, expands the predominant issues of the Western concepts of overdetermination (without space for alternative reading), and underdetermination (the ambiguity of the sign confers space for alternative reading) and the Eastern ones on "undercoding" and "overcoding", comparative conceptualisations of literary production and reception. Derrida's textual title is taken partially from the exordium to *Specters of Marx*, a tribute to the Marxian spirit of revolution in spite of the failure of

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[35] The phrase is a pun on "rock" as the ground and the double oscillations of *dao* and *khōra*.

[36] Deleuze, Gilles. "What is the Act of Creation?" *French Theory in America*. Ed. Sylvere Lotringer and Sanra Cohen. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. pp. 100-101.

[37] Geoffrey Bennington's essay "X" found in *Applying to Derrida* refers to the objections encountered when he called deconstruction quasi-transcendental. With the denotations for "quasi" from Dictionary.com – "resemblance, virtual, connection" and "seemingly; apparently but not quite" with its Latin etymology defined as "as if" or "almost"in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, and using what Bennington says in "X", this thesis argues in the dissertation proper that *khōra* is *quasi*-transcendental even though *khōra* alludes to that which is more than meets the eye – the paper machine whose machinations is incalculated akin to the *Tai Ch'i* of *dao*.

Socialist/Communist ideology in bringing about democracy. The emphasis given to the notion of "contribution" is informing in communicative terms since the focus appears to shift from the viewers to the "auteur"[38] but, since nothing is ever simple when it is Derrida's writing, the cancellation in the above subtitle can be read as putting distribution under erasure – meaning that the flashlight is moved to the interpretative contributions of the viewers/ readers who are willing to heed the Derrida's advice of irresponsible reading, the countersignatures.

Auteurism (started sometime in the 1940s with André Bazin paying attention to movies from Alfred Hitchcock and Jean Renoir from the French New Wave) gains greater impetus later when read with Saussurean semiotics that privileges the signified (the idea) despite the fact that the signified in his triangle of signification is given the role of the connector to the referent.[39] This makes the signified the representation of the referent whose place in the signifying chain is determined by the assignment of an arbitrary signifier. The above works in synchronic situations as *parole* (circumscribed by institutional norms, a system of rules that direct communication, which is referred to as *langue*) but if this is transported to a diachronic situation of translation (the sign must be repeatable in order to function communicatively), then the signified is shown to be destabilised by a temporal and spatial disjuncture and its signifying function is demonstrated as a signifier. If one reads the above explanation closely then one realises the importance of

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[38] André Bazin, a co-founder of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, came up with the auteur theory which denotes "author" in English but this theory emphasises the creative, personal vision of the director whose control over production evinces his visionary endeavour. Tying this with Derrida's erasure of distribution which overlaps the dichotomous distribution and contribution is an affirmative move to allow the viewers/readers the freedom to be auteur in their own right – in this case, a challenge taken up by many film critics and reviewers, a revolutionary performance based on the erasure of any interdiction to self-creation or innovation, an aesthetic laying down of one's own law in the making of the film or writing of the critique or review and eventually maybe the remake of the film. In Lee's case, he is an auteur despite the rewriting of Chang Ai Ling's book, a filmic translation of a textual translation of life, thus making Chang the auteur of a novella which prompts the auteurism of Lee. While auteurism appears to promote the author, it is given a twist here: the word "auteurism" is put under erasure here giving it the additional meaning of "innovative reception" besides and beside "creative production".

[39] Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Ed. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye and Albert Reidlinger. Trans. Wade Baskin. London: Fontana, 1974. pp. 142. Emphasis mine. Saussure's example of the tree is cited here for the argument later on "Cultural China".

Saussurean semiotics to any study on translation which, effectively, becomes creation. Referential continuity is prioritised no matter what order the discourse is presented to us, brought in as a negative inward to the individual's soul, to use Hegel's analogy. If the West privileges internal speech, so does the East, but the order in the *Xicizhuan*, the "Appended Verbalisations" whose dictum for language is *yan bu jin yi* (words cannot exhaustively express ideas) and *yan yi zu zhi* (words can adequately convey intention), has the image coming before the word – a triadic interaction between thoughts, images and words, *yi* (idea), *xiang* (image) and *yan* (word), the Chinese screen, a triptych, for writing.

Saussure's example of the tree is also crucial to this thesis here because of the discussion of "natural" imagery used in literary discourses. The tree is often taken as a symbol of unshaken faith and belief and my thesis has the tree uprooted and overturned, a thesis shared by Cheng when he, too, refers to Tu Wei-ming's "Cultural China": "Contrary to the 'political China,' the transnational sense of Chinese identity implies a 'cultural China.' 'Cultural China' is employed by Tu Wei-ming to elaborate on the contours of a symbolic universe that both encompasses and transcends the ethnic, territorial, linguistic, and religious boundaries that normally define China (1994 v). In the project of 'cultural China,' Tu tries to deconstruct the cultural authority of geopolitical China. He wants, instead, to 'explore the fluidity of Chineseness as a layered and contested discourse to open new possibilities and avenues of inquiry, and to challenge the claims of political leadership (in Beijing, Taipei, Hong Kong and Singapore be the ultimate authority in a matter as significant as 'Chineseness'' (1994 viii). Contrasting the monolithic and hegemonic essentialist national China discourse with 'cultural China,' Tu uses the living tree as a metaphor to represent 'cultural China': the Chinese diaspora is sprouting the most vigorous new branches

and leaves from the root China".[40] Tu Wei-ming's "Cultural China" is also mentioned in Saussy's definition of the comparative method which invariably returns to the point of commonality, what he calls the trunk of the genealogical tree: "the comparative method tended to dissolve identities, or at any rate their singular expressions, into a common source… Comparative philology could, in the end, use up its *raison d'etre*: after a sufficient number of examples are adduced, laws can be formulated and historical accounts framed. In philology, the properly comparative moment came early in the discovery process, as parallel phonetic series were established for the different languages and the regularity of their differences showed them to be tributaries of a higher common source".[41] Perhaps his question: "What is the trunk – what does comparative literature discover?" regarding this "third thing" that will perform the connective function between cultures, will find its answer in the confluence between Lacan's psychoanalytic theory and Laozi's Daoist teaching (*Daodejing*) with the Lacanian psychoanalysis read as a reverse parallel of Derridian deconstruction (whose "true" parallel may be that of Zhuangzi's writings).

It is in my *interest* to look closely at Saussy's use of the analogy of "the living tree" of "cultural China" which is premised upon one's ancestral search using the family tree. As the spine of his argument, the "trunk" implicitly informs us of the discursive susceptibility of privileging the source. Rather than the trunk, this thesis here prefers to think of the roots but roots always already dispersed – an inversion and displacement that does not only have the living tree uprooted and turned upside down; it is also "imag(in)ed" through a metaphor that does not have a unifying spine – the figure of *allium* propagation: significations invigorated with a

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[40] Cheng, Shao- Chun. "Chinese Diaspora and Orientalism in Globalized Cultural Production: Ang Lee's Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon". *Global Media Journal*. Volume 3. Issue 4. (Spring 2004). Internet source: http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp04/graduatesp04/gmj-sp04gradref-chun.htm (accessed 16/10/07).
[41] Saussy, Haun. (ed.) "Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares: Of Memes, Hives, and Selfish Genes". *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006. pp. 7-8.

dissemination likened to that of onion seeds whose spaces are like the liminary sites between letters and whose inflections are comparable to the small bulbs which are transplanted so that the propagation proliferates and expands.

With the inadvertent erasure of former borders and, at the same time, the wrecking of the underlying conceptual structure upon which the idea of modernity rests, what is in place is a theoretical double-bind, a noumenon which contrasts with the phenomenon, the idea and the occurrence. This structural problematic, akin to the historical trauma as remembrance, the Freudian breaching, entails a forgetting which evinces with close reading. But it is only with the forgetting that the narrative is retroactively established. Something is lost even as something is gained and Ang Lee's portrayal of China in *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon* (2000) is an instance. What is gained is a large-scale production of premodern China with breath-taking *mise en scène* and martial arts techniques facilitated by contemporary technology critiqued as Oriental aesthetics employed to please an international audience.[42] In other words, the critics claim that Lee is selling China out, but Cheng's argument is of particular import here: instead of *selling out* China, Lee is *selling China*.[43] Whereas some Chinese critics are exceptionally protective of "the real China", leading to arguments against using China as cultural capital that inevitably results in economic capital, others propose that this as a way of countering hegemonic Hollywood since the film industry is really a dream factory which allows the "exotic travel in search of the Other"[44] providing the pull of Chinese films in recent years.

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid. Sheldon Lu is one of the proponents who believe that Jameson's notion of "national allgory" is no longer viable and this is also obvious in his later commentary of Chinese art since "The globalization of economic and cultural production has rendred the disnction between third world national allegory and American postmodernist art tenuous". Lu, Sheldon. *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001. pp.157.

Ang Lee's films are not the glazed productions of Hollywood but, to extend the glaze analogy, they are similarly appealing matt productions, a twisted mimicry of big-budgeted Hollywood movies that puts an imaginary China into circulation. This example of "sophisticated calculation"[45] on Lee's part is commendable as we are presented, now, with an alternative to box-office Hollywood hits. However, these are the questions posed to Ang Lee: for what and whom are these films made? How long will this euphoric reception of the "re-imaged" China last before the interest of international audience wanes since the film industry is governed, to a great extent, by fickle audience response that inevitably translates to profits and losses, economic terms that Derrida inscribes metaphorically in *White Mythology*? These interrogations are strangely anticipated in Ang Lee's latest film, *Lust, Caution*, released late September 2007, a filmic metaphor of longing and love, death and life, perhaps, even death-in-life and hate-in-love, paradoxical notions troubling metaphysics. Rhetoric, that which is consigned to the exterior of philosophy, in other words, can always be discovered within the discourse, a use unacknowledged by philosophy and prohibited any mention as the very denotation of rhetoric itself destabilises a discourse that strives to achieve totality and stability through the notion of Truth. The castaway, the flower of rhetoric, the other filial filament of philosophy, returns as a bird of prey, the return of the repressed from the philosophical unconscious, causing seismic shakes within the metaphysical realm. In other words, the metaphor as the transport to the content is analogous to the signified as the link to the referent, making rhetoric the signifying links to referents in any discourse. If the signified is comparable to the metaphor, this clarifies Žižek's assertion that the imaginary is that which provides the stuff of the signifier making the grammatical subject also a rhetorical subject.

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[45] Ibid.

Lust, Caution, generally read as a tale by Zhang Ai Ling (Aileen Chang) whose *oeuvre* is known to focus on the private lives of the individuals, the intense sexuality between two persons in the closeted space behind locked doors, runs contrary to the May Fourth writers' aims and ambitions for the collective, and this frank portrayal of the secret within the psychic unconscious can be read as a "national allegory", the self-sacrifice doubly invoked, first for the country and then for her lover, corresponds to Lacan's *other jouiisance*, although invigorated by its transnational themes of adultery, betrayal, loss of innocence and conflict – the love-hate relationship of the protagonists.

Lee's latest film verifies the politics of desire through the philosophical and cultural thoughts of both the East and the West, thoughts allied in a crossover with the crossing-out. The lack of temporal linearity in *Lust, Caution* as opposed to his "father-knows-best" trilogy: *Pushing Hands* (1991), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994) reveal a change in Lee's tactics of filmic intervention. The film is an acknowledgement that remembrance is a retroactive narrativisation prompted by a forgetting. What can be read as a panoramic and macrocosmic view of history is symbolised by the microcosmic and claustrophobic sexual activity. Whether the Shanghai depicted is a close copy of the real Shanghai of that time is irrelevant because we shall never know what the "real" Shanghai was as it will always be more than the imaginary of Shanghai. Crucial to the argument is the seductive pleasure of the chase brought out by the cinematography which befits the title. The surface text is a thriller/espionage type that has a university freshman turned play actress whose love for the director of the troupe transformed her from a role enacting political dramas to playing a role in a real-life espionage attempt to assassinate a Mr. Yee (actor Tony Leung), suspected of being a Japanese collaborationist in World War II Shanghai. Wily Mr. Yee escapes the first attempt and Wong

Chai Chi (actress Tang Wei), the female protagonist, is drawn into the dark plot a second time three years later after the Japanese occupation. *Déjà vu* occurs, the Derridean *iterability*, as Mrs. Mak (Wong in disguise) is no longer the innocent and idealistic girl she has been. A noteworthy review encapsulates the political and emotional underpinnings of the film succinctly:

> The relationship between Mr. Yee and this woman with a divided identity is the central dynamic of *Lust, Caution*, and it is especially compelling because both participants are playing roles within roles, engaging in intricate double and triple games that get so complex they become ensnared in entanglements neither one anticipates or wants. Mutual deception, it turns out, has consequences on all sides of the equation.
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> The one place the protagonists are naked, both literally and psychologically, is when they make love, and the sex scenes in *Lust, Caution* are both explicit and essential to understanding character and motivation. Though the sex is graphic, it is by no means loving; in fact the hostility of the first encounter recalls the sexual initiation in *Brokeback Mountain.* While they might not admit it, this appears to be the only place where the protagonists are honest with each other, where the complex, tortured, ever-changing relationship between them plays itself out.[46]

The graphic sex scenes stir up controversy everywhere with most countries giving the film an NC 16 rating, except Singapore, which initially wanted to screen a censored version but eventually succumbed to public pressure.

While the controversy centres on the depicted sex appropriate again to the title, my thesis reads the lust here *as an allegory of* the threat inherent to a paroxysmal mapping of identity

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[46] Turan, Kenneth. *Los Angeles Times*. Critics Review. 2007. (Accessed 16/10/07). http://www.fandango.com/mviepage.acpx?mlp_tab=critic_review&rad.

figured in the oxymoronic hostile lovemaking, gestures of mastery which metonymically bestow a glimpse of the violence involved in the absolute union of image and idea, or the same domineering insistence on the global village once envisioned, the conventional opposition to the self-sameness of national identity, but, arguably, premised upon the same violence of mastery concealed by the notion of free market and upward mobility, catering to the needs of a capitalist-driven world. Although it is the proposal here that the specular reflection prompted by the image has within it the possibility of inversion and displacement required for the revival of nationalism or the encouragement of transnational capitalism. These two options can be read as never far from each other as *both dichotomies are promised* in the very paradigmatic mobility of the notion of "allegory", the swinging back and forth between differential relations of Self and Other, in the reading of Chineseness, the *trace* of the heterogeneous Other always already haunting identity. This reading calls to question the notion of Chinese films as examples of "national allegory" with the crossword puzzling of the concept of "auteurism", a word used to describe Lee's directorial endeavours. Despite his unique style and creative reading of Zhang's novella of the same title, which was incessantly corrected for twenty-five years before its release in 1979, the reading is still a translation of a translation – Zhang's experimental and imaginative writing of a tragic love affair from her own experience. And the fact that the narrative can be transported by another person from another era and, more significantly, from one gender to the other says much about the untranslatablity of the text which offers incomplete translations, the inexplicable metaphoricity that allows cinematic metaphors to emerge. The metaphor (the Freudian displacement) as a metonym (the Freudian condensation) provides this capacity to translate or metaphorise – the rhetorical tropes within language as the smooth operators – making possible the movement from an inscriptive paradigm, the novella, to another, the film. What can

be read as a "national allegory" can also be read as a "transnational allegory" although how effectively either fits into the lack in the midst of the Symbolic (China as the Other) depends on the persuasiveness of the individual's rhetoric and the successful consumption of the other, perhaps, coincidentally figured by the much-talked about *mise en scène* of implied oral sex. The scene may be a clever twist of the auteur's vision, reinforced by the assertion of Hamid Naficy and Teshome H. Gabriel in their introduction to *Otherness and the Media*:

> Consuming the other is a continual process of yearning – for meaning, for those qualities which the dominant order as exiled or lost, and for the certainties that ideologies provide in a world that is increasing uncertain an unpredictable. Since this yeaning is never fulfilled, the other remains forever alluring (and threatening). But, it derives its allure not from an essential authenticity, moral absolutism, or some higher knowledge but from its own shifting nomadic sensibilities. The other tends to thrive on the ambiguities and the limits of language.[47]

In other words, the truth of the other emerges from the gaps and margins of the extant text, waiting to be recollected by an other reading. In an age of mediatisation, the significance lies with the way the other is presented to the viewers, given support by Naficy and Gabriel's suggestion: "Critical discourses within existing relations of productions continue to be subjected to the operation of dominant hegemonies which tend to want to capture ideologically and economically both the threat and the allure of the other and its discursive strategies. Co-opting differences, effacing histories and conflictual relations of forces, multinational corporatism tends to map out alterity as mere difference to be consumed only as style. It is in this light that we must

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[47] Naficy, Hamid and Teshome H. Gabriel. (Eds.) "Introduction – Consuming the Other". *Otherness and the Media*: *The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged*. Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993. pp. xi.

view the sudden feverish love affair with pluralism, otherness, and diversity. It appears *as if* the issue is no longer to capture the means of production or to gain control over the means of representation but *to pose as question representation itself*".[48] This explains the thetic focus where the question of the politics of representation is reopened which reciprocates the politics of desire: the representation of the other is almost tantamount to making a claim on the other. The antinomy to this absolute appropriation is a sensitive approach that sees the other as someone or something beyond one's complete grasp. The Truth of the Other elides even as the Self persists in the pursuit making the translation a double betrayal as evidenced by *Lust, Caution*.

Home is Where the Heart is: There is just No Place like Home

I'll make my report as if I told a story, for I was taught as a child on my homeworld that Truth is a matter of the imagination. The soundest fact may fail or prevail in the style of its telling: which grows brighter as one woman wears it and, worn by another, dulls and goes to dust. Facts are no more solid, coherent, round, and real than pearls are. But both are sensitive.

> Ursula LeGuin
> *The Left Hand of Darkness*

And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them into shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

> William Shakespeare
> *A Midsummer's Night's Dream, v.i*

In the editors' introduction to Slavoj Žižek's *Interrogating the Real*, Rex Butler and Scott Stephen suggest that Žižek's critics have not grasped his interpretative strategy: "For they necessarily miss the way Žižek brings these categories together in thinking of what frames thought itself (an undertaking that in fact characterizes philosophy from the very beginning, not merely as any kind of interdisciplinary undertaking but as the attempt to articulate that empty

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[48] Ibid. pp. x. Emphasis mine.

place from which all disciplines come, including its own)".[49] This citation not only supports the claim that interpretations are inherently comparative but also the significance of rhetoric or what Haun Saussy calls "linguistic literariness" in translational or interdisciplinary endeavours, denotative and connotative properties predicated on absences. Moreover, his diagnosis about comparative studies: "Contextualization is always a legitimate epistemological move, but let us not grant any context the final authority of the real. That would be to make comparative literature a portal for other, more meaningful, more conclusive disciplines, and so to cheat the world of the nonreductive model of critical relation that our work at its best can provide"[50] can be reworked to counter the critique that theory ignores empirical, historical instances. The weight of a critical study depends on the historical and contingent as well as the theoretical. In fact, it can be demonstrated that contextualisation alone produces inadequate readings. However, comparative studies as such cannot be said to be *the* only nonreductive model of critical relation as all interpretations are essentially translational, requiring the linkages of two or more identities. There is only *the final authority of the Real*, in the Lacanian sense whose hard kernel, *the* unassailable fortress, makes it impenetrable, the Sublime of epistemology. Thus, the connection made in comparative readings, according to Žižek, is "an *impossible short circuit* of levels which, for structural reasons, cannot ever meet".[51] As my thesis has explained earlier regarding the phantasmatic quality of the so-called "intersubjective" link, this adjunct indicates the critic's positioning and the path she travels more than the topic of investigation. Žižek espouses this parallax view, which differs in relation to how and where the object is viewed, the different

[49] Žižek, Slavoj. *Interrogating the Real*. Ed. Rex Butler and Scott Stephen. London and New York: Continuum, 2005. pp. 6.
[50] Saussy, Haun. (ed.) "Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares: Of Memes, Hives, and Selfish Genes". *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006. pp. 23.
[51] Žižek, Slavoj. *Interrogating the Real*. Ed. Rex Butler and Scott Stephen. London and New York: Continuum, 2005. pp. 9.

locations and interpretative routes undertaken by readers: "From its beginning (the Ionian Presocratics), philosophy emerged in the interstices of substantial social communities, as the thought of those who were caught in a 'parallax' position, unable fully to identify with any of the positive social identities".[52] Žižek's reference to philosophy emerging from the interstices of substantial communities bears witness to the above assertion that creation manifests from the confrontational relations between two identities. This emergence is only possible as a khoral manifestation, a consequence of the contestation between opposites, arising as a link only because something is missing, and a fleeting parking space permitting a signifier to be enchained in a matrix.

Interpretation has to be ordered in relation to the critic's position, which acts as the centre, in order to achieve textual coherence. Supplementing Saussy's reference to David Damrosch's proposal that world literature ought to be considered as "'an elliptical refraction of national literatures,… not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading'",[53] the thesis reverts attention to the tension inhabiting the space between world and national literatures, a tension caused by the imperial possibilities in very act of inclusion, serving the national interests of the dominant culture. More importantly, Saussy's comment, here, has not addressed the agenda the harnesses any East-West reading for interpretation, comparative or otherwise, means an appropriation and assimilation: "Another reason is our close dependency on the very national-language-and-literature disciplines that comparative literature was created to overcome".[54] Thus, world literature, with its globalising tendencies, may subsume the regional or local because what is considered world literature has always been premised on the valued cultures of the West. This

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[52] Ibid. pp. 11.
[53] Saussy, Haun. (ed.) "Exquisite Cadavers Stitched from Fresh Nightmares: Of Memes, Hives, and Selfish Genes". *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006. pp. 11.
[54] Ibid.

written discourse. As an obvious instance of intertextuality, the internet undermines the traditional ideas of authorial control, a deviation from standard interpretative processes and the systematic encoding that bound pre-internet textualism because of the unprecedented interconnection and, simultaneously, dispersal of texts. The worldwide web raises deconstructive issues such as the indeterminacy of definition and the devaluation of information with the intensive reconfiguration of hegemonic canons.

Derrida's concept of dissemination affirms the openness to the Other instead of the absolute arrival of the message, a reworking of the Heideggerian *aletheia* which is a bringing-forth in *poiesis*. Based on the Greek notion of *technē*, meaning craft or art of representation, Heidegger's question concerning technology is a philosophical treatise on form as representation. In other words, the medium is the message although a message always already translated. This gesture of welcome, according to Derrida, positions itself at the threshold of language and its representations of selfsameness, demonstrating not only its hermeneutic limits (acts of reading positioned between the inside and outside as appositely exemplified by the information superhighway) but also its iterability. Structurally, writing involves the capacity for reiteration that functions even in the absolute absence of the addressee or the sender. Besides the radical absence of the sender and the receiver, writing as repeatability must be capable of functioning even beyond the specific destination or the situation of production as well. As a communicative occurrence, it requires absence as the precondition for the reusability of signs, which ensures not just the lasting existence of a signifying system but also the logical structure of any communicative event. The thetic emphasis given to contribution in/through distribution means that in the stead of reception we have creation. Although it is the argument here that it is difficult to separate reception from creation as the latter is also translation as interpretation.

Cyberspace, a cybernetic non-physical configuration, presents a simulation of the khoral or daoist space. It is, by definition, both liminary and boundless operating externally from the circumscriptions of regular discourse but interiorised because of its openness to alterity or otherness – its biggest strength. The individual texts constituting this network are themselves a particle as well as a transitional point, a margin and a centre, interconnected to and from one another in an interwoven manner. The ubiquity of the hyperreal performs an overturning of the polar distinctions of the real and the imaginary: a metaphorical world created that problematises the concept of "the world" promises other possible worlds. The internet, with its hyperlinks, exemplifying the movement of the trace within writing, enacts the temporary suspension of the logocentric control in discourse. With multiple parties reading the same text and adding commentaries over time or when one has various readers and commentators contributing to real-time discussions, this information superhighway displaces the traditional conventions of reading. Texts, in the internet, cannot be read exclusively as the word, hypertextuality, indicates the externalising possibilities of online interaction. In other words, the potential for structural destabilisation is greater because of the ability to roam the web-like connections at speeds far greater than the message transmissions of traditional postal systems, an apposite figure of the labyrinthine paths of writing.

Hyperlinkage, whereby a word or phrase is foregrounded, so that one is transported to a related webpage by a mere click exemplifies the notion of external textuality from which the concept of the supertext[57] is derived. In its indication to dispersive reading, the hyperlinks provide readers with extra possibilities for diversion by presenting each and every reading as an active interruption, extending the literal reach of the text beyond that of the author, a disjuncture

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[57]The term indicates some entity above the text, which is different from the notion of "hypertext" – a term that points to the textual composition of webpages.

inflecting the space-time continuum we know. Deconstruction in the internet is staged by the virtual leaping of the reader across pages, forming a metatextual[58] chain that makes references to other online writings but resulting ultimately in individual inferences. Thus, the virtuality encountered in the worldwide web revitalises the imagination read here as another version of this amazing human ability which allows the escape from inscriptive circumscription making the potentiality of revolutionary readings dependent on the very condition of inconclusiveness.

The Aestheticised Aporia: *The Adventure of Reading*

The revolutionary activities that occurred on Tiananmen Square and its spatial construction in relation to sites of authority, the Forbidden City and later the architectural representatives of the Communist regime, constitute the leitmotif, not just the Ariadne's thread in the ideational maze of Chineseness but also the Minotaur wandering within the labyrinth, the two-faced entity connecting the various sections of this thesis. As a metaphor of the divide between the transcendental and the immanent, the Heavenly Peace Gate recalls the mythical gate where Laozi was asked by the Keeper of the Pass to write two books, one with thirty-seven chapters known as *Dao Jing* and another forty-four called *De Jing*, explaining *dao*, the nameless passage that is the beginning of heaven and earth. Whereas *Dao* is the Way, *De* signifies ability and power and it has been speculated that *De Jing* comes before *Dao Jing* and this has immense philosophical implications.

By *catachrestically yoking* the political activities that happened on this square from the 1919 literary revolution, accompanied by student protests on the square, to Mao Zedong's

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[58]According to *The Collins Dictionary*, "*meta*", used as a prefix, in the academic realm, considers "the concepts and results of a named discipline". In this case, the word "metatextual" refers to an examination of the idea of writing, which yields the structural effects of textual reading.

instatement as the premier of the republic and then to the *avant-garde* of Chinese writing, it is my aim to reopen the issue of Chineseness from a space within the binary interplay between writing and being, East and West, literature and history, aesthetics and politics, transcendence and immanence, a commentary founded upon the premise that the East/West complementary can only be located within the opposition, the space between the two centres. By referring to *khōra*, which is interpreted as an abyssal fissure that opens up in the middle of Plato's text, *Timaeus*, Derrida wants to indicate not just the undecidability that raises the poetic deviances within inscriptions but also a site where non-violent relations can be thought. In other words, the configurative core is always on the outside, complying with one of the laws of physics: the researcher has no recourse to measuring the actual driven-ness of the moving vehicle within the mechanical enclosure except by placing herself out of the machine. Diane Wei Liang, in *Lake with No Name*, comments: "… sometimes people from the outside offer great insight because, well, exactly because they have not lived here all their lives… They may be able to see things that we don't, or don't want to see"[59] in her conversation with Hanna, her friend, and Jerry, a foreigner in China, just days before the bloodshed at Tiananmen Square in the summer of 1989, supported by her citation of the eminent eighth-century Chinese poet, Li Bai, whose verses have been influenced by Daoist philosophy: "being inside the mountain makes you not able to see it".[60]

In order to corroborate the above argument about the sublime machine of deconstruction, Derrida's analogy of the manual printing press in "Tympan" is cited:

As in the case of the *mystic writing pad*, I am asking in terms of the *manual printing press*, the question of the writing machine which is to upset the entire space of the proper

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[59] Liang, Diane Wei. *Lake with No Name*. London: Review, 2003. pp. 169.
[60] Ibid.

body in the unlimited enmeshing of machines-of-machines, hence of machines without hands. The question of the machine is asked one more time in the pit and the pyramid, in the margins (of the Hegelian text)… In terms of the printing press, therefore, the manual press, what is a tympan? We must know this, in order to provoke within the balance of the inner ear or the homogenous correspondence of the two ears, in relation to itself in which philosophy understands itself to domesticate its march, some dislocation without measure. And, if the Hegelian wound (*beleidegung*, *Verletzung*) always appears sewn up again, to give birth from the lesion without suture, to some unheard-of partition.[61]

Connotative of "type", a "kind" or a "model" that "prints" so as to "represent" as a "prefigurement" of writing – *archi-écriture,* the printing term "frisket" included in the above citation is crucial to the underprivileged white spaces in this thesis. The sublime machinations of *différance* prompt the transubstantiation which allows the transmission of not only the word in different linguistic contexts but it is also responsible for the carriage of the form to a potential content. Substantial permutation is made possible by the tropological workings of rhetoric, supporting my opening assertion that comparative studies are ultimately essentialist to a greater or lesser degree; they are either ethnocentric or sinocentric depending on which side the writer locates herself as she frames the reference. However, the *frame* of the reference here is *the water margin*, an overflowing frame. The attempted anti-essentialist gestures of contemporary European metaphysical critique inadvertently return to essentialism because of the denotative norms embedded in language. Derrida, more than any other writer of metaphysics, notes especially the necessity of discursive positions; Instead of metaphysics of presence, the thesis

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[61] Derrida, Jacques. "Tympan." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. xxv-xxvi.

proposes a metaphysics of mediation: Saussure's signified (discovered to be another signifier) as an inscriptive connector.

Deconstruction, as a detour, displaces a thetic position that gives rise to another place with the initial lodging of one's critique in the crevices of the others' arguments. If essentialism is inevitable, we ought to acknowledge, first, the necessity of taking a position so that our argument is presented cogently, which entails an essentialist reduction, and, second, work with essentialism as a strategy in our negotiation with the other, a "strategic essentialism" that aids the argumentative manoeuvre, a definition of the Heideggerean notion of enframing – the situating of the (wo)man in her/his endeavour. More precisely, the initial emphasis on the spacing of *khōra* and its counterpart, *dao*, will shift to the taking up of a position. Here, this thesis addresses his reserved articulation on Chinese writing – an economic reserve read as a gesture to the differential relations of signification and an invitation for a countersignature. Derrida teases out from the Heideggerean notion of being and time (being can be understood only with a set of historical givens, an epistemological fore-structure implying that the process is inhibited by the *limits of a hermeneutic circle*) this suggestive thread: "Time is the economy of a system of writing".[62] In his exploration of metaphysics and psychoanalysis, Derrida realises that the logocentric repression of illegitimate traces explains the psychic repression of traumatic experiences and anamnesis is possible only with the intergrading of the palimpsests making the perceptual apparatus which operates as a "two-handed machine": the "ideal virginity of the present [maintainent] is constituted by the work of memory" – "the double force of repetition and erasure, legibility and illegibility". The capacity of the sign to iterate, in other words, the trace, is figured at the concluding scene of *Lust, Caution* by the shadowy impressions on the

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[62] Derrida, Jacques. "Freud and the Scene of Writing". *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 1978. pp. 284.

white bed linen – an always reworked *hymeneal ring* for the hymenoid has been the unacknowledged metaphysical concern of both East And West, whether hymeneal in terms of marriage or the hymenoid as a membranous violation, which explains the significance of Derrida's assertion: "We must be several in order to write, and even to 'perceive'".[63] Derrida's re-inscription of Freud's mystic writing pad finds its enigmatic corollary in Li Bouyan's *Modern Times* in which one finds Shanghai a Babel where a Mr. Xin possesses a mysterious notebook whose existence is questionable since the Jia brothers (Jia Ziyou [fake freedom], Jia Pingquan [fake democracy] and Jia Gemin [fake revolution]) are not shown the notebook (if we read it as an occasion of Plato's classification of narration, then there is no mimetic relief only diegetic ones) despite their great efforts to acquire it. The "secret handbook"[64] is purported to enable the transcription of all antiquated knowledge or terms to new ones – "translating a given foreign cultural system, political structure and ideology into the Chinese context",[65] another mystic writing pad which allows the trace of the other to be impressed upon the Chinese psyche even as the Communist ventriloquist continues to make its puppet spout revolutionary slogans.

Yang Xiaobin examines the "ruptures of time" found in the fictions of the Chinese *avant gardes* as they try to represent the unrepresentable:

> Only by *deferring* the past, in the Derridean sense, can memory *differ* from what it contains and then maintain its deconstructive force. "Memory," says Derrida when he touches upon the problem of *Nachtraglichkeit* in his essay "Freud and the Scene of Writing," "is not a psychical property among others; it is the very essence of the psyche: resistance, and precisely, thereby, an opening to the effraction of the trace. "This

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Wang, David, "Translating Modernity". *Translation and Creation: Readings of Western Literature in Early Modern China, 1840-1918*. Ed. David Pollard. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997. pp. 306.
[65] Ibid.

"opening," of course, assumes a discrepant and critical distance between the present and past. Here is the very impetus of writing, of the abrupt, evocative intrusion into history. The evocation of the unconscious is not a process of identifying but, rather, in the form of a compulsion to repeat, an attempt to grasp the gap, or to "breach." In Derrida's words, the *original*: "repetition adds no quantity of present force, no *intensity*; it reproduces the same impression – yet it has the "power of breaching" (Derrida, *Writing* 201). The repetition compulsion, as the psychic action of resistance in the unconscious *educes* the repressed onto the present surface of the literary work while revealing the irreconcilable fissure.[66]

The membranous psychic protection causes the asymmetry between the past and the present which allows the individual to survive psychic fragmentation. The repressed may be evoked in forms different from the deductive dimension of the word "educe", which is not just a drawing out but also *an assumption or working out of given facts* (reminiscent of the Heideggerean notion of being and time). What is deduced may not be what it is, the "original" mentioned by Yang, explaining why Freud, according to Derrida, never managed to depart from the metaphysical domain since the unconscious is evoked in the *Mystic Writing Pad* as absence – a negative reference. And Yang himself does not elude the metaphysical hold because of the eschatological bent of his argument – the "original" he mentions above cannot be *the* psychic source per se. As Derrida suggests in "*Différance*", the origin is non-originary due to the *trace*. Perhaps Yang's use of this word has an unintentional facet drawn out here with the help of its Latin root *edūcere* which is ex- and *dūcere* meaning "to lead" – a subversive erasure, the Derridean *sous rature*, with an alternative route. Here, the road traversed follows the ghostly trace as it marks and re-

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[66] Yang, Xiaobin. *The Chinese Postmodern: Trauma and Irony in Chinese Avant-garde Fiction*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002. pp. 53.

marks cross-culturally – punctuations where three-dimensional space is embellished by the fourth dimension of time.

Derrida's note – with the implications of currency, concern, letter, substance, inflection, influence, weight, et cetera – on the surplus of signification above gains resonance with the literature of the exiled included not only as a mirror to the Chinese spirit of resistance; it also attests to the impossibility of permanently arresting the idea of Chineseness since identity, like all other constituted concepts, is defined by *process* and Chinese writing, predicated on the metaphoric and the metonymic, incites the disaporic tendency of the name, making it conceptually problematic. This flight from meaning is revealed in the doubling of the Chinese script, which, contrary to the predominant Western perception of Chinese characters as a faithful depiction of nature, wilfully misread into the language by the Enlightenment thinkers as the basis of a universal writing, is lateral and associative; it is energised by an antonymous layer that allows the diachronic accretion of the language, a rhetorical propulsion that is inherently deconstructive. The above assertion entails an investigation into the lack of a "proper" Derridean response to Chinese philosophy of language. Derrida's unarticulated address is complimentary, in my view, because it gestures to the similitude between the aberrations in Western writing and the deviations noted in the Chinese script. These signifying instabilities are inscriptive interventions of difference, metonymic associations that will have Chinese writing lodged *within* and *without* the Western inscriptive conception just as the Occidental grammar has its beginnings in Sanskrit before its separation from it. Having located a curious commonality between Chinese inscription and poststructuralist writing on which the critique will be based, an interrogation that is targeted at the very heart of logocentrism, my discourse unsettles the notion that logic is the surest way to truth. Logic, connected to *logos* etymologically, is necessary as an analytic support

but my emphasis goes to the poetic in *mimēsis*. I read Chinese writing as evident of this privilege given to the visionary because, in the book of the Chinese soul, the image takes priority; the painter arrives before the writer. Truth, in its presentation, is parasitic by nature. It feeds on the existing structural abyss in order to manifest but its actualisation leads to another crisis. The *critical* perpetuation, a consequence of the mythological disruption of logic, points to the *trace*, an ephemeral element that necessitates reading. In order to ground the elusive *mythos*, we require the solid structuration provided by *logos*. Reading is, thus, best described as incited by mythological play but arrested with the analytic.

The above rhetorical doubling attests to my argument that the Chinese script informs its philosophy, which bears an uncanny resemblance to "deconstructive" thinking, a similarity which can be read as acknowledged by Derrida's silence. I shall argue, as my thesis, that the enthnocentric in logocentrism and sinocentrism can be undermined not only by Derridean deconstruction but also ancient Chinese thought, encapsulated in *Yijing* (*I Ching*), properly translated as the "Concise Book of Constancy" otherwise known as the *Book of Changes*, an unambiguous indication of the intrinsic deconstruction at work in the heart of Chinese culture. Constancy is located equivocally in the ceaseless mutability of the *presence* given to writing; however, the weight of my critique goes to *that which is before* articulation, the imaginary and conflicted space that precedes sense. The word, *yi*, in *Yijing*, exemplifies this doubling I mentioned earlier. *Yi* denotes "conciseness" and "constancy" but it designates "change" as well, encompassing the polarity in one word. Supplementary to this, "*yi* has *ri*, meaning sun and light, positioned at the head of the character, which, in turn, forms part of its antinomy, *wan*, defined as night and darkness. Homophonically, *yi* means "significance" leading to another *yi* denoting interpretation, a graph that has *wuo*, "self", embedded within. This association that leads to the

dispersal of meaning is most advantageous to my reading of *dao* and *khōra* as parallel sites, both described as the unnamable doulas of names, shedding the half-light of representation. The white space, found right at the core of *t'ai chi t'u*, the Yellow River Plan, symbolic of the five thousand-year-old philosophy of China, is empowering, similar to the white space of *différance* at the locus of Western writing. Correlating to the *technē* of writing, an art that requires the play of oppositions to manifest, the creative forces of the *yin-yang*, the interpenetration of the feminine and masculine principles of Chinese philosophy, are forces that valorise form as presence. Thus, the daoist and khoral spaces prior to writing are comparable; the difference lies with the form writing takes in the different parts of the world. *Yijing* is "essentially a book about changeless *presence* in a world of always changing configuration".[67] The above citation brings to mind the epistemological feud between Parmenides and Heraclitus to which Laozi provides the answer in the first line of *Laozi*.[68] Thus, truth, as Eastern philosophy indicates, is made present to us only in/through representation.

The Irreal of Reality within Writing: The Well of Man

Forget the passage of time. Forget the differences. Leap into the boundless and make it your home.
> Zhuangzi
> *Zhuangzi*

The opening to "Wandering in Absolute Freedom", the first chapter of the Inner Chapters of *Zhuangzi*, testifies to my belief that there is more to life than humanism or metaphysics; "the world is not enough", a borrowed statement reinterpreted here as knowledge built upon humanism in whatever category, including Confucian humanism, is inadequate in its ontological

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[67] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. 22.
[68] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. D. C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001. pp. 5. Here, Laozi informs us of the nameless way: ""The way that can be spoken of / Is not the constant way/ The name that can be named / Is not the constant name".

exegesis. In order to go back to the metaphysical basics so as to reshape the contemporary world with its multiple problems, the climate crisis being the most salient at the moment, one requires a greater interpretative detour; a return to the Presocratics and the Chinese ancients of about the same period. Thus, the appraisal needs the energetic impulse *Zhuangzi* expounds in the imagery of the bird, *peng*, which needs a whirlwind travelling at the speed of 90,000 *li* to lift it and aid its flight by clearing all hurdles.[69]

The Celestial Pond, cited in the footnotes, refers to the heavenly or divine and archaically names the Chinese Empire and the Chinese people. Notorious for his evocative, aphoristic style and the use of rhetorical images, Zhuangzi tells us that the Celestial Pond is not only located in the South Sea; there is another in the North Sea. In the same chapter, Tang, the first king of the Shang Dynasty asks his minister, Ji: "'Are there limits up and down, east and west, north and south?' Ji answered, 'There are limits beyond limits. In the remote and barren north, there is the dark sea, the Celestial Pond, where lives a kind of fish by the name of *kun*, whose size covers thousands of *li*. There also lives a kind of bird by the name of *peng*, whose back is like a lofty mountain and whose wings are like the clouds that hang from the sky. Soaring like a whirl wind to the height of 90,000 *li*, the *peng* flies above the heavy clouds and against the blue sky on its southward journey toward the South Sea'".[70] *Kun* is also the name for the "feminine" principle of *dao* and it covers thousands of *li* because the Chinese sees the entire earthly terrain as that which gives to creation. The chapter on translation will indicate that *kun*, too, is the term for the woven fabric of writing. In this section, it is read as a cosmic veil providing the epistemic contours of society, concretised as the literature, philosophy, art and architecture of a particular ethos. Ji's answer can be read in terms of the *transition* from one cultural epoch to another. With

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[69] Zhuangzi. *Zhuangzi*. Tran. Wang Rongpei. Hunan: Foreign Languages Press, 1999. pp. 1.
[70] Ibid. pp. 5.

experimentation and exploration as justification, we push ourselves beyond the known limit to demarcate another, in the hope of supplanting and superseding the present but we, ultimately, have to glean from tradition the elements required to move forward. The tensions and the intersections between the two cultural movements, Modernism and Postmodernism, exemplify what is meant here by "transition": a going across with *a modulation used in passing*, the license for the cross-over.[71] Working with the *avant-gardes* of the various epochs, the May Fourth writers, the Abstract Expessionists of the 1940s/1950s, the Misty writers, and the New Era writers exemplify the crossing-over. And the memorious discourse here emphasises the importance of the literary moment – time giving to the analepsis and the prolepsis – providing the poetic space for the "event" of the recapture, which is, perhaps, encapsulated by the word *li* in the above quotation, indicating both speed and distance, space in relation to time.

The Latin roots of the "translation", which means "to cross" is crucial not only to my reading of the problematic inherent to the translation of Chinese writing to English; it is significant to the taking up of a challenge to translate that which is considered discourse-bound, "the prisonhouse of language", to use Fredric Jameson's phrase, to the empirical world. This prison break, a freedom ironically tied to another goal, is capacitated by Ji's "limits beyond limits", empyrean bodies of waters metaphorically comparable to the sublimity of the Solarian

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[71] The mapping of this transition from Modernity to Postmodernity, located here as high Modernism, is exemplary of the movement from an epoch or ethos to another where overlaps can be found although one movement is known to be a reaction to and against the other. Since the instance is the thesis here, an example is needed to demonstrate this move. Furthermore, the above is also a remembrance of Derrida's emphasis on the significance of tradition. One cannot deconstruct metaphysics without first residing within it. Yeh's "Chinese Posmodernism" makes obvious the ramifications of erasing the classics, albeit unintentionally, and the attempt here demonstrates how the retrieval of Chinese poetic antiquity can renew and refresh what is considered a culturally stagnated and bankrupt society without the nostalgia that haunts Stephen Owen's diatribe against contemporary Chinese poetics. As the transitional phase is also decidedly dissident, the *avant-gardes* are brought in to complement a thesis concerning the question of the revolutionary, a question illustrated and elaborated by the revolutionary of the aesthetics of which Pollock's paintings are instances (though it must be added that *Lavender Mist* is of paramount significance to this thesis for its portrayal of the "primordial" daoist or khoral processes before they manifest textually) and substantiates the thetic argument that what is considered Western postmodernity can be interpreted as imbued with ancient Chinese thought since the *avant la lettres* of postmodernism are known to have studied Daoism or Buddhism, thus countering Yang's and Yeh's concepts of the Chinese postmodern.

Ocean and the Weiming Lake, the "Lake with No Name". Why the recourse to modern and, inversely, postmodern literary texts from the West and the East respectively (although neither can be classified strictly as this nor that)? First, this move pertains to the value given to water by the Chinese ancients, comparable to Thales's cosmological belief that the earth floats on water and all things originate from this medium,[72] a notion made obvious in *Laojing* or *Old Well*, a novel by Zheng Yi and translated to the filmic version of the same title by the Chinese director, Wu Tianming, in 1987; second, it presents the ways water can be read as a figure of writing and, third, it also allows the thesis to lay bare *the coddled criminal property* within the metaphysical unconscious of the West, the Lacanian Barred Other, an aberration which the East has recognised within their own culture from time immemorial.

The plot of *Old Well* centres itself on the need to find water in a mountainous village whose arid landscape results in the digging of one hundred and twenty-seven dry wells. Sun Wangquan, who has just returned to the village, decides to use his technological knowledge to find water. Trapped in a loveless marriage while his love for another remains unconsummated the denouement of which will destroy his family name and upset the social order, he sublimates his desire to the worthy enterprise of looking for water when generations before him have failed. Digging the well, the villagers' obsession, overrides all other personal issues. In fact, Wangquan whose name means "auspicious for flowing stream", fulfils the chosen designation, which, in turn, gives the apparent wholeness to his identity. He is duly rewarded with an inscription on a plaque but at what cost? In a patriarchal and misogynistic society, the sacrificial lamb is always the female, especially if she, too, has just returned from the outside world. There is merely the satisfaction of a vampiric kiss, a romantic ephemeron with Wangquan, when both are trapped in

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[72] Thales of Miletus is known to be one of the seven wise men mentioned by Plato and purportedly predicted the eclipse in 585 B.C.E. In one of Plato's tales, Thales falls into a well as he is too busy examining the stars. See Kirk, Raven and Schofield. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

the well thinking that death is near. The contrast between the two women, Wangquan's wife, Duan Xifeng, and Zhao Qiaoying, his love, is used by Rey Chow to foreground the repressive patriarchy of rural Chinese society. Qiaoying, by going against social norms, becomes an outcast. As Chow explains: "Even though in terms of social progress, Qiaoying is much closer to man himself than the woman-at-home. In the rural village, her *avant garde* ontological proximity to masculinity is eyed with suspicion and mistrust".[73] She is the strange and, yet, familiar thing, the unwelcome "it" who reflects the unpalatable image of D. H. Lawrence's "ripe fig" – "showing her crimson through the purple slit/ Like a wound the exposure of her secret, on/the open day./ Like a prostitute, the bursten fig, making a show of her secret". Why is her "secret" so repulsive to the male gender? Could it be a reminder that social cohesion depends heavily on female fidelity, the *othered* of patriarchy, and any mis*demeanour* can upset its already fragile structure?

Chow's perceptive discussion of third-world cinema in "Digging an Old Well" notes that "the ideal postulation of a 'third world difference' is not without its own problematic – the equally ethnocentric assumptions. Arguments for 'Third World' cinema are often such that the 'Third World' becomes an extension of the European Marxist avant-garde tradition, and such that its cultures are loaded, by the way of interpretation, with the residues of the European Enlightenment with an emphasis on cognitive lucidity, on production, on experiment, and on emancipation".[74] Chow may be digging her heels into something here with her qualification on Chinese cinema but it must be noted that the above criticism is arguably valid when one looks at the issue of Chinese literary/cinematic realism. From Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah Q" (at the turn of the twentieth century) to Wu Zuxiang's *Mountain Torrent* (1946), Chinese literature had

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[73]Chow, Rey. "Digging an Old Well: the Labor of Social Fantasy." *Reinventing Film Studies*. Ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams. London: Arnold; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. pp. 411.
[74] Ibid. pp. 403.

to contend with national interests. In order to revolutionise literature, perceived as bound to their cultural identity, Lu Xun and the other May Fourth writers, who professedly looked toward the West for literary ideas, introduced the New Literature – a vernacular prose style in their fictional portrayals of the lower classes. The generation of writers after the May Fourth literary movement inherited a literature fraught with contradictions between political agenda and stylistics: Chinese literature continued to be concern with critical realism because it was deemed, first and foremost, a didactic medium supposedly benefitting the masses. Despite the Chinese writers' struggles to counterpoise realistic fiction with subtle resistance to its ideology (with the exception of Lu Xun[75] and Mao Dun whose writings can be described as writings *at the limits* of realism), C. T. Hsia is right in calling these literary revolutions an "obsession with China"[76] as the writings are fictions always attempting to address the plight of the common people with the hope of transforming China's cultural identity. Chinese literature from the May Fourth Movement onward can be read as replete with tensions between the individual and the community because the individual is perceived to be without an identity outside social validation, an issue that began from Confucian teachings. Individual identity in China is circumscribed by communal rituals just as writing is conditioned by institutional codes and shared assumptions. In other words, the propriety of the name is privileged the way writing has to be "properly" coded. Theodore Huters, in his examination of Chinese literature in modernity, insists that the problems mentioned above

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[75] Lui, Jianmei. *Revolution plus Love: literary History Women's Bodes, and Thematic Repetition in Twentieth-Century Chinese Fiction.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003. pp. 40-41. Lui speaks of the critical attacks that Lu Xun underwent despite his literary reputation as his literary input was deemed too dark for the bright future of Communist China, a future always associated with brilliance and light, a coincidence to the allusion to the sun as a symbol of Truth in Platonic philosophy.

[76] Hsia, C. T. "Obsession with China: The Moral Burden of Modern Chinese Literature." *A History of Modern Chinese Literature.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971. pp. 533-554. Yang Xiaobin, in *The Chinese Postmodern*, rewrites Hsia's description as "an obsession with the redemption of China". His critical reading delves into the issues of historical trauma and literary irony in Chinese *avant-garde* literature. Yang, Xiaobin. *The Chinese Postmodern: Trauma and Irony in Chinese Avant-garde Fiction.* Ann Arbor: The University f Michigan, 2002. pp. 5.

are "symptoms of a more global crisis in which a particular system of ideas"[77] of a certain locality has to fit. In his view, the difficulties faced by modern Chinese writers are results of "overt political strictures imposed by various authoritarian governments" and "perhaps the most powerful common denominator of the constraints upon literature is the disinclination to turn literature loose from a focus upon the social bases of human problems… [which] can be broken down into two main categories – those conditioned by longstanding cultural patterns, and those conditioned by historical contingency, in particular by the post-1895 challenge the encroaching West presented to the images that traditional China had of itself".[78] Huters argues that the sense of cultural crisis may have to do with "the very abruptness of the literary revolution's move to the vernacular … The traditional literary language, however dry and restrictive it may have been regarded as being, was the last and arguably most deeply felt of China's links to the traditional system of meaning".[79] The political pressures on Chinese literature became even more pronounced during Mao's reign and any literary movement deviating from the realistic mode was branded counter-revolutionary with the writers persecuted and vindicated only with degrading acts of self-criticism. Perhaps *Laojing* is an allegory of the writers' quest for a literature freed from tradition and socio-political constraints.

Chow's ironic questions suggest that she does not subscribe to the common belief that nationalism is the Third World revenge on First World's imperialism: "One question that the inscription of 'Third World' cultures in opposition does not seem to be able to deal with is what else there is in such cultures besides the struggle against the West. What if the primary interest of a 'Third World' culture is not that of resistance against Western domination? How are we to read

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[77] Huters, Theodore. (Ed.). *Reading the Modern Chinese Short Story*. New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, Inc. 1999, pp. 8.
[78] Ibid. pp. 10.
[79] Ibid. pp. 11.

the processes of signification that actually fall outside the currently hegemonic reading of Third

World cultures, the reading that insists on their *oppositional* alterity to the West only?"[80] To

counter the polemical reading, Chow insists that the nation's enemy is the constructed otherness

of female sexuality embodied by the well, an enemy inherent to Chinese society. Qiaoying, as a

modern woman, is "Like a mysterious signifier unleashed from centuries of anchorage to

kinship"[81] and her mobility may be the reason why she is caught between nationalism and

communism. Chow reads the figure of the well as a gesture to the absence right at the locus of

the master signifier "nation": "A careful allegorical reading of *Old Well* would demonstrate that

the allegory of the 'nation' is, paradoxically, the nation's otherness and non-presence".[82] The

non-presence signified by the well can be read as a reinforcement of "woman" as an empty and

shifting signifier since the well, a cavernous hole dug again and again for water, the source for

human survival, is comparable to the female genitalia. Thus, the fiction can be read as one

yielding to "an emphasis on cognitive lucidity, on production, on experiment, and on

emancipation". In fact, Chow herself succumbs to the same ideological trappings by using the

figure of the well as a master signifier in her feminist reading. As an appendage to Chow's

reading, this thesis realigns the figure of the well to the *Kun* hexagramme of *Yijing* – an image

with an empty space in the middle across its length, a symbol of both earth and cloth: the earth

covers the fiery core within and the cloth an be read as writing that veils being. The character,

"*Kun*", also includes the meaning, "dissemination", the spread of the *Yin* forces during the darker

times of the year. In *The Limits of Realism*,[83] Marston Anderson explores the "crowd" motif in

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[80] Ibid. Author's emphasis.
[81] Ibid. pp. 411
[82] Ibid, pp. 409.
[83] Anderson, Marston. *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fictions in the Revolutionary Period*. Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990. In her critical account, she mentions the attempts of the literary elite to represent the subalterns, all eventually encountering the gap between the individual and society, self and community.

Chinese revolutionary literature which ties in with the writing here, premised on the analogy of the multitude against the empire, tropes borrowed from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.

The otherness Chow mentions above can be an oppositional alterity to the "First World" or a conflictual other as a neighbour or an internal otherness clashing with selfsameness. In other words, the other can be met as a friend at one point but confronted as a foe in a different situation. Chow's argument about national identity in the era of internationalism is further elaborated here: the master signifier, "nation", contains within its core a heterogeneous alterity, an abstract otherness, an otherness in its recapitalised form, not the Lacanian Other which allows the splitting of the One to two, three and so on. This space, named provisionally the daoist and khoral sites, creates a new arena of interrelations that can change at any moment into a signifying field of cultural contestations. The possibility of either harmony or conflict rests on the temporal and spatial conditions of interpretation as translation and the schizophrenic reception of alterity testifying to the doubling at the radical boundary where the controlling forces meet the untamable ones, the concept of ideality and propriety crashing with the notion of impurity and impropriety. Nationalism as the "obscene superego underside"[84] of the Communist regime motivates the struggle to protect what is seen as tantamount to one's possession of selfhood supports my assertion that man is a creature who does not want to be unplugged from the *jouissance* of the Other; the satisfaction of the Other (the Symbolic) is the key to happiness for the individual. Sun Wangquan is one such person who sublimates his desire for Qiaoying to the love of his village and, by extension, his nation, a fantasy shared collectively as evidenced by Chow's subtitle to the essay "The Labor of Social Fantasy" because it shelters the villagers from

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[84] Žižek, Slavoj. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates.* London and New York: Verso, 2002. pp. 25.

the horrors of the ontological vacuum. However, this *jouissance* can turn easily into an obscene one when an individual is punished by the community for undermining the Law of the Father.

The affirmation of the mobility of the signifier here is predicated on Žižek's "parallax view"; these perspective shifts inadvertently expose the necessary mediation between self and other and simultaneously, the parallax error. The cultural exchange depends on the agenda of the participants and the hierarchy implicit in the processes of valuation. Thus, the exchange can be a conflictual or harmonious interaction dependent on the perception of the hand extended as one leading to a handshake, the self as *a part of* a whole (a kind of conflict management activating dialogue), or a left-handed friction, the self as *apart from* an other. The law of the third, the signifier as *the thing* standing in for the Other and as self standing in front of the Other, Lacan's mobile *objet petit a*, cannot contain the spills from within the contours of the representative, allegorised here by the overflowing presence of water in the mentioned texts. Water, the symbol of life and death, is a fluid and dynamic medium, with qualities similar to writing, which can manifest as a terrifying tsunami or fresh water springing from a mountain source. Book VIII of *Daodejing* has a passage on water which is of relevance here: "Highest Good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would *like to be*, it comes close to the way".[85] The above emphasis invokes the idea of *transfiguration*, embodied in the diverse forms water can take in its natural cycle. The textual knot, which is also the traumatic core of the psyche, the "mysterious mirror"[86] read here as emblematic of the mind, gives to the unraveling and re-entangling of the text, permitting the reengagement of the problematic in the form of a question, a subjectivity bridging the gap between the particular and the universal by cutting across the existential impasse with action. All

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[85] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. D. C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 13. Emphasis mine.
[86] Ibid. pp. 18. The allusion to the mirror is exceptionally important to the Lacanian references here as Lacan is known to be influenced by Daoist teachings, as recorded in his biography by Elizabeth Roudinesco.

the female figures mentioned so far: *Kun*, the fish; *peng,* the bird; Zhao Qiaoying and Diane Wei Liang, the author of the "autobiographical" *Lake with No Name*, can be read as creations from "the spirit of the valley",[87] a Daoist evocation of the maternal vessel comparable to Derrida's description of *khōra* as a maternal receptacle. *Dao* and *khōra*, the ineffable and the evanescent, are the genii driving the recycling processes of the remainders. These excesses cannot be properly named because they are considered the improper and the illegitimate, the grotesques of the Symbolic, noting here that the word "grotesque" comes from the Italian word *grotto* or "cave" derived from the Latin word *crypta* which means "a subterranean passage". In response to Chow's intuition that "family values come as an attempt to mask the lack created by the bankruptcy of communism and nationalism" in her reading of *Laojing*, the thesis adds that the lack now is covered by the postmodern, gobalised face of capitalism, the disfigured demeanour of commodity fetishism evident in the oxymoron, "a communist capitalist society", a cultural transformation the regime makes so that the Communist ideology becomes invisible to the people of the republic.

Both *dao* and *khōra,* perceived as a tandem machine, gesture to the blind spot at the centre of the Hegelian dialectical circulation, corresponding to Chow's reading of the well in *Laojing* or *Old Well* out of which emerges Ernesto Laclau's empty signifier. Laclau suggests that the empty signifier is different from the equivocal or the floating signifier in that it is not just an effect of the arbitrary nature of the sign nor is it a result of the overdetermination or underdetermination of the signifier. It materialises at the edge of the system where the logic of equivalences gives way to the logic of differences, notably remarking Derrida's description of *khōra* – where the oscillation swings between "two types of oscillation: the double exclusion

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[87] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. D. C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 11.

(*neither/nor*) and the participation (*both/and*)"[88] and not just between two poles. If language is a system of differences, according to Ferdinand de Saussure, and purely relational, then every single act of signification requires a signifying ground that totalises all the properties necessary for the signifying structure as identity to appear and, yet, at the same time, it must materialise as difference. The crisis occurs when "the very possibility of signification is the system and the very possibility of the system is the possibility of its limits".[89] In my view, the emptiness within the signifier gives to its equivocal and floating characteristics, both the cause and effect of signifying overdetermination or underdetermination. Unsettling the equivalences, the trace enables the transformation within the signifier as it shifts with the agency of another subject (although a writing being *being written*),[90] desubstantiating the signifier with translation. The subject, that of enunciation as well as the enunciated, is lodged at the fissure between the two, *dao* and *khōra* - the (non)being as well as (non)event – who fleshes out one of the possibilities.

Ming Dong Gu's *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing*, a comprehensive study of the traditional Chinese texts, speaks of the above in relation to the readings of *Zhouyi*, Wang Bi's exposition of *Yijing*, readings divided into two schools of thought: the *Yi-li* (Meaning-Principle) school, "… not bound by the images of the text[;] they related the text to the infinite context of the universe, society, and human conditions",[91] and the *Xiang-shu* (Image-Number) school, which dominated the readings of *Yijing* before Wang Bi came into the scene. Gu refers to the controversy between the two schools as one based on "coding": "As far as coding is concerned,

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[88] Derrida, Jacques "*Khōra*". *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*. Ed. Julian Wolfreys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. pp. 232.

[89] Laclau, Ernesto. "'Why do Empty Signifiers Matter in Politics?'" *Deconstruction: A Reader*. Ed. Martin McQuillan. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. pp. 406.

[90] The tautological words within the parenthesis find its support in Jonathon Scott Lee's *Jacques Lacan*: "in short, the "experience" of human subjects as speakers of a language, is essentially shaped by the language they speak. Language marks a radical otherness at the core of the subject". Lee, Jonathon Scott. *Jacques Lacan*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1991. pp. 50.

[91] Gu, Ming Dong. *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing: A Route to Hermeneutic and Open Poetics*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005. pp. 116.

the Image-Number school's paradigm of exegesis may be called "overcoded reading", and the Meaning-Principle school's paradigm of exegesis may be termed "undercoding",[92] paralleling the Western textual concepts of "overdetermination" and "underdetermination". Gu's extrapolation of Wang Bi's strategy of reading mentions Wang Bi's proposal of "forgetting the image", an exegesis that superficially correlates with the Nietzschean "forgetting and remembering". A profound difference can be found and it lies with Wang Bi's emphasis on meaning. Wang Bi is known to have revolutionised the hermeneutic approaches to *Yijing*, a trailblazer who introduced a new theory of reading, but, according to Gu, if we examine closely the different approaches, there evinces a radicalism from the Image-Number school, whose conservative effort, believed to be associated with Confucian teachings, "overemphasizes the efforts believed to have gone into the making of the Zhouyi text".[93] On the other hand, the Meaning-Principle school "seems to suggest that the intense efforts believed to have gone into the correlation between images and statements might not have been there in the first place".[94] The thesis readjusts the hermeneutic flashlight on "image" and "number" of *Yijing* in terms of the ambiguity and cryptic quality of these signifiers, a defamiliarising of the signifiers by scrutinising them from the outside of Chineseness with Derrida's reading of Stephan Mallarmé *Crise de vers* and Phillippe Sollers's *Numbers*: the first, his signifying alchemy with rhetorical play, and the second, his refreshingly *en*lightening poetics on Chinese numerals.

This thesis reproblematises and make more complex the idea of Chineseness; it is a critical performance that moves back and forth, movements corresponding to the temporal and spatial oscillations of Chinese philosophical thinking, disrupting the three dimensional measure of an "event" with the fourth dimension not unlike the principles of relativity. *Chi*, the cosmic

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[92] Ibid. pp. 117.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

aether, to which *Yijing* alludes is mentioned in Moritz Schlick's *Space and Time in Contemporary Physics*: "The efforts of physicists had always been directed solely at the substratum which *occupied* space and time: they taught us to know, more and more accurately, the constitution of matter and the law of events which occurred *in vacuo*, or as it had, till recently, been expressed in the 'aether'".[95] Schlick's discussion contradicts traditional physics's emphasis on "Space and Time as vessels containing this substratum and furnishing fixed systems of reference, with the help of which the mutual relations between bodies and events had to be determined: in short, they actually play the part which Newton had set down for them in the well-known words: 'Absolute, true and mathematical time flows in virtue of its own nature uniformly and without reference to any external object'; and 'absolute space, by virtue of its own nature and without reference to any external object, always remains the same and is immovable".[96] One of the earliest objections came from epistemologists who believed that "there was no meaning in the terms Space and Time as used without 'reference to an object' which was further explored by A.H. Lorentz and Fitzgerald whose theory of contraction insists that "very body which is in motion relatively to the aether is subject to a definite contraction along the direction of motion (the so-called Lorentz-contraction), which depends upon the velocity of the body. This hypothesis is set up in order to explain why it seemed *impossible to detect 'absolute' rectilinear motion* of our instruments by means of the experiment of Michelson and Morley… For Einstein recognized that there is a much simpler way of explaining from first principles the negative results of Michelson and Morley's experiment. No special physical hypothesis at all is required. It is only necessary to recognize the principle of relativity, according to which a rectilinear uniform 'absolute' motion can never be detected, and the fact that the conception of

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[95] Schlick, Moritz. *Space and Time in Contemporary Physics*: *An Introduction to the Theory to Relativity and Gravitation*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. pp. 2. Author's emphasis.
[96] Ibid.

motion has a physical meaning only when referred to a material body of reference"[97] corresponding to the pragmatic view of Chinese philosophy from ancient times onwards. Instead of tarrying in the Lacanian Real, the Lorentz-contraction is used as a metaphor for the writing here which dives into the vortex and speeds up again across the Real, taking up the wager of the Derridean legacy in the hope that the condensed style here is read idiomatically as "brevity is the soul of wit".

Finally, the option which is always already occurring because of the first proposal, the two sides are perceived not just as frictional but clashing explosively. For the word "entity" to be of use here, one must see the existence of such a thing as not just a projection from its numerous potentials, a rod extending outward and toward the other, on one side but also the rowdy jostling of the various possibilities within the vacuum of being, on the other, a (dis)orientating whirling experience not unlike the whirlpool the Chinese anticipated at the edge of the world when Zheng He, the imperial admiral, was sent to spread Chinese dominion to the barbaric areas across the seas from 1405 to 1433; the seven voyages came to be known as "Zheng He to the Western Ocean". The sea adventurers from both East and West were right about the whirlpools that still occur at various parts of the oceans but they were, then, wrong about the earth which was thought to be flat. The terror associated with this freak of nature is described graphically in Edgar Allen Poe's "A Descent into the Maelström". Poe's story is included not merely for its amazing details of the horrific descent but also for the fact that, in the editor's addendum, it is said that Poe was inspired by Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (specifically Part IV, 224-231) when writing "Descent": "For the vertigo of the one is juxtaposed by the descent of the other; the lure of the abyss, by the fisherman's loss of fear, his 'almost serene contemplation of the impassive Law which brought that fear about. Such is '*the **well** of Democritus*', as the

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[97] Ibid. pp. 2-3.

epigraph from Glanvill suggests. Or, put more simply, as Poe had surely read in Ree's *Cyclopaedia*: This mode of acquiring certain knowledge he confessed to be very difficult, and therefore, he used to say that *truth lay in a deep well* (emphasis mine), from which it is the office of reason to draw it up".[98] Poe's fiction not only describes the existential vertigo experienced when an individual becomes unplugged from the Symbolic; it also suggests the psychological tranquility expounded by Zhuangzi's Daoism when facing a fearsome phenomenon.

The narrator describes the Maelstrom as "the vast bed of waters, seamed and scarred into *a thousand conflicting channels*, burst suddenly into phrensied convulsion – heaving, boiling, hissing - gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes except in precipitous descents",[99] an apposite metaphor for the vortex of the Real residing at the radical boundary. According to him, "The ordinary accounts of this vortex had not prepared me for what I saw". There was "a radical alteration" that followed the forces and counterforces of currents with the slowing down of the antagonistic gyratory movements which, on the other hand, mounted to something vaster: "Suddenly - very suddenly – this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than half a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, *and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar,*

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[98] Poe, Edgar Allen. ""A Descent into the Maelström." *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allen Poe*. Ed., Intro. and Comm. Harold Beaver. London: Penguin Books, 1976. pp. 357-358.
[99] Ibid, pp 74. Emphasis mine.

such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven",[100] the scream of the Sirens within the human psyche.

The emphasis on the voice here is significant to what I have to say about being and presence. In the West, just as in the East, sight and sound denote presence as being; the Chinese acknowledges the role sensorial perceptions play in the empirical world – the active ordering of the phenomenal manifestations by our cognitive faculties so that they mean something to us, correlating to the Western enlightenment occurring with Immanuel Kant: the infinite as an idea measurable only with the finite – the Kantian Sublime as the unrecognisable is thinkable albeit inaptly with schematisation. If we subscribe to Kant's view that the thingness-in-itself can never be truly experienced, then the experience we have is mediated through the *relation* between the phenomenon and the senses. The daunting prospect of the Other may inflict violence on the imagination but our imagination, in return, does aggression to it by its very attempt to penetrate the opacity of the unknown. This cycle of mimetic violence continues even as cultures, perceived as epistemic structures, are founded and renewed and my argument gestures to the radical violence at the absolutising moment of knowledge. Poe's vortex is comparable to the clamour of being dawning vertiginously before the narrator as he stands transfixed by the sights and sounds in front of him, a mammoth terror crying out for the recognition so crucial to being. Absolute mastery is deemed impossible as indicated in Poe's short fictions. The will to absolute knowledge is followed by the annihilation of the individual consciousness. Thus, conflicts arise only because of the need to colonise the other, physically or epistemologically, and the violence inherent in any antagonistic confrontation remains the master in our interaction with the other.

At the beginning of the chapter entitled "Analytic of the Sublime", Kant refers to the difference between the Sublime and the Beautiful as a distinction between quality and quantity.

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[100] Ibid. pp. 75. Emphasis mine.

However, crucial to my discussion is the analogous nature of Kant's analysis and it can be seen in this statement "Thus the beautiful seems to be regarded as the presentation of an indefinite concept of understanding, *the sublime as that of a like concept of reason*".[101] In referring to Kant's analysis on aesthetic judgement, it is my contention that the judgemental aptitude (an intersection of the intellectual faculty and imagination), reflective or determinant, by its very endeavour to domesticate the formless other, a consequence of our impulse to knowledge, *violates* the encountered unknown. This human propensity to systematize our contact with alterity is, of course, an aid to the faculty of understanding, with the emphasis placed on the pleasure experienced when comprehension is achieved. But this inclination to structural principles must be accompanied by the acknowledgement that there will always be vestiges exceeding form. Kant recognises the indeterminacy that describes certain experiences – encounters that elide determinate judgements - even as he painstakingly expounds the intrinsic value of totality. How we relate to the experiences we encounter in the phenomenal world and present them in a manner as close to reality as possible is an issue that has been considered and reconsidered by various philosophers. Kant is the first to privilege interpretation in *Critique of Judgement*. The chasm between the phenomenal world and human consciousness is bridged by a reading that sees the integrity of the phenomenal world as the *a priori* of logical investigations, whether philosophical or scientific, and this indicates his critique as a form of transcendental phenomenology. It is important to distinguish the role of imagination in Kant's critique of judgement. Imagination is allotted a mediating place between the divides of concepts and intuition, subject and object and intelligibility and sensibility, with a synthetic function that unifies the various elements of cognition, thus giving rise to possible experience. Kant's contribution to the epistemological significance of imagination is informing but there evinces a

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[101] Ibid. pp. 82. Emphasis mine.

limitation in his critical philosophy when he insists that judgements of beauty, in order to achieve validity, must arise from cognitions that have a consensual basis. In the recent commentaries on Kant's third critique, the Beautiful and the Sublime are no longer interpreted as oppositional because they are both subjected to the same conditions of perception. Form can be only envisioned from the boundless formlessness which, in turn, indicates the role of imagination in our encounter with the other. The bridge that connects our consciousness to reality is not our imaginative capacity as such; the mediation comes in the form of representation in imagination, an elemental rearrangement of experience similar to the virtual reality of computer graphics. The structural necessity that determines Kant's analysis of the beautiful and the sublime can be and is often flouted by high modernist aesthetics, whose emphasis is on the elusive figure that gives to translations in the Derridean sense of which Pollock's *Lavender Mist* is an instance.

An exegesis of the prevalence of violence in epistemic construction demonstrates how the confrontation with the Kantian Sublime, this boundless formlessness, does violence to the imagination.[102] Kant's third critique is a discourse preoccupied with the conceptual challenge of subliminal experiences (and in contemporary culture, it includes the description "uncanny") one encounters in the phenomenal world, which, even with the play of the faculties of understanding and imagination, cannot yield a presentation that can be submitted to cognitive powers. Even though Kant recognises the boundlessness of the sublime, he insists that "its totality is also present to thought".[103] The totality of the sublime is present to thought only if it is analysed in logical terms. In addition to reading against the grain his epistemological emphasis, which can be

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[102] Kant's third critique mentions this violation at the beginning of his analysis of the sublime: "On the other hand, that which excites in us, without any reasoning about it, but in the mere apprehension of it, the feeling of the sublime may appear, as regards its form, to *violate* purpose in respect of the judgment" Kant, Immaneul. *Critique of Judgement*. Trans. J. H. Bernard. London: Hafner Press, a division of Macmillan Publishers, 1951. pp. 83. Emphasis mine.

[103] Kant, Immaneul. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. J. H. Bernard. London: Hafner Press, a division of Macmillan Publishers, 1951.

detected in the *Critique of Judgement*, my interpretation of Kant's exposition on aesthetic judgement notes, more importantly, his positioning with regard to transcendental imagination. His meta-critical espousal of our imaginative capabilities makes us aware not only of the limitations of our interpretative ability but also the unlimited expanse beyond. The portal positioning he occupies in his academic explorations indicates the underlying *indeterminacy* of the third critique, especially obvious when he tries to delineate the various faculties of understanding, judgement and reason and the manner of their interactions. Although Kant was initially suspicious of the workings of our imaginative faculty,[104] *perceiving it as an obstruction to reason*, he later places priority on imagination, most significantly in the third critique. This may be why Lacan insists that philosophy as logic gives us textual knots since the ground for logic, as Kant discovered, is imagination. Crucial to the thesis is Kant's intuition that the imagination is the *cornerstone* of knowledge and an alternative to theological and traditional metaphysical dogmatism but its frailty manifests with the virtual quality of the sign making it, first and foremost, a simulacrum which finds no acceptance within logocentrism. *Yijing*, on the other hand, proposes a schematic arrangement premised on observation, symbolisation, systemisation, divination and interpretation.

With the cacophony of being as the keynote, I gesture to the significance of the visual and the aural, what Lacan calls the gaze and the voice, that elaborate the "concrete and cultural" in Chun-chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher's introduction to *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*: "The Chinese mode of living in space-time is neither intuitive nor immediate (as western thinkers would have us think) but concrete and cultural, expressed matter-of-factly in history and literature. Chinese culture is concrete by virtue of its being characteristically "*Wen* [literature]

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[104] A detailed discussion of Kant's analysis of the imaginative faculty can be found in Sarah L. Gibbons's *Kant's Theory of Imagination*. Gibbons, Sarah L. *Kant's Theory of Imagination: Bridging Gaps in Judgement and Experience*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxord University Press, 1994.

and *Shih* [history] (*wen-shih*)" at once".[105] The word, "concrete", in the above introduction to Chinese culture does not indicate a lack of abstraction and complexity in Chinese philosophy or aesthetics; it is an appeal to the material, signs, as imperfect concretisations of ideas, an appellation that calls forth the intelligible with the use of the sensible, a parenthetical use that remarks the other as always already intrinsic to the selfsame. Gu indicates this with his exposition on the Chinese literary concept *yixiang* (image) "a remarkable invention because it captures both the seen and the unseen, image and thought… The evolution of the concept *yixiang* (idea-image) shows vividly how the ancient Chinese mind grasps the inseparableness of idea and its material body, the word".[106] That Chinese culture is defined elegantly as *wen-shih* notes the variegated nature of the culture. Chinese ancients were keenly aware of the considerable role senses play in one's observation of the subject, the way it becomes perceptible to the mind, a shortcut, an altered interpretation (due to the Lorentz-contraction) illustrated by the forty-five-degree-angled meridian, the fisherman's "deck lay in a plane parallel with the water"[107] inclined because of the whirl. Poe's story read with the way space and time is thought Chinese culture gives support to the thesis that the structural problematic found within writing is comparable to a

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[105] Huang, Chun-chieh and Erik Zürcher, (Ed.). *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*. Leiden, New York: E. J. Brill, 1995. pp. 11.

[106] Gu, Ming Dong. *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing: A Route to Hermeneutic and Open Poetics*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005. pp. 127.

[107] Poe, Edgar Allen. ""A Descent into the Maelström." *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allen Poe*. Ed., Intro. and comm. Harold Beaver. London: Penguin Books, 1976. pp. 85. Poe's description is not dissimilar to Jacques Lacan's "objectively subjective", a knowledge not based on immediate intuition but suspended retrospectively and, with magic, projected proleptically, an al-lusion that makes the approach paradoxically a reversal to the self. It is a perception illuminated like the fisherman's suspended view of the void within the whirl – the Benjaminian flash of insight as a result of the dialectical standstill: "The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly, on account of the thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and *over there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge* which Mussulmen say is *the only pathway* between Time and Eternity. This mist, or spray, was no doubt occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel, as they all meet together at the bottom – but the yell that went up to the Heavens from out of the mist, I dare not attempt to describe".[107] The rays from the moon are significant to my reading later when the floodlights shine on Pollock's *The Moon Woman Cuts the Circle*. Poe's "Descent" can be read as an allegory of being and writing: the magnificent rainbow bridge as the comparative connector that allows the East-West, writing-being, literature-philosophy/history and fiction-fact transmissions.

historical trauma experienced by the individual psyche, a narrativisation with a structural lapse. Perhaps, the sublime machine to which Derrida refers is the psychic Real that gives to the imagination, that which allows the breaching and breaking of paths upon which the image travels.

The fisherman, whose narrative is within the narrative of another, survives the horrors of the vortex through sheer calculation. After his life-threatening experience, he checks with an old schoolmaster his *hypothesis* and it is scientifically known that a cylindrical object provides more resistance against the suction of vortices; hence, instead of being pulled toward the abyss, an end his brother suffers, his complete descent is prevented by the water cask to which he is holding on, saving him from the annihilating violence of the conflicting clashes in the deepest recesses of the whirlpool. His creative speculation involves a state of mind closely associated with the Daoist notion of "observation with a tranquil mind"[108] which saves him. His changed appearance bears witness to the intensity of the awakening, a consequence of his vicissitude. The narrative, however, has precise significance to this thesis only because of the footnote referring to *Archimedes, 'De Incidentibus in Fluido'*, an odd allusion for there cannot be found a direct explanation to the above principle. According to the editor, this was inserted in the 1985 edition of *Tales by Edgar A. Poe* and Killis Campbell has found nothing pertaining to the above-mentioned theory ('Marginalia on Longfellow, Lowell and Poe', Modern Languages Notes vol 42 December 1927, pp. 520). This perplexing annotation creates a nonzero ground, which supports my hypothesis that empty signifiers are what allow the signifying slides amounting to the translational bridges of comparative study so as to avoid the absolute absorption into the vortex: "The article on 'Whirlpools' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* mentions cylindrical objects - specifically a cask – but suggests they be thrown overboard as a kind of *decoy* or *plug*

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[108]Zhuangzi. *Zhuangzi*. Tran. Wang Rongpei. Hunan: Foreign Languages Press, 1999. pp 27.

to still the whirlpool. Far from being drawn less rapidly into the vortex, Orkney Islanders apparently argue, barrels are sucked immediately into the abyss".[109]

The logic of Poe's fisherman is made out to be conjecture when read against the entry on Orkney Islanders, which also contradicts the commentary found in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Here, we have an example of the literary empty spot, a footnote overturning the en*cyclop*aedia and the fictional body. Rational analysis is rendered mythical in this tale on the Sublime. The analytic, instead of anchoring the discourse, is demonstrated to be a byword but, once, overloaded becomes *the plug* connecting her to the energy given by the drive of soullove as she rockets through the signifying void with the spherical *dao*, a fluid knot that the Daoists recognise as the indescribable source of all things and to which all things return. This unbearable lightness of the signifier launches the limpet through the terrifying vortex of the Real to which Zhuangzi signals when he refers to the non-fixity of writing. In order to survive the gravitational pull of the yawning jaws of the treacherous waters, the signifier ek-sist – the Lacanian term is used here to call forth the maverick within the sign – disposing its weight as it glides on a surf-board in an ec-centric movement pulling the *singularity* at the deepest recesses of the vortex with her as she attempts the resurfacing, a slippery motion reinforced by the transferential capacity of rhetoric. The fluid lightness of Lacan's *objet petit a* permits its discursive adaptation to the articulator transforming the subject of enunciation. This turning away from in order to turn back to constitutes the double movement of deconstruction, the unfolding leading to the refolding, hollow in the middle so that it acts like the cask in Poe's fiction, a cylindrical tool allowing the fisherman narrator to evade the fatal effacement, a total extinction of identity. This mirroring is a tautological inflection better comprehended with the chromatic aberration.

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[109] Poe, Edgar Allen. ""A Descent into the Maelström." *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allen Poe*. Ed., intro. and comm. Harold Beaver. London: Penguin Books, 1976. pp. 359. Emphasis mine.

Chromatic aberrations[110] are phenomena resulting from the scattering of light due to the various dispersive and dielectric glasses constituting the photographic lens; these imperfect images are projected by the refraction of the polychromatic light passing through the photographic lenses, somewhat similar to the dissolution of the incident light passing through a glass prism into the rainbow rays. The deviations of the chromatic interestingly parallel my earlier exposition on the mapping of my East/West translational endeavour, plotting the tensions and affinities with the magenta or the green. The longitudinal chromatic aberration occurs when the lens cannot focus the distinctive colours on the same focal plane, displaced along the optical axis. It results in a circle of confusion with the image blurring. When the lateral and the longitudinal chromatic aberrations coexist, an image space appears which is created by the continuum of monochromatic images of different sizes and positions, filled only by *the volume* of a polychromatic subject, much akin to the silhouette of the polyhedron – a solid figure bound by multiple planes or polygonal faces. The resulting image has a hazy white centre with magenta fringes, which can be corrected with an achromatic doublet: the combination of a convex crown glass element with a concave flint glass element, corresponding to the double moves of the mythological and the logical. This thesis highlights both the white cores and the purple edges of the erroneous images from the longitude and transverse chromatic aberrations as white can be considered the hue with the greatest admixture and the highest value and purple is a secondary colour closer to the notion of hybridity. A consequence of oblique incident lights, the transverse chromatic aberration refers to the sideward distortions in a cross direction. The transverse axis exemplifies not just the two foci, the Lacanian encore, on the focal plane; it also indicates the hyperbola that passes through the two foci, the web frame that supports the hull of this ship as it

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[110] Weale, R.A. "Chromatic Aberration". *The Senescene of Human Vision*. Oxford and New York: Oxord Unversity Press, 1992. pp. 57-58

orientates sideways in order to reroute the symptomatic, a hyperbole resting on the exaggerated hyperbola. Thus, the uncontainable excesses in this translational effort are not merely acknowledged; they are manipulated to push the vehicle outbound facilitating the displacing acts on the horizontal plane. Transverse chromatic aberrations are the negative effects of differing wavelengths of light with the truancy manifesting at the boundaries between dark and bright areas of the image. These magenta halos of the photographic images, a visual description of the pulsation from contesting elements within the radical boundary of the Real, can be corrected using the "focal length" of the superachromatic, a critical detour with a displacement upward nearer the green image so as to produce a sharper focus. And the white centres from the longtitudinal chromatic aberration can be corrected by using a "focal shift". Thus, both the mobility of the signifier and the belatedness of signification owe much to *différance*, both crucial and irruptive to writing.

Chromatic aberration, a theory of unfaithful imaging is analogous of the refraction incited by translation – a centrifugal process that flows to a centripetal one – a many to one implying a one to many, contrariwise in a circularity which Friedrich Nietzsche calls the Eternal Return of the Same, a reading which counters Michael Naas's in *Taking on the Tradition*. Naas believes that Nietzsche's eternal return is one based on sameness in contradistinction to *différance*[111] but it is the argument here that Nietzsche's Eternal Return of the Same is a sameness founded upon *différance* which starts and ends every reading, light diffusing to prismatic colours. A contradiction is discovered in his reading of Derrida's *oeuvre* when he alludes to "Violence and Metaphysics" later in his text: the latter speaks of thematising the

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[111]Naas, Michael. *Taking on the Tradition*: *Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 2003. pp. 21.

encounter with the stranger, the radical other, only by means of the "the concept", which, similar to the question, is always encapsulated within a certain horizon of the same.

This interaction between the inside and outside can be further illustrated by the cosmic design of the Purple Forbidden City whose architecture, an obverse connection to the location of Tiananmen Square, is read as an anatomical imaging of the Lacanian barred Other or that which is interdicted at the centre, exposed in Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play". Why refer to the architectural design of the imperial centre at the capital of China? Etymologically, the word "centre" in Old French means "source". Coincidentally, the etymology of the word includes the Chinese root, which means "the middle point of an object". Adding this meaning to its Greek base, which means "goad, peg, stationary point of a pair of compasses", the centre is the point of orientation and alignment. The centre emits a centripetal force that "gather[s]" the elements in its constitution of the configuration. It is crucial to note that the point of reference in the pair of compasses is fixed in the Greek and Latin roots but this is not applicable to the Chinese root. Although the Chinese base for "centre" implies the inclusion of a shifting locus, it does not mean that Chinese metaphysics is not logocentric; Chinese traditional metaphysics is the epitome of logocentrism, evident in the Chinese designation of China, *Zhong Guo*, which first appeared in the historical records as a name chosen to represent the central states found along the Yellow River during the Zhou Dynasty (1122 B.C. to 256 B.C.), the longest ruling dynasty in Chinese history. The cosmic (transcendental) anatomy is architecturally translated by the heavenly forces of *shangti* (God of Heaven) through the creative powers of their human representatives, the dynastic *huangti* (demi-gods or Sons of Heaven), reflecting the analogical association proposed. Defended by a wall ten metres high and separated from the common people by a moat fifty-two metres wide and six metres deep, the Forbidden City, the world's largest imperial site, was the

traditional symbol of Chinese sovereignty. Its design mirrors the five-thousand-year-old philosophy of the Chinese known as *wuxing* whose emphasis is on a kind of immanence represented by the five sensorial categories found in the elements: fire, metal, wood, water and earth; in positions and directions: east, south, west, north and central; in colours: blue, yellow, red, black and white. The Purple Forbidden City, *zijincheng* (purple is the mythological colour of the North Star or alternatively known as the Pole Star) is the earthly cynosure of cosmic significance with the emperor and his semi-divine status reflected in his title, the Yellow Emperor, *huangti*: yellow was the other royal colour, a reflection of the yellow earth of China. Within the bounded territory, the multiple imperial halls, courtyards and gateways are secluded from the public with the only access, the Meridian Gate, *wumen*, protected by another gate, the Tiananmen Gate, the southern entrance to the imperial palace. Between *wumen* and *tiananmen* is another square where the announcements of new lunar calendar, based the sexagenary cycle,[112] which, contrary to Lacan's belief, originates from China supported with the discovery of its inscription on the oracle bones (bones of the buried dragon) of the *Shang* dynasty during the second millennium B.C., and the performances of official rites and rituals were carried out during the dynastic eras. The palace was built in accordance to the stipulations of *Liji* or *Book of Rites* (perfectly subscribing to principles laid down by Confucius). On both sides are the institutional architecture of the Law – keepers of the *sub rosa* inherent to the barred Other.

The Tiananmen Gate, the threshold between heaven and earth, the Forbidden City and the common people, figuratively inscribes the notion of the inside-out and the outside-in, the Derridean doubling which Zhuangzi enigmatically renders from the perspective of *dao*: "Everything in the world has its "that side": everything in the world has its "this side". What is

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[112] The sexagenary cycle is calculated from the greater cycle of the sixty terms, the least common multiple of ten and twelve, and the two numbers are taken from the ten heavenly stems, *tiangan*, giving the five elements of fire, wood, metal, water and air, and the twelve earthly branches, *dizhi*.

ignored from "that side" may be perceived from "this side". Therefore, it is said that "that side" comes from "this side" while "this side" is derived from that side"– which means that "that side" and "this side" give rise to each other. … "That side" is "this side" and "this side" is "that side". There is right and wrong on this side of things and there is right and wrong on that side of things".[113] The sacred, which is prohibited to the *multitude*, takes its definition from the *common* just as the emperor who was the earthly materialisation of the heavenly deity, *Shangti*, the only one with access to the Heavenly Temple and the Heavenly Vault via the Sacred Way (the Bridge of Cinnabar Stairway), was an emperor because some have to be the "good" shepherd. For that which is prohibited to man is a secret so closely guarded that it is almost inexpressible. To have the secret revealed, we have to refer to Kristofer Schipper's "The Inner World of *Lao-Tzu Chung-Ching*" where he speaks of the Daoist belief that Man is the embodiment of both transcendence and immanence, the divine and the material. In his anatomical description of the various sacrosanct sites in the human body, the Cinnabar Field, *tan tien*,[114] which is perceived as a square piece of land, is located "adjacent to the kidneys, the gateway of intercourse, of pregnancy and birth"[115] reiterating Heraclitus' belief that the cosmic is embodied by the human. Thus, the sacred way can be interpreted as that which is produced by the Cinnabar Field, the golden field of tropes, overturning the dominant belief that the rhetorical is effective only because of the vertical analytic support. The Cinnabar Stairway is a projection from the Cinnabar

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[113] Zhuangzi. *Zhuangzi*. Tran. Wang Rongpei. Hunan: Foreign Languages Press, 1999. pp. 23.

[114] *Tan tien*, the square field, corresponds analogously to *wen tan*, translated here as "the inscriptive field", which, in contrast to the objections to the mechanical terms used, is astutely described in Derrida's *Paper Machine*: "So there's what we normally use, following the "usual" name, *papier-machine*, to the letter, in the strict or literal sense: the form of a *matter*, *the sheet* designed as the backing or medium for a *typewriter's* writing, and also now for the printing, reproduction, and archiving of the products of so many word-processing machines, and the like. This then is what becomes a figure here, what a rhetorician would also call a "locus". Machine paper: the title gestures toward a place a figure, more than one figure". Derrida, Jacques. *Paper Machine*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005. pp. 1.

[115] Schipper, Kristofer. "The Inner World of *Lao-Tzu Chung-Ching*". *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*. Ed. Huang Chun-chieh and Erik Zürcher. Leiden, New York: E. J. Brill, 1995. pp. 126.

Field, the troplogical arachnid device that equivocally entraps and produces the (stair) way, the analogical, to the analytic, the Lacanian symbolic ladder as the access for the nominal process to cross over; the symbolic as the connection between the imaginary and the real works with the relationships of equivalence and proximity albeit marked by difference, which means that the connector is defined by a disjunction due to the split in the discourse of the Other, the provisional union of the immanent and the transcendental, a provisional meeting disrupted by *différance* made obvious here with the analogy of the chromatic aberration.

The figure of the *multitude* invoked by the golden field of tropes, both in formal design (the metonymic web) and thematic concerns (the connotative multivalence, a wordnet whose several sites of immunity form a sort of shield, allows a re-genesis with the association of multiple homologous units of meanings and values), is used to illustrate not just the intersection between form and meaning; the term, "multitude" and "common" have taken on the significance as a counter to the various forms of repressive regimes and ideologies of modernity. In the contemporary era, the Tiananmen Gate has been reduced to the holder of Mao's portrait with placards proclaiming the longevity of the Chinese Republic. In other words, the imperial declaration, "long live the emperor!", is replaced by an indirect salutation to the Communist leader, "long live the people of the Republic!" Hailing the "people" in the above address gives the impression that the people have become the rulers of the Republic but what has really happened is this: the master signifier of "emperor" has been changed to that of "people" with Mao or the later Communist dictators veiled by the signifying fabric. The square, like all the other in-between spaces within the imperial palace, can be read as the khoral genus, the third space, where the sovereign and the multitude, heaven and earth, meet. The way they meet is the major consideration of this dissertation.

Whether the encounter was harmonious during the years of accordance or fractious in the periods of discordance will be explored in relation to the literature produced. This inquiry into the connection between politics and aesthetics, culture and writing, demonstrates that the (counter)transferential capacity of writing in the tropic chain enables the rendering of the inherent mobility of the multitalented enti-ty; whose Middle Latin etymology "*esse*" is a present participle form of "to be" which is conducive to a signifying play that captures both the meaning of "the essential nature" and the corporeality of *a Thing*, giving to the conditions, quality and reality of the ontological process. This "event", reiterated in "Structure, Sign and Play", is the Derridean word for the performative aspect of writing, read here as an analogue of the manifestation of being, galvanised into action by the friction between the opposing players on this stage, a birthing process propelled by the forces of contraction: "Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an "event." If this loaded word did not entail a structuralist meaning which it is precisely the function of structural – or stucturalist – thought to reduce or to suspect. Let us speak of an "event," nevertheless, and let us use quotation marks to serve as a precaution. What would this event be then? Its exterior form would be that of *rupture* and a redoubling".[116] Despite and because of Derrida's suggestive remarks about the abyss, I shall deviate from his discourse by making visible the hole – the raising of a mountain from the lacuna – where the differential relations are found, the unnamable hole around which metaphysics, both Eastern and Western, circulate. The impossibility of an absolute can be shown to be the groundless ground of any nominative operation, the nothingness we have to experience and accept before we charge ahead for the something we want. The operations of the unpredictable and unthinkable third kind, *dao* and *khōra*, are encapsulated by

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[116] Derrida, Jacques. "Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *Writing and Difference.* Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 1978. pp. 351. Author's emphasis.

the two passages taken from Book II of *Daodejing* and "*Khōra*", Derrida's essay on the appearance of inscriptive form:

> Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;
>
> The difficult and the easy complement each other;
>
> The long and the short off-set each other;
>
> The high and low incline towards each other;
>
> Before and after follow each other.[117]

> The 'whole history of interpretation,' we have just said. We will never exhaust the immense literature devoted to the *Timaeus* since antiquity. It is out of the question to deal with it here in its entirety. And, above all, to presuppose the unity and homogeneity of this whole, the very possibility of totalizing it in some ordered comprehension. What we shall presuppose, by contrast, and one could still call it a 'working hypothesis,' is that the presumption of such an order (grouping, unity, totality organized by a *telos*) has an essential link with the structural anachronism of which we spoke a moment ago. It would be the inevitable effect produced by *something like* the *khōra* − which is not something, and which is not *like* anything, not even like what *it* would be, *itself*, there beyond its name.[118]

The juxtaposition of these two abstracts on the inexpressible *dao* and *khōra* demonstrates how one extrapolates the other. "Nothing" in the above citation from *Daodejing* is a word with paramount significance in *daoist* teachings because the nothingness gestures to the paradoxical

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[117] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. Lau. D.C. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 7.
[118] Derrida, Jacques. "*Khōra*." *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*. Ed. Julian Wolfreys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. pp. 235. Author's emphasis.

state of consciousness which comes with the awareness of the "lack" in awareness, the clarity of consciousness achieved only with the *erasure* of thought: the acknowledgement and acceptance of the constant mobility of thinking. This unfixed rising and falling of thought processes is mobilised to induce uncluttered thinking, one of the similarities Daoism share with Zen Buddhism. The double negations and affirmations that accompany the binaries expose the structural problem inherent in the hierarchical placing of one over the other in any socio-political situation. The word "nothing" always already implies the existence of something and vice versa. Thus, nothing gains meaning in relation to something and the ontological status of an entity is enhanced by the possibility of its annihilation. *Some thing* taken to its logical conclusion yields not coherence but its implicit inconsistencies, the excesses *almost* obliterating the thing itself. The thing, then, has an uncanny ontological status of *being there but not quite*. Instead of an intersubjective encounter with the Other, the thing of the hermeneutic pursuit, we countenance the ontological vacuum at the heart of Self and Other. The heart of darkness glimpsed results in not only the disappointment that follows the failure of the intended project but the love for the Other turning to hate, leading to the violent collisions between the other and self. The reason for placing Derrida's quotation after this particular passage from *Daodejing*, the conjunction of *dao* and *khōra*, is not just one based on correlation, one supplementing the other as an addition with the potential to transform each other, but also the possibility of conflict, a confrontation which owes much to the w(hole)ness expounded by the daoist unifying principle. This prosthetic displacement linking the two founds itself on the ironic play of the phrase "out of the question"; it is out of the naught, symbolic of the Lacanian and daoist knots, which the monstrous trace appears to purloin the letter from the daoist and Lacanian discourses as they splinter. And Derrida's *khōra* is used to draw out this trace that unsettles the transcendental dimension of the

above discourses and then reinstates it with the innate ability of *khōra* to converse[119] using the immanent.

The Depth versus the Expanse of Writing: The Plane of Creation Gaining Volume

Working within a poststructuralist framework means that there is the awareness of the rhetorical sediment that has to be dredged while situating the idea of Chineseness, a delayering which is also a relayering of the mysterious secret in the advancement toward the other, succinctly suggested by Derrida's figure of the dredging machine in *Glas*.[120] Haun Saussy's *Great Walls of Discourse* criticises Michel Foucault and Philippe Sollers for their attempted articulation of a difference between the East and the West by looking at the verticality and the horizontality of ideographic writing and phonetic writing. Saussy's statement of the x-y axis is examined in an endeavour to snitch his letter with the z and the more than z: "That "the [distinctive] characteristics of the entity are none other than the entity itself" is an axiom of language but not of Chinese Studies, at least not until the latter has been refined into a closed linguistic system. Symptoms of such a closed system appear in the short texts we have examined: in particular their

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[119] The word "converse" can mean "engage in conversation" or/and the archaic use "keep company with" or/and "opposite, contrary, reversed". *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

[120] Derrida, Jacques. *Glas*. Trans. John P. Leavy, Jr. and Richard Rand. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1986. pp. 204-205. The above citation is also found in Peggy Kamuf's *Between the Blinds* as an epigraph:

> "I am seeking the right metaphor for the operation I am pursuing here. I would like to describe my gesture, the posture of my body behind this machine.
> What it would be hardest for him to tolerate would be that I assure myself or others of the mastery of his text…
> No danger. We are very far from that; this right here, I repeat, is barely preliminary.
> … a sort of dredging machine. From the hidden cabin (small, closed, glassed-in) of a cane. I manipulate some levers and (I saw this done at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer at Easter), from afar, I plunge a mouth of steel into the water. And I scrape the bottom, grab some stones and algae that I bring back up to the surface in order to set them down on the ground while the water quickly falls out of the mouth. And I begin again to scrape, to scratch, to dredge the bottom of the sea.
> I barely hear the noise from the little room.
> … some algae some stone… Detached".

common motif of verticality. By it Foucault and Sollers are trying to articulate a difference. But the difference between vertical and horizontal is highly determinate; it refers back to a point of sameness, to the origin point of an x-y axis. As long as there is a difference between vertical and horizontal, we are not lost in space with no up or down. The alterity operates within a common category (that of dimension and directionality). Chinese writing is not, to sum up, *necessarily* vertical or timeless; it is vertical or timeless *insofar as* we think of ours as horizontal and time-bound. Otherness resolves into antithesis – a figure of speech, not a logical operator or category of being".[121] This dissertation takes the attribute of the grammato-graphical dimension (a deictic gesture) in order to understand the non-existential aspect of radical alterity, the Other, an entity that manifest to us only in imaginary space and time. If Saussy objects to the East-West difference which Foucault and Sollers state, *Yijing* and Derridean deconstruction have the answer to the former's query about the *timeless* East of the poststructuralists: the East is timeless not because the West is time-bound since both definitions are subjected temporally to that which has never been present – the primordial termed the "anorigin" by Andrew Benjamin in *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy* – a temporal suspension owing to the spatial dimension of being. Foucault's poststructuralist response to the East remarks the urge to represent the other as distinctive only to demonstrate to us the inescapable need for difference in knowledge, the discourse from his projection room is a topographical investigation rather than a historical one, a spatiality displacing the Western focus on ontological temporality. This spatial-temporal inversion is happily reflected by the Chinese emphasis on the spatial as opposed to the temporal, the mythological instead of the logical, a reading given the support by Wei Tat's exposition of the *Yijing*:

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[121] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 152. Author's emphasis.

In the case of these two apparently unrelated terms "commencing" and "topmost", for instance, one wonders why a related couple of words such as "first and last", or "lowest and topmost", or "commencing and concluding" is not adopted. The reason is that, according to the Chinese conception of the terms, the word *Chu* … i.e., "commencing" denotes a *point of time*, while the word *shang* … i.e., "topmost" denotes a *point of space*, the idea being that, in considering the meaning and mode of transformation of the lines, one must bear in mind the respective *positions* which they occupy and the different *times* at which they occupy such positions.[122]

Wei's description of the symbolic functioning of the trigrammes gestures to the inseparability of text and context, words taking on meaning only in relation to the conditions of space and time, space as the becoming-of-time and time as the becoming-of-space. This space-time interaction is crucial to the materialisation of writing and that of being, a conceptualisation similar to the non-concept of *différance*. The Chinese emphasis on direction and position can also be found in Derrida's reading of Sollers's *Numbers* where the graphs *wei fang* signifying situation and direction are included in *Dissemination*; the first graph has a radical denoting "man" placed beside the graph *li*, which means "immediate", signalling the Way in which (wo)man can manifest herself/himself.

With a half-turn of the pivot, it is the proposal here that the intersecting point of the x-y axes conceal "a secret angle" which means that it is not the point of sameness: "The mirror in which these *Numbers* are read, in its capacity for seeing you, will, of course, be broken, but it will reflect that breaking in a fiction that remains intact and uninterrupted. … What sort of angle is this angle writing? concave? projecting? An angle of reflection? Because we cannot know

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[122] Wei, Tat. *An Exposition of the I-Ching or the Book of Changes*. Hong Kong: Nippon Printing Co., (H Dai. K.) Ltd., 1977. pp. 162. Author's emphasis.

what that will all have meant, let us put "this" writing forth as a kind of angle remark, considering all lines broken".[123] Comparable to Derrida's last remark is Wei Tat's comment on the *Yin* lines which are broken lines with a gap in between, a symbol the earth with water separating the land. In recognition of his debt to Freud, Derrida demonstrates how psychoanalysis helps describe the manner signification happens: what lies buried in the unconscious, that which can never be known, is accessible to us only as symptomatic impulses breaking through to the conscious surface. If discourse is founded upon a shaky transcendental signifier, then the transcendental signified cannot be found. With no absolutes to ground us, what we have instead are travelling signifiers denoting only the direction of the travel and the positions of the stopovers, transits in the transmission of the message, distorted even as it is relayed. *Yijing* refers to the mobility of the subject positions in its illustration of the figurative in Chinese writing. In the section "Time and Place", the nature of this mobility suggested by Wei approximates the gliding signifier.

Deconstruction, by displacing the idea of Chineseness, points to that which precedes the location, allowing the addressor the space to confront the sublimity of Chineseness, an off-the-wall space due to the dieresis one cannot wholly contain even as one takes the definitive stance of any discursive location. Thus, this thesis concerns itself with the rowdy void right at the vertices of being, writing and politics. This khoral site, white as a result of the fusion of the rainbow colours, is affiliated to the Daoist "uncarved block", which owes much to the teaching of the "uncraved", an emptying of desire so as to elide the possibility of being absolutely bound to one position, an inscriptive or political mastery propped by the very enslavement of itself. And, yet, Laozi ambivalently suggests: "Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe

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[123] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 295.

its secrets; But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations".[124]

This aporetic space as the impasse provides the passport for a digressive tour such that the condition of impossibility makes possible the temporary parking of the comparative automobiles in the midst of travelling across the myriad rainbow bridges of comparative studies, back and forth over the East-West channels, hoping to strike gold before the gnome gets to it, the many *or*'s of Mallarmé. *Dao* and *khōra* produce these *allegorical* sites, the non-passage passages, aesthetically transfigured as labyrinthine paths, courtyards, squares, gates: routes and spaces permitting the inscriptive translation –the carrying forth or over – of meaning, analogical links from self *to* and, then, *through* the Other. The word, "allegory", according to Walter Benjamin, "means precisely the non-existence of what it *presents*".[125] Zhuangzi's writing explicates further this non-existence which always already implies the existential the moment it is thought and the thought of being recalls non-being simultaneously:

> Now I am going to say something, but I do not know whether my remarks are similar or dissimilar to other remarks. However, whether these remarks are similar or dissimilar, all of them fall into the same category. In this sense, I am no different from others. Nevertheless, please allow me to explain myself. There was a beginning for all things; there was a time before that beginning; there had been a time before that. In the beginning, there was existence and there was non-existence; there was a stage before the existence of non-existence; there had been a stage before that. All of a sudden there was non-existence, but I really do not know whether non-existence is existence or non-

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[124] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. Lau. D.C. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 5.

[125] Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: New Left Books, 1977. pp. 233. Emphasis mine.

existence. Now I have said something, but I do not know whether by what I have said I have really said something or not.[126]

The structural design of the dissertation reflects the positioning whose configuration is informed by the poststructuralist framing of my thesis. It is an aeronautic machine that has as its *canard,* a horizontal stabiliser constituted by the tropological web, serving as the horizontal axis of a baseless representation buoyed by the verity of the analytic elevators located at the forefront of the wings and propelled by a re-turn to the Ten Wings of *Yijing*, the poetic lifting the axiomatic with the sense and sensibility of the onomatopoeic in the Old French root of the word; the word, "canard", is derived from *quanart*, meaning "to cackle". The homophonic play, a revelry that brings to mind the homonymous wordplays in Chinese classical writing and its emphasis on tonality, and its equivocal quality gives to the *jouissance,* the motor of the machine. Seduced by the enigmatic crossroads of the polarities, this thetic drama is played out on the chiasmic weave of the horizontal tropological field and the analytic incision of the vertical, a reloading of a matrix taking the contours of a ticklish figure that demonstrates the tic of the force field that entrammels the analytic pillars of the discourse in the varying senses of the verb: a lunar attic built on the ellipses drawn out with the analytic, restrained due to its entanglement in the arachnid's trap. This blast from the past has its emphasis on the associative and lateral network of tropes because it enables the crossing of the oppositional poles, entrenched, themselves, in the horizontal axis of which rises the analytic. This mythological field, an intricate matrix which is the closest proxy of the inexplicable khoral play, empowers the logical with the possibilities of fusion or fission; both processes in nuclear research are known to emit a lot of energy but it is energy that is, first, difficult to harness without the right coordinates and, second, highly detrimental to the earthly plane if not properly channeled, made evident in the cases of

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[126]Zhuangzi. *Zhuangzi*. Tran. Wang Rongpei. Hunan: Foreign Languages Press, 1999. pp. 27-29.

nuclear pollution affecting human lives. The priority given to the tropological field, in turn, reinforces the eclectic approach of the reading, a diversity necessitating the analytic as a measure of authenticity.

The structural interlacing of the two axes characterises the double performance of deconstruction – the act of coalescing the horizontal and the vertical, the mythological and the logical, the longitude and the latitude – and provides cogency to the thesis, as etymologically, the word "cogency" denotes "to drive together" and "to force"; its Latin base is most conducive to the driving force of my reading of Chineseness with Western writing. The configuration of the individual chapters echoes the larger structural mould as this thesis is engendered by the striding from pole to pole, a theatrical cast of players reflecting the other dictionary meaning of the word "transition", covering "a period during childbirth that *precedes* the expulsion phase of labor, characterized by strong uterine contractions and nearly complete cervical dilation".[127] As a chapter on the cosmic, the intent here is to illustrate the movements to and from the binaries: mythos and logos, the imaginary and the symbolic, the hoax and the truth, and the fantastic and analytic, foreshadowing the violence of the regressive appropriation and the progressive assimilation of fragments in my discourse. Describing the structural design in this chapter indicates the import of the structure to the export of the content of the dissertation. Being the *initial* chapter in my thesis, which is more like an afterword, it structurally initiates the matrix underscoring the writing here, a multimodality of rhetorical movements – tropic wayfarers topographically tracing the tropics of Capricorn and Cancer – so as to find an *alternative* meridian that cuts across the two points on these circles of latitude, a revision that looks beyond and behind the postmodern. Furthermore, the word, "transition", gestures to a possible passage,

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[127] This definition from *Dictionary.com* is used instead of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* because it represents better the writing here.

one prompted by the changeover while traversing through the aporia of Chineseness to an other cutting across from the middle of Europe to the Antarctic Ocean, This chiasmus is only one instance of the affected silk of tropes, interwoven skewed correspondences owing to the lateral leaps that form the sublime machine of Derrida exposing the navigator as she makes her critical traversal hacking through the packed ice of the *terra incognita* premised on a reading of *Yijing*, the oldest Chinese text on cosmology and philosophy whose authorship is still a matter of speculation. One of the Five Classics, *Wujing*, *Yijing* drives the inscriptive construction here as part of the spherical machine that permits the access right through the eye of the storm.

In order to explain the comparative ground on which this dissertation rests, this thesis alludes to the *Zhouyi zhengyi – Yijing* and its commentary, *Zhouyi zhu*, and the sub-commentary to *Zhouyi zhu*. Kong Yingda (574 -648), the contributor to *Zhouyi zhu*, refers to *Wang Bi*'s comments on the "*Kun*" hexagramme, which uses the metaphor of a mare to describe a passive albeit persevering person to suggest that she finds friends in the direction of the west and south, and not the east and north. This suggestion is based on the dynamics of the yin-yang principles, a relational interaction of complementary opposites. For the idea of Chineseness in this comparative study to locate its associate, the thesis maps the travel west and south to the Tropic of Capricorn, which parallels the Tropic of Cancer running east and passing through China. Argentina is the topographical mirror of China, thus corroborating the decision to start my dissertation with Jorge Luis Borges, the greatest Argentinean writer in my view and an unfaithful progeny of Western metaphysics, one of the modernists mentioned in this dissertation whose works gesture to the encounters of the third kinds. The selected writings are difficult to situate in terms of genre. Borges's writing, like *Yijing*, is idiomatically on the threshold. *Yijing* is Chinese philosophy without analytical principles while Borges's "essays" are poetics with a logical tone,

the third genre, writing that eludes the symbolic. These writings are much like bodies moving with respect to the rotating frame of reference veering toward the left or right, a deflection likened to an effect of the Coriolis force. Akin to the ambiguous genre of these writings, the discourse here tapers from the right to the left.

In the meanderings back and forth the East and the West, my thesis attempts to make more pronounced the third genera of the "mighty opposites". Zhang Longxi's title to his text on the intercultural translation of the East and the West is used to mark the encounter between the Chinese and the Greeks, foregrounding the transitional aspect of ideographic and phonetic writings with its connotations of transformation and interpretation. However, I am not speaking of the third genera of *dao* and *khōra* as a conventional one-to-one correspondence. The emptiness at the heart of Zhang's *The Tao and the Logos* used as the springboard for this reading is called forth by a mismatch between the two. While Laozi's *dao* has a cosmic, mystical significance stretched to accommodate the practical, everyday reality, *logos*, which is the Greek for "word", founds logic evident in its etymological inclusion of "reason". In addition, Derrida's deconstruction of Western *meta*physics undermines its emphasis on transcendence, the Platonic Idea with its focus on truth as speech and presence, with the neologism, "logocentrism", which highlights the immovable locus of logic based on the oppositional polarities. According to Derrida, the philosophers and writers who had tried to overturn Western metaphysics did not succeed in escaping its hold. Even as they undermine its *a priori* principles, they ultimately become caught because these writers had to rely on the same linguistic resources used in metaphysics. Even Kant's critical philosophy which exposes the gap between the transcendental and the immanent, subject and object, does not manage to elude the metaphysical grip because of

his emphasis on the subject's cognitive knowledge. He is similarly troubled by the *X* that has disturbed Western philosophy from the Presocratics.

If Kant's third critique interrogates human judgement premised upon the difference between *a priori* knowledge and understanding, determinative judgement and reflective judgement, this inquiry is likewise conducted in Chinese philosophy, albeit in a different manner. To the Chinese, knowledge *is* understanding. Harold D. Roth's comments to Angus C. Graham's translation of *Zhuangzi* refers to Section 3 / 4 where the former speaks of the *daoist* use of the Chinese word, *shih* "'If basing yourself on something you judge 'That's it' then basing yourself on something you judge 'That's not'"; in all subsequent cases it may be taken is the phrase nominalized as a technical term, "the adaptive *shih*." You may call a thing "X," but must be ready to judge it "not X" in another instance; this error is to assume that it unalterably *is* what you call it, which is *wei shih*, "the constitutive *shih*." The latter phrase is once used verbally: chapter 27/2: … "Of what agrees with their own judgement they judge 'That's it' constitutively, of what disagrees they judge 'That's not' constitutively." We may take the two phrases as technical terms expandable … "to *shih* taking it as one's basis" and … "to *shih* deeming it to be 'X'".[128] In other words, what is at issue depends on one's view of the matter, somewhat similar to Nietzsche's "perspectivism", a reading based on the performative facet of language since *wei* in Chinese means "work". Roth's commentary to Graham's translation of *Zhuangzi* is crucial to this reading of Chineseness through the juxtaposition of *dao* and *khōra*, a critique of the supposed objectivity that accompanies conventional hermeneutics. The above explication testifies to Derrida's reading of reading, always an appropriation and assimilation to the self.

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[128] Roth, Harold D. *A Companion to Angus C. Graham's Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003. pp. 70-71.

If poststructualism has undermined the Cartesian Subject, then who is looking for whom? How do I, the investigator, *relate to* the Other, the idea of Chineseness, an interaction which is also a conveyance? My approach manipulates the space-time coordinates found in Albert Einstein's theory of relativity where these coordinates mean something only in reference to an object, looks toward the interstices of writing and being and within both being and writing, where the possibilities are rooted in the conditions; it can either be contentious or reciprocal between differences, depending on the way we see the linkage. These relations are conjured by either thinking in terms of being as *apart from* or *a part of* an other entity, relations resting on a minute shift in the syntactical order, a predicative slip, which is a most telling signal to the overlapping of being and writing. At this juncture, I would like to point out that the conjunctive "and" in the title can be read in multiple ways. First, the conjunction can be seen as linking the two terms, *dao* and *khōra*, in a manner that provides textual cohesion, a connection primed by the substratum of similarities intuited, a *simpatico* analogous to the two sides of a coin meeting precisely because they will never meet in a face-to-face encounter. This provides an opportunity for the shared values between the East and the West to emerge in the hope of finding *a way* to expand on these commonalities, giving to the engagement of two equals. Alternatively, *dao* can be seen as a corollary of *khōra,* with the notion of the back-to-back, *as if* one extends to the other with the associative continuum. The "as if" here, *pace* Derrida's response to Kant's third critique (used here as the two senses of the word - in step with as well as with due respect to) is an "analogical mimesis" paradoxically pointing to the excess that escapes the limits; it is the fiction conferred by the "as if" rather than the friction that allows the apparent intersection. Based on the operations of analogy, the mimetic dimension is an exchange mechanism folding and refolding a part onto the other, East and West, aesthetics and politics, culture and technology,

tainting each other and reciprocally transformed by this interfolding of the "double questions", a precarious act of breaking barriers.

As my thesis considers high Modernism an instance of the *avant-garde*, Pollock's paintings are singled out to demonstrate the manner in which translation is effectuated. His painting *Lavender Mist* depicts not only the intercrossing of subjectivity but also the chiasmic and cryptic double *Xs* starting from the left and tapering to the right. Despite the countless overtures to undermine his creative attempts, Pollock refuses to cave in to what the public wants in artistic representations. Although he is greatly influenced by surrealism and expressionism, his style encapsulates and supersedes these movements. The simultaneous attraction and repulsion the viewers experience when apprehending his artworks are a reflection of the stylistics of alienation and obsession, which finds expression in his sophisticated use of elements. The thoughtful elemental intermixing of colours, designs and materials warrants an interpretative scrutiny previously lacking in the critique directed at his corpus. Michael Leja's section on Pollock, "Pollock and Metaphor", reinforces the notion that Pollock's painting technique is one that attempts to figure abstraction within the play between dichotomies, emblems resting on the explosive encounter between control and the lack of control, fusion and separation, proximity and distance, the real and the subliminal, spontaneity and intentionality, and the active and the passive. It has been noted that Pollock works in ways which are different from his contemporaries, especially manifested in the disparity between his productive process and productions. Similar to *khōra*, his paintings are places that encourage thinking – the conceptualising reception and conceptualisation as reception. Research into his so-called method unravels the enigmatic quality of his paintings. The surface simplicity of his *oeuvre* not only masks the painstaking artistic process, a process defined by careful layering and delayering,

which allows the visionary manifestations, a process termed "action-painting"; it also conceals the complexity of his insight into creation. This phrase astutely captures the *technē* of his art which uses his body, the force of gravity and the flow of the viscous paint as the controlling media to expression. As a visual metaphor of the process of conception, the artistic production stages the inherent deconstruction at work in visual representations. The "saying" or descriptive aspect of his artworks is brought into being by the "doing"; the im-pressing of his technique is affiliated to the performative found in illocutionary utterances but giving privilege to the unsaid as his method characterises Freud's mystic writing pad. His paintings are unique formalisations of "a singular promise", like the promise Cézanne makes to Emile Bernard to speak the truth in painting. Pollock's promise is a promise embedded in his artworks, a promise to deliver the message through his facture.

As Derrida suggests: "[The painting's] performance does not promise, literally, to say in the constative sense, but again to "do." It promises another "performative," and the content of the promise is determined, like its form, by the possibility of that other. Performative supplementarity is thus open to infinity. With no descriptive or "constative" reference, the promise makes an event (it "does something" in uttering) provided that this possibility is assured by a certain conventional framing, in other words a context marked by performative fiction",[129] verifying the claim earlier about the fiction of accordance overlaying the friction of the Real. By excising with knives and chisels, the incisions and fractures echo the violent and, yet, decisive suturing so necessary for the revolutionary in aesthetics to materialise, an emergence mirroring the rise of the political being. More importantly, the technical palimpsest is taken to a higher level with the symbolic layering when we are told by Lee Krasner, his wife, that he veils the

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[129]Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. pp. 3

layer of figuration, a painting of recognisable motifs, with another layer of disfiguration in abstraction, a face defaced. Pollock's artistic technique is where the transitions from one side of the binary to the other occur. With imagination as visualisation, Pollock's artistic form, is the medium that allows to him to make the leap from the extremity of the concrete, as signified by his use of construction materials such as sand, masonite, glass etc., to that of the transcendental with the *puissance* of the imagination, figured in the critical readings of his artworks as the cosmic and the magical, attesting, in a way, to the Daoist belief that man encompasses both the transcendence and immanence. Visually disorientating and evocative, optical allusions of the non-optical, Pollock's abstraction gives rise to figurations, from the miniscule to the expansive like the evocative style of Zhuangzi's rhetoric. The multiplication of metaphors is only possible with the semantic shifts in his artworks but it is the structuring principles that we bring with us when we read his paintings that construct meaning. This explains my earlier remark about the timeless quality of Pollock's paintings, which makes his corpus culturally relevant even after the 1950s. In my view, his visual enterprise attempts to figure the figureless, the metaphor of metaphors; it is a surpassing of the auto-referential to the mythical space beyond the referential in artistic representations by using the metonymic qualities of the metaphor.

Jackson Pollock
Lavender Mist (1950)

The Other is capitalised not only because of its abstraction in both senses of the word but also due to the immeasurable remainder. The name, a unit of language, fractures and unfolds into chains of signification, pushed by the hand of the Other, a roustabout responding to the metonymic capacities within, leading to a synonymous dissemination. The word, "metonym", means that which signifies something while referring to another; its Greek etymology means a change of name with the prefix "met-", a variant of "meta" denoting "after", "along with", "beyond", "among" and "*behind*". The multiplicity here is a first instance of how signifying dispersal can occur with an affix, a bound inflectional or derivative element, as a prefix, infix, or suffix, added to a base or stem to form a new word, as –ed added to "want" to form "wanted", or im- added to form "possible" to form "impossible". This multiplicity of meaning when explicated in relation to Alain Badiou's thesis in *Being and Event*: a subjection of philosophy to mathematics gives us the consistent multiplicity that one has with set theories, which, in short,

means ontology *is* (comparable to) mathematics *is* (comparable to) aesthetics. It is the argument here that the epistemological inquiry itself via aesthetic strategies gives to the ontological manifestation and, inversely, the ontological disclosure in and through aesthetics provides impetus to epistemology. Thus, the relations between aesthetics and ethics are seen as reciprocal within this circularity, a circularity that breaks into two encouraging a reconciliation with alterity. This thesis tells us that progression, ontological, epistemological or inscriptional, requires an external propeller, the other of the selfsame for a robust move, a thought shared by Aristotle himself:

> The man who pushes the boat while he is himself standing in the boat and fixing himself against it naturally does not move it, since it is necessary that that against which he fixes himself remain still. But in this case the thing he tries to move and that against which he is fixing himself are the same. If, however, he pushes or pulls from outside he does move it. For the ground is no part of the boat.[130]

With a big push, the linearity of Father Chronos is overcome by the circularity of Mother Topos, a *coup détat* that has history spinning out of control before it settles down with a new epoch, a *transavantgardism* implying the interchangeability of the modern and the postmodern within modernity, a term used to destabilise categorical distinctions with the unsettling effects of *déjà vu*, Derrida's notion of iterability:

> So, it seems, style also uses its spurs (*éperon)* as a means of protection against the terrifying, blinding, mortal threat (of that) which *presents* itself, which obstinately thrusts itself into view. And style thereby protects the presence, the content, the thing itself, meaning, truth – on condition at least that it should not *already* (*déjà*) be that gaping

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[130] Aristotle. *De motu animalium*. Trans. and comm.. Martha Craven Nussbaum. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985. pp. 28

chasm which has been deflowered in the unveiling of the difference. Already (*déjà)*, such is the name for what has been effaced or subtracted beforehand, but which has nevertheless left behind a mark, a signature which is retracted in that very thing from which it is withdrawn. *Withdrawn from the here and now, the here and now which must be accounted* for.[131]

By accounting for the "here and now", metaphysics has forgotten the *effaced* trace which, nevertheless, leaves its mark, a dot that is expanded to a line and then to the two dimensional surface of the square, used here to *outface* temporarily the circular. The disruptive gesture that comes with iterability operates with Georges Bataille's philosophy of chance which, on one hand, denies the teleological vision of modernism and, on the other, affirms the signifying play within postmodern images. Lodged at the edges of chaos, this citation from Bataille's "Inner Experience" supports the initial overturning of the cosmic sphere and the four-sided sur*face* of a khoral appearance before I divert the (dis)course back to the cosmic dome with a passage from "Games of Chance".[132]

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[131] Derrida, Jacques. *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Trans. Barbara Harlow. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978. pp.39.

[132] Bataille, Georges. "Inner Experience" *The Bataille Reader*. Eds. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1997. pp. 38. Bataille describes an experience which figures the expansion of the point/dot: "A slippery glance down, the molar's extracted but the anaesthesia isn't working, how big a coward would I have been, without the hope the cocaine gave? *When I get home, I bleed profusely*. I stick my tongue in a hole … there's a piece of meat there, a blood dot getting larger, starting to protrude. I spit it out – another follows. The dots have the consistency of snot, taste like food gone bad. They are plugging my mouth". And he claims later: "The human mind is set up to take no account of chance, except insofar as calculations that eliminate chance allows you to forget it: that is, not take it into account. But going as far as possible, reflections on chance strips the world bare of the entirety of predictions in which reason encloses it. Like human nakedness, the nakedness of chance – which in the last resort is definitive – is obscene and disgusting: in short, divine. Since the course of the things of the world hangs on chance, this course is as depressing for us as a king's absolute power. My reflections on chance are *in the margin* of thought's development. All the same, we can't make them more radical (desire). Descending as far as possible, they pull the rug out from under us when we think that the development of thought allows sitting on, allows rest". Ibid. pp. 39.

Bataille's thoughts on chance bring together the sacred and the profane as if at the extreme ends of this particular spectrum, the two clash and explode in a hellish descent, not unlike the experience of being shipwrecked and moored in *Lethe*, the River of Forgetfulness in Hades (mythologically, there is a female figure by the name of *Lethe*, a *naiad* whose ontological status is defined by the term which means "to flow" or "a flowing stream"), a supernova reminding us that *aletheia* contains the *lethe* within: the remembrance is possible only with a certain forgetting. My argument that the East and the West are twins, one the alter-ego of the other, corresponds to the *modus operandi* above. It is a double inversion that eventually allows the square to be transmuted to a sphere and, then, contrariwise, contradicting Euclidean geometry by expanding the plane to a fourth-dimensional figure, a tesseract which projects to volume, a three-dimensional calculation. The fourth dimension indicates a space outside our scope of vision but not our imagination. Just as a point can expand to a plane and then to a sphere, the sphere can reduce in size to become a point, presently undermined by the string, the hinge of this discourse, which develops in due course at the core of the text an image projected upwards to *volume*. Jürgen Harbermas' take on the unfinished project of Modernity, incomplete, in my view, because each epoch considered modern must pass through first a transitional phase, is crucial to the emphasis on the moment when the modernist and the postmodernist characteristics intersect – the high Modernists of the 1950s being an instance of the crossing-over – the East and the West are twins that shall never meet not unless with a twist. Thus, *avant-garde* Chinese literature can be considered as the obverse of the postmodern literary movement of the West. Yeh's reference to Zheng's polemical discussion, despite the latter's poststructuralist take, of the quarrel between Hu Shi and Mei Guangdi, characterised by the dichotomy, literary vernacular and classical literature respectively, gestures to the cultural consequences of China in a global

context since the culture has always privileged the literary, an issue she clarifies by saying: "What is noteworthy is that both Mei and Hu find it necessary to discuss China's literary reform in an international context especially in reference to the Anglo-European part of the world. It is no longer possible to discuss China solely in terms of China; any such discussion must take into account a worldview that is both broader (geographically) and deeper (historically). If, as evident from the Hu's writings in the 1910s (including diaries and correspondence with friends), the adoption of the modern vernacular as the new poetic medium invited vehement opposition from some intellectuals, I would argued that, as the episodes of Ren Shuiyong and Mei Guangdi suggest, such opposition arose because the issue of language as inextricable from the broader cultural issues, especially those related to China's cultural identity as a modern nation".[133] Not only does the above citation brings to the fore the problems faced by the proponents of the New Literature even in the contemporary context; it also justifies the reading of Chinese culture from the literary viewpoint. Indeed, the Chinese view the socio-political dimension of the nation as inadvertently linked to its philosophical and literary facets.

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[133] Yeh, Michelle. "Chinese Postmodernism and the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Poetry". *Cross-cultural Readings of Chineseness: Narrative, Images, and Interpretations of the 1990s*. Ed. Wen-hsin Yeh. Berkeley: University of California, 2000. pp. 103.

Chapter 2

Cracking the Cosmic Code: The Tw(o)o Twisted Tales

Once, I Zhuangzi, dreamed that I was a butterfly, flying about happily. I did not know that I was Zhou. Suddenly I awoke, and there I was, visibly Zhou. I do not know whether it was Zhou dreaming that he was a butterfly or it was the butterfly dreaming that it was Zhou. Between Zhou and the butterfly, there must be some distinctions. This is called the transformation of things.

<div align="right">

Zhuangzi
Zhuangzi

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In the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation.

<div align="right">

Edgar Allen Poe
Eureka

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Writing critically at the beginning of a new millennium necessitates a rethinking of all the key terms that have so far ruled the day in critical, cultural or comparative studies, not to mention the new communication studies. While teaching for a very brief period a certain course, there was a realisation that the chosen *course*, not exactly a path-dependent voyage or a journey with a destined end, has to be undertaken. Writing, akin to the hymenoid, is here a *sheer* skein spanning the horizons of discourse and finding its end precipitously swerving off course when countenancing the volley of fiery sparks outside the discourse. This Promethean venture undermines both Eastern and Western metaphysics with recourse to the tunneling of secret passages – the ghostly corridors likened to the Vietcong's underground city – a subterranean network which saw the first failure of American military supremacy. This figure rebounds to the start of Friedrich Nietzsche's preface to *Daybreak*, a title befitting "the new morning" of this dissertation not merely with its evocation of the dawn, the most entrancing moment between night and day; it is also a reflexive gesture to the ambiguity of his title – a new day breaking with the breaking of the day: "In this book you will discover a 'subterranean [wo]man' at work, one who tunnels and mines and undermines. You will see [her]him – presupposing you have eyes

capable of seeing this work in the depths – going forward slowly, cautiously, gently inexorable, without betraying very much the distress which the protracted deprivation of light and air must entail … As though [s]he perhaps desires this prolonged obscurity, desires to be incomprehensible, concealed, enigmatic, because [s]he knows what [s]he will thereby also acquire: [her] his own morning, [her] his own redemption, [her]his own *daybreak?*".[134] Why the allusion to Nietzsche here? My metaphysical trespass, with Derrida as the *eminence grise*, acknowledges his debt to Nietzsche, whose alternative response to the tradition has influenced other poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Paul de Man and Jacques Lacan. More importantly, there is a silent partnership between Nietzsche, Freud and Lacan for Nietzsche is known to have anticipated the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud.[135]

Nietzsche's discourse against Western metaphysics can be considered the first act of resistance, marked by *The Will to Power*, and an out-of-the-domain observation of metaphysics that eventually accedes to its injunctions although, if I may add, only partially. First, the desire to break out of logocentrism is always thwarted by obstacles, a hurdle-race at a snail's pace here, and not the walking that Nietzsche proposes, and, second, the very use of the language of metaphysics always implies the transgressor's complicity even as it speaks of the inexorable act of translating the tradition, a matter of reading and receiving the canon as Michael Naas asserts in his *Taking on the Tradition*: "I wish to show how Derrida begins always with the tradition, with the canon, how he assumes and confronts it, that is, "takes it on" so as to locate something within it that the tradition has itself been able to take on its own. As Derrida puts it, "Whatever

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[134] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. pp. 1

[135] Freud frequently referred to Nietzsche as having "more penetrating knowledge of himself than any man who ever lived or was likely to live" and was surprised to find the correspondences between Nietzsche's writing and his psychoanalysis. Jones, Ernest. *Sigmund Freud: Life and Works*. Vol. 2. London: Hogarth Press, 1955.

one ends up doing with it, one must begin by listening to the canon." … because the canon gives us, in its folds, something noncanonical, something that can never be simply included in the curriculum".[136] While proposing the teasing out of the non-canonical within the canonical, deconstruction is fast becoming the canonical in the university with the various deconstructionists debating about the location of deconstruction. Deconstruction cannot be located because it is about the process of situating, perhaps, playing the role of a custodian to the non-canonical space – the white of the margins of an inscriptive page.

As an afterthought on deconstruction and the canon, the thesis here argues for the implicit necessity for the non-canonical in canonicity although texts of resistance inevitably become canonised. Canonisation is a human endeavour to ensure the ease of thinking: the comfort that comes with the sense of security it provides. But the very divide between the central and the marginal is, in actuality, not as distinctive as we thought or hoped for in some cases. Thus, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of canonicity is applicable only because one can read the canon repeatedly and discover new interpretation each time we make the approach, thus its canonicity, a canonical identity dependent on the non-canonical within. To be faithful to Derrida necessitates a breaking away, to let go and part ways with him by, first, taking the plunge over the abyss at the heart of his discourse and, second, arising with the gift of writing. Professedly a mis-take, it is a taking to myself, an appropriation with the affirmative denotations of company (the sharing of his secret, a *tête á tête*, with you), self-assurance (a giving which makes possible the rewriting of Chineseness) and, of course, the advantage of the materiality of writing which allows the actualisation of this discourse. The allusion to the physicality of writing as an offering or a gift – "in or into the presence (of)" someone or something – testifies to the gift of language as the link

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[136] Naas, Michael. *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 2003. pp. xxix.

making explicit the "truth" of the abyssal. As his *oeuvre* makes its appearance from the blind spot in metaphysics, my discourse emerges from the eureka spot in the middle of Chinese writing itself, the staking of a claim the *terra nullius* albeit provisionally.

Just like the fool from the country in "Before the Law" who sacrifices all his possessions to the guardian of the gate in order to gain entry into the realm of the Law, this writing is a wager with incalculable risks, endangering the enterprise with its innate apocalypse as foretold in Derrida's "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy", a consideration of Immanuel Kant's rejection of the "supernatural communication" or "mystical illumination" which, according to him, is the death of all philosophy", a thematic tying in with the mystical and divine underlining of "Telepathy",[137] where Derrida asks the anonymous interlocutor: "And what if this outside of apocalypse was *inside* the apocalypse?"[138] What must be considered then is both the destruction with the revelation, the concealment inherent to the unveiling. Considering the notion of chance in the rhetoric of an image, it gives to the image topographical revelry. Before we look at some thought-provoking examples that will provide an idea of the possibilities given by chance, let us now turn to the etymology of "chance". In *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, the Latin root, *cadere* means fall, related to cadence, which denotes a fall in pitch. Thus, in musical terms, cadence opposes the rise in crescendo, connoting death and contingency and heightening the notions of freedom and necessity. While the linear conception of time enhances the irreversibility of history, the philosophy of chance intervenes by dwelling on the

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[137] Derrida, Jacques. "Telepathy". Trans. Nicholas Royle. *Oxford Literary Review 10*. Nos. 1-2, 1988. pp. 3-4. In the above essay, Derrida's engagement with Freud extends the notion of the father becoming the son and the son becoming the father. In a reverse fashion, the hands that write the text are those of the addressee since the addresser requests for semantic assurance from the addressee. In Naas's *Taking on the Tradition*, he informs us of the connection between *Postcard* and the above essay. In *Postcard*, the picture of Socrates writing with Plato standing behind him is inspired by the notorious postcard found in the *Fortune-Telling Book*.
[138] Derrida Jacques. "On an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy". *Derrida and Negative Theology*. Ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foslay. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992. pp. 25-72.

temporal detour prompted by the play within the visual signification. The rise in crescendo is in accordance with the cadence required for its upward movement.[139]

The music analogy ties in with the undulating underground trajectory that brings me behind the enemy line; with an unexpected assault of a subtotal recall, this thesis hopes to see the sparkle of light at the end of the tunnels, which Levinas examines in his reading of Jean Wahl: "What is the *credo* of so free an oeuvre? Wahl's *credo* does not have the weight of a position, of what Husserl would call a doxic thesis. It emits a blinking light – the *credo* followed by a *dubito* that leaves for a second or third equally possible *credo*. It is an alternance on the model of the "*aut … aut.*" But that succession of *yes's*, *no's*, *but's*, *or's*, those disjunctives that change neither into conjunctions nor convergencies (a phenomenon that strikes, astonishes and initially disconcerts the reader) in no way reflect a character trait or the psychology of some hypercritical empirical hesitation, nor a form of skepticism. What it displays is precisely truth as truth. Truth for Wahl is not some congruent portion of the Absolute, *relativized* by a finite, myopic subject, a lingering shadow or an image within consciousness, as if truth had played a role from the start, as being flowing quietly along, then later offering itself, as best it could, to a thought seeking truths".[140] No, truth is not a relativised view given by a finite myopic subject but realities elasticised to envelope the overwhelming threat of darkness instinctively felt and repressed by the subconscious; according to Derrida, this is an understanding of the human psyche bestowed by a critical analysis of Western metaphysics which makes time *the economy* of a system of

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[139] The footnotes to Derrida's *Dissemination* alludes to Mallarmé's poem: "the relation between the rhythmic and the cadence – or case – and all the falls, including the silent fall of the pen … 'There falls / the pen / the rhythmic suspense of the sinister / to become buried / in the original spume / not long ago from which delirium with a start leaved to a peak / withered / by the identical neutrality of the gulf / NOTHING / of the memorable crisis'". pp. 279-280.

[140] Levinas, Emmanuel. "Jean Wahl: Neither Having nor Being". *Outside the Subject*. Eds. Werner Hamacher & David E. Wellbery. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Sanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 73.

writing.[141] Levinas informs us later that the individual experiences the intense ache accompanying an envisioned ego-subjectivity that does not find her-self out there: "What goes (or goes on) before is the tension of being that is beyond itself, an already completed breaking through the borders or limits of its definition, thus in being itself, there is a lag, an approximation incapable of equaling its own beyond-simultaneously a glorious inadequation and a glorious going beyond. … Tension, and as it were *a spasm of an identity unequal to itself*",[142] reminding us of the Lacanian *lamella* of a (WO)man who struggles to break out of the vile, gelatinised enclosure that constrains her subjectivity.

This tension we feel when the tennis ball in Woody Allen's *Match Point* (2005) is suspended for what feels like eons; it figures aptly this game of chance especially with Chris Wilton's introspective monologue accompanied with a shot of a tennis ball crossing the net of a tennis court back and forth until it finally hits the top of the divider and bounces vertically upwards: "The man who said, 'I'd rather be lucky than good' saw deeply into life. People are afraid to face how great a point of life is dependent on luck. It's scary to think that so much is out of one's control. There are moments in a match when the ball hits the top of the net and in a split second it can either go forward and you win. Or maybe it doesn't and you lose".[143] At the end of the *misé en scene*, an agonising *mise en abyme*, the ball is kept up in the air in a freeze frame keeping the audience guessing which side it will land. Chance, as a philosophy, applies to Chinese thinking too who are well-known for their excellence in *pingpang* (table tennis) but it emerges stylistically because of the emphasis on patterns. The above monologue makes the filmic title an ironic play on the game of the name, a game of chance. Levinas writes beautifully

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[141] Derrida, Jacques. "Freud and the Scene of Writing". *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge. 2001. pp. 284.

[142] Levinas, Emmanuel. "Jean Wahl: Neither having nor Being". *Outside the Subject*. Eds. Werner Hamacher & David E. Wellbery. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 73.

[143] *Matchpoint*. Dr. Woody Allen. Per. Jonathon Rhys Meyer, Scarlet Johansson, and Brian Cox. BBC Films, 2006

about the "Truth of Disclosure and Truth of Testimony": "A lag between the fact of being *thematized* and the fact of *being made manifest* in intelligibility can thus be adduced, a *passage* from thematization to manifestation within intelligibility. In the movement from the one to the other, a hesitation, a time, a certain risk, good and bad fortune, can be made out – the necessity of an effort for the structures to be secured. This event or this becoming within intelligibility itself can be called subjectivity".[144] Therefore, subjectivity, if it is merely a manifestation as such, is a subjectivity conditioned by the spatial and temporal possibilities making the "event" of becoming a materialisation that cannot be wholly defined by the idea. Georges Bataille, who is much aware of this wheel of fortune, foregrounds the inassimilable in metaphysics in order to pursue the signifying trajectories to the outer limits of the condition of possibility, a journey without an end – the word "end" meaning both a goal and a limit – made possible by the double windmills of the mind.

One the other hand, the Chinese vanguards' throw of the dice is made obvious in their parodies of the master discourse of Maoism. The *avant-gardes* rework the repressed within Maoist legalistic society in a literary revolution started by Lu Xun whose despair in his failure to bridge the gap between the intellectuals and masses with literary revolution can be sensed in his "A Shadow's Farewell", where an autobiographical trace is detectable: "There is something about Heaven that displeases me; I do not wish to go there. There is something about Hell that displeases me; I do not wish to go there. And there is something about your Golden Age that displeases me too, I do not wish to go there either. What displease me is you… My friend, the time draws near. I shall move into darkness, I shall drift in the land of nothingness. You would still have a gift from me. What is there I can give? If there must be a bequest, then let it be

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[144] Levinas, Emmanuel. "Truth of Disclosure and Truth of Testimony". *Truth: Engagements across Philosophical Traditions*. Ed. José Medina and David Wood. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. pp. 262. Author's emphasis.

darkness and void. I would rather give you darkness and void. I would rather give you darkness; or dissolve in the light of your day. Best of all things I would give you the void, and occupy no space whatsoever in your heart".[145] This gesture of friendship, couched in estranged words, is received whereby darkness is perceived as the abyssal gift of *khōra*, an "oblation" to the formless Other; the use of the word signals the act of reading as a translational performance with its Latin etymology, "*oblatus*", a past participle form of "*offerre*", signifying "to carry to or to bring to".[146] Famous for his innovative use of *baihua*, vernacular language, and the propagation of Western literary styles, Lu Xun indicates the inlet to monolithic Confucian China, the shadow within the sun, the trace of the other figured as the subfusc core of the ball of fiery gases, the penumbra from which the supernova of this thesis emerges. Contrary to the popular belief that his poetics was influenced by Western literature, it is the assertion here that his poetic prose is a crossbreed between the above and a literary and philosophical legacy from Zhuangzi, the adopted son of the latter's alternative Chinese inscriptive heritage, and the prodigal son who squanders the riches of the tradition with his will to power. Perhaps what is needed to appease the alienation he felt is the affirmative power of the Nietzschean revelry, to use language in a way that transcends its inadequacies in representing reality.

The Buddhist influence of Nietzsche's writings, especially *The Will to Power*, is well-known and Lu Xun was a translator of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and a proponent of the Nietzschean overman, an adoption evident in the latter's *A Madman's Diary*, journal entries of the entranced; perhaps a word about what it means to be caught in the unrequited love for someone or something. Bataille's words can be said to describe the mental and physical torment Lu Xun underwent for an envisioned China: "I fall, no matter what I write, in this, that I should

[145] Lu, Xun. "A Shadow's Farewell (24 September 1924)." *Seed of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*. Ed. Geremie Barmé and John Milford. New York: Hill and Wang, 1989. pp. 321.
[146] *Dictionary.com*.

be linking the infinite – insane – richness of 'possibility' to the precision of meaning. To this fruitless task I am compelled – happily? Perhaps, for I can henceforth not conceive my life if not pinned to *the extreme limit of 'possibility'*… from the *extreme limit* I descend to the most stupefied state – assuming that at rare moments I have touched the extreme limit … *And yet*, without the extreme limit, life is only a long deception, a series of defeats without combat followed by impotent retreat – that is degradation".[147] The writers featured in this dissertation are the superhuman ones – the ones who would push themselves to the limits beyond limits with the self-overcoming of Nietzsche's "superman".[148] It is only with this sail to the beyond of the previously set limits that one gets a glimpse of the "real" world of possibilities, the potential given by the spacing of contesting elements.

In "Plato's Pharmacy", Derrida reiterates the Nietzschean notion of the "overman": "Tautology is life only going out of itself to come home to itself. Keeping close to itself through *mnēmē*, *logos*, and *phonē* (essentially repeating the Hegelian notion of sublation here). But on the other hand, repetition is the very movement of non-truth: the presence of what is gets lost, disperses itself, multiplies itself through mimemes, icons, phantasms, simulacra, etc. Through phenomena, already. And this type of repetition is the possibility of becoming-perceptible-to-the-senses nonideality. This is on the side of non-philosophy, bad memory, hypomnesia, writing. Here, tautology is life going out of itself beyond return. Death rehearsal. Unreserved spending. The irreducible excess, through the play of the supplement, of any self-intimacy of the living, the good, the true".[149] The "graphics of supplementarity" corresponds to Edgar Allen Poe's

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[147] Bataille, Georges. "The Games of Chance". *The Bataille Reader*. Ed. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1997. pp. 69-70.

[148] Lu Xun is also known to be an admirer of Nietzsche's writings (especially *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *Will to Power*) whose influence on the Chinese writer is discussed in Chueng Chiu-yee's *Lu Xun: The Chinese "Gentle" Nietzsche*. New York and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2001.

[149] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans and intro. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 168-169.

proposition in the pseudo-scientific treatise, "Eureka", reminds one of the *trace*, an absent otherness, whose presence is felt even as it is excluded and this apparently nonresidential element, although exiled, always returns as an intruder into the domesticated space we call writing. In contradistinction to the strict separation of the dichotomy, presence and absence, inside and outside, which has a firm entrenchment in our normative mode of perception, the polarity is demonstrated as relational by deconstruction. Instead of critically approaching these terms as divided, one ought to see them as intermingling since one term recalls the other in definition.

The epigraph is an acknowledgement that a genealogical quest into the makings of identity will only reveal the fallacy of conceptual ideality. Poe's ingenious postulation in "Eureka" is another way of re-thinking the heterogeneity that haunts interpretation. A master in fantastic fictionalisation, he gives us a poem, "Eureka", a meta-figure of creation indicating the self-reflexivity of writing. Literature as a discourse reflects its own makings even as it disrupts the conditions that provide experience in terms of space and time, and this writing allows us a glimpse into the grammars of creation. Creation, whether aesthetic or scientific or technological, requires mastery over the multivalent, chaotic elements that exist and this domination manifest itself in the endeavour to synthesise and order what Poe calls "particles" into structured existence. In recent scientific research, the existential elements are discovered to be vibrating minutiae strings instead of particles, thus the point in spatial measurements is made up of vibrating little strings, the *nonzero* of the Planck length of a string amounting to multiple vibrating strings of *a point*, but this does not subtract from the argument that the act of exclusion for the coherence of the assemblage gestures to the intrinsic violence that propels the innovative act. Derrida's engagement with Mallarmé in *Dissemination* is tellingly suggestive of the

cannot be perceived with one's nose or mouth".[152] And *ch'i* is that which moves the ethical disposition of *ren* as Tang claims: "As [ether] is activated, it generates that which is called benevolence' [*ren*], 'origin' [*yuan*], 'nature' [*xing*] by Confucians, 'compassion' [*jian'ai*] by Moists, 'sea of humanity' [*xinghai*]and 'piety' [*cibei*] by Buddhists, 'soul' and 'empathic love' by Christians and 'attraction' and 'conductive power' by scientists".[153] Chinese futuristic fictions, which, on the one hand, reinterpreted Chinese mythologies and, on the other hand, inspired by Jules Verne's science-fictions, are more often than not contributions concerned with national reformation, a preoccupation (over)extended to later literary movements such as "scar literature", "root-finding literature" and "new-era literature". We shall travel not just around the world but also temporally encircle the globe twice in reverse directions between high antiquity and postmodernity in eighty days.

The period from the May Fourth Movement to the June Fourth of the Tiananmen Square Incident sees a production of literature that focuses on the lesson learnt after the Western imperialist powers cut China into spheres of influence. The Middle Kingdom fraught with internal strife decided that modernisation, underscored by science and technology, must be given the priority in order for China to progress. Wu Jianren's *The New Story of the Stone* is also a text thinking through the malaise of a backward country with a systematic principle, a principal of the Ultimate Unity propounded by traditional Chinese philosophy, making possible my argument that the Absolute is really an absolution of the structural problematic,[154] a symbol of the psychic real manifesting as a historical and cultural crisis explainable by the chaos theories. The Chinese

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[152] Tang, Sitong. "Renxue (The Study of Benevolence)". *Tangsi tong quanji* (*Complete Works of Tang Sitong*). Shanghai: *Shanghai guji chubanshe*, 1963. pp. 121.
[153] Ibid. Tang's thesis is in tune with his time as China in the late Qing era became aware (rather too late as the imperialists were gaining colonial power in the major Chinese cities) of the power given by scientific inventions.
[154] The sentence is an ironic play on the title of Yang Xiaobin's introduction "The Absolute and the Problematic in Twentieth-century Chinese Narrative". Yang, Xiaobin. *The Chinese Postmodern: Trauma and Irony in Chinese Avant-garde Fiction*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2002. pp. 2.

whose existence has always been plagued by conflicts from the period of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (722 BCE to 481 BCE) to present-day Communist-capitalistic China instinctively react to this darkness with a regulated social structure controlling familial customs to communal rites. By concluding his rewriting of a Chinese classic with an enigmatic English poem, Wu provides an insight into his thoughts on the foreign invasion – a parody of the Chinese emphasis on Westernisation and modernisation at that period:

> All foreigners thou shall worship,
>
> Be always in sincere friendship.
>
> 'Tis the way to get bread to eat and money to spend
>
> And upon this the family's living will depend;
>
> There's one thing nobody can guess:
>
> Thy countrymen thou can oppress.

This translation is taken from David Wang's "Translating Modernity" whose special significance to late Qing readers is expressed in polemical terms (the spirit of *dao* is superior to the Western vessel) but these people were oppressed, in actuality, not only by the colonialists but also the Chinese lackeys of these foreign invaders.

Inverting the "Event" Horizon: The Enterprise at and beyond the World's Ends

For we are like tree trunks in the snow. They seem to be resting smoothly as if one could push them away with a slight nudge. No, one cannot, for they are firmly attached to the ground. But lo and behold, this too is sheer semblance.

> Franz Kafka
> *The Trees*

Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* is a fantastic creation that bring to the fore the idea of creation. The inexplicable Solarian Ocean is read as a metaphor of Man's need for sense and sensibility.

Although the sensible permits a greater attunement to material world but *we cannot truly attest to what reality is*, a question that intrigued metaphysics from the Presocratics onwards. In Plato's representation of philosophical feud between the two Presocratic philosophers, Heraclitus and Parmenides, their thoughts are interpreted as polarities: the sensible and the intelligible. Their philosophies are emphatically cosmological and ontological and can be summarised into two apparently distinctive propositions: "Whatever is, is changing" as opposed to "Whatever is, is". As existential flux is a state in scientific terms, Parmenides' remark above, although seemingly obverse to Heraclitus', can be read as an iteration of the latter's observation. Heraclitus, who lived in Ephesus around 500 B.C., is infamous for his riddles and chiasmus, akin to the ambiguity and paradoxes of Zhuangzi's and Laozi's writings. The ambiguity and vagueness of the writings of the Chinese and Greek ancients encourage deciphering in terms of interpretation. Heraclitus uses the analogy of a running stream to exemplify existential flux: "Into the same river, we step and do not step, we are and are not." (Heraclitus Homericus, B49a).[155] The message, subtle and profound, conveys Heraclitus' ontological concept: "nothing endures but change": material reality persists only with the constant turnover of elemental compositions such that apparent oppositions are both the same and not the same owing much to their continuous change over space and time. In other words, contraries and contradictions are found in us as sameness but they manifest as difference due to context, the space-time conditions of existence. Heraclitus believes that sensorial experience does not reveal the truth about things, the reality of the objects of observation. What we call knowledge is only a part of the process of how the thing in question appears to us confirming the Freudian notion that what appears as consciousness is no longer what really was. The images that emerge, even the images of ourselves, are but

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[155] The discussion on Heraclitus and Parmenides is based on J. Barnes's *The Presocratc Philoophers*. Barnes, J. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.

processes appearing *as if* they are beings only because of the extractive character of the phenomenological experience. Despite his emphasis on change, Heraclitus believes in the unifying principle of *logos* (not the *logos* of Western metaphysics which privileges the intelligible and the univocal and stable presence of reality) whose uniformity is based on constant transformation, a notion similar to *dao*: "This world-order (*kosmos*), the same of all, no god and man did create, but it was and is and will be: everliving fire, kindling in measures and being quenched in measures" (B30). Thus, like the Han Chinese, Heraclitus believes that fire and friction are the earthy sources of creation and some kind of matter is the ultimate reality, known to the Chinese as *Tai Chi*, the cosmic aether, and any perceptual transformation comprises merely qualitative and quantitative variations of this "aether". However, there is a marked difference between Heraclitean philosophy and Daoist teachings. Whereas Heraclitus was an elitist known to be a dialectical philosopher, the Daoist masters believed in ontological asceticism, a notion that rejects any hierarchical ordering of society. The rest of the thesis will argue that *dao* cannot be compared to *logos*, not even the Heraclitean *logos* because the unifying principle of *dao* is paradoxically a disseminative force, a kind of thinking beyond dialectical philosophy, one which is similar to the analogical linkage between the synchronic and the diachronic requiring the suspension of time.

Postmodern aesthetics points to the lack in our experiential capacity. Instead of unifying the conditions of space, time, form and so on, that will permit logical conceptualisations, postmodern artworks disjoint these conditions so that the representational contact requires an imaginative rearrangement of elements. According to Jean François Lyotard: "I think in particular that it is the aesthetics of the sublime that modern art (including literature) finds its

impetus and the logic of avant-gardes finds its axioms".[156] The literary fantastic, akin to the postmodern emphasis on the elusive figural, disrupts the conditions for normative modes of perception. These perceptions are, according to Kantian aesthetics of the beautiful and sublime, judgements based on a synthesis of the cognitive and intuitive faculties. Lyotard insists in the same essay, "Within this tradition of the subject, which comes from Augustine and Descartes and which Kant does not radically challenge, this contradiction, which some would call neurosis or masochism, develops as a conflict between the faculties of a subject, the faculty to conceive of something, and the faculty to "present " something. Knowledge exists if, first, the statement is intelligible, and second, if "cases" can be derived from the experience which "corresponds" to it".[157] Thus, Kant's principles are *a priori* only if they can be validated by examples. A conflict arises when the particular refuses the universal sublation and *avant-garde* aesthetics as the sublime upsets the philosophical primacy of the intelligible. What we have is an intuitive encounter with a phenomenon or an object which stimulates intellectual speculation.

Form, which is so essential to the constitution of concepts and categories, allows the idea to manifest itself, although it is a manifestation that is, at the same time, a reduction. Attending to the concept of *khōra*, Derrida gestures to the reductive violence of which not only philosophy from Plato onwards is culpable; the minute we speak or write about something, we are reducing the object of attention to our experiential and perceptual faculties as well as representational constraints. *Khōra* is Derrida's translation of that which is prior to form – to what gives shape – in order to accentuate the sublation of contradiction in writing:

This question cannot resound when we know that we are caught in such a scene of reading, included in advance in the immense history of interpretations and

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reappropriations which in the course of the centuries come to buzz and hum around *khōra*, taking charge of it/her or overloading it/her with inscriptions and reliefs, giving it/her form, imprinting it/her with types, in order to produce in it/her new objects or to deposit on it/her other sediments [the translation of the French pronouns *elle*, referring to *khōra*, includes both 'her' and 'it' in order to stress that elle could also be understood as a personal feminine pronoun – Ed.]. This interminable theory of exegeses seems to produce what, following the discourse of Timaeus, would happen, not with Plato's text, but with *khōra* itself/herself one could speak at all this about this X (*X* or *khi*) which must not have any proper determinations, sensible or intelligible, material or formal, and therefore must not have any identity of its/her own, must not be identical with herself/itself. *Everything happens as if* the yet-to-come history of the interpretations of khōra were written or even prescribed in advance, *in advance reproduced and reflected* in a few pages of the Timaeus 'on the subject' of *khōra* 'herself'('itself'). With its ceaseless re-launchings, its failures, its superimpositions, its overwritings and reprintings, this history wipes itself out in advance since it programs itself, reproduces itself and reflects itself by anticipation. Is a prescribed, programmed, reproductive, reflexive history still history?[158]

Derrida demonstrates with his reading of Plato's *khōra* the vacuum within *Timaeus*. If *khōra* is refigured as the sentient ocean on Solaris, then the millions of scientific hypotheses are myths within myths, the junk mails and unwanted catalogues of Zhuangzi, bearing witness to the *mise en abyme* of metaphysical Truth. The awe and fear resulting from this contact with the unknown not only exposes the limitations of our intellectual capacity but it incites in us a desire to possess that knowledge. *Khōra*, like the Sublime, is anxiety-inducing simply because it displaces identity

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[158] Derrida, Jacques. "*Khōra*." *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*. Ed. Julian Wolfreys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. pp. 238.

predicated on presence, the basis of metaphysical elucidation. Axiomatic reassurance, the support given by the metaphysical privileging of presence, is demonstrated as possible only because absolute referential stability is unachievable. The Solarian Ocean, as *khōra*, exceeds and precedes knowledge; the difficulty in categorising it has to do with temporality. It cannot be defined synchronically, itself being the symbol of the past and the future. This play of memory and anticipation is especially obvious in the apparition of Rheya, a materialisation of Kris Kelvin's memory and simultaneously a figure of the future, signaled by Kelvin's anticipation of her next arrival. Steven Soderbergh's film version (2002) makes obvious the bond between Kelvin and the figural Rheya, a projection that renders her existence entirely dependent on the former's presence. This is also evident in Andrei Tarkovsky's thematic treatment of *Solaris* (1972) which can be read as an indication of the the existential significance of the other's recognition of one's selfhood. The ambiguity lies here: instead of remarking identity as a relational construct – one is that which one is not – which is inadvertently the case; the other is an identificatory projection of one's selfhood.

To those who insist on categorical knowledge, these playful oceanic constructions, because of their variability, unfortunately add to the mystery surrounding Solaris's sole inhabitant. If we read the structural aspect of writing as a reverberation of being, then the conclusion can only be the fragmentation within the deepest recesses of the psyche, a dissolution already kept in check by the hand of the Symbolic pressing the lid on the Pandora's Box. But the secret, unanimously contained, counters this repression by overthrowing the cover and emerges to trouble the wayfarers' journey to their destination. Discomfited by the apparitions, the scientists attempt to conceal that which has returned as the repressed. They confront with the terror inflicted upon them by the unimaginable and contain these disconcerting occurrences

behind locked doors. But the absences within the fiction are the sites where one can thwart the fearsome trace by rising to the challenge since the Latin etymology of the word "discomfit" includes "*conficere*" which is part the past participle form of *desconfire* which denotes "to make ready, to prepare, to bring about" from *com* plus *facere* (to make). Thus, this amorphous being covering the entire planet, indifferent to the distinct personalities of the researchers, probes and invades psychologically its victims, driving each of them to their existential end with fear.

As an allusion to the incessant ontological transformations that humanity and its sciences have to undergo in order to evolve, the ocean as *khōra* can be located in the description: "But it was engaged in a never-ending process of transformation, an 'ontological autometamorphosis'".[159] Interpreting the ocean as *archi-écriture*, the violence that erupts with the formation of a symmetriad is symbolic of the violence inherent to writing, a result of the oscillations that impel writing to being. Writing as permutation finds its resonance in the metamorphic ocean. Like the volatility of the symmetriad structures, writing can be destabilised by a differential eruption, which exposes the primary violence of structural polarisation that privileges one term over the other. Resisting the constraints imposed by institutional conventions, akin to the "laws of physics" mentioned in *Solaris*, the differential element problematises these inscriptive structures, built on a subjugation that provides the illusion of textual totality. The description of the birth of the symmetriads, if the ocean is interpreted as *khōra*, reveals the fundamental instability of inscriptive mastery, which can be subverted by an implosive disjunction. The structural play within language, in turn, casts light on the imagination as representation. Like the non-figurative artist, I prefer to see the mimoidic (mimetic) play as an avowal of creativity. Kelvin's research on Solaris attests to my interpretation of the Solarian

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[159] Lem, Stanislaw. *Solaris*. Trans. Steve Cox. New York: Faber and Faber Ltd. and Walker and Company, 1970, 1987. pp. 24.

Ocean as *khōra* giving to inscriptive forms. It is in one of the marginalised texts on the subject, by Otho Ravintzer, entitled *The Apocrypha*, that Kelvin finds an account which provides some illumination on his predicament. *The Apocrypha*[160] records an interview with the pilot, Berton, whose perceptual faculties are questioned in his encounter with the oceanic apparitions, an interrogation that makes the ocean even more mysterious.

Kelvin informs us that "Ravintzer's book was full of this sort of intellectual speculation, *prefaced*, it is only fair to add by an introduction in which the editor dissociated himself from some of the texts produced".[161] If *The Apocrypha* is read as a metaphor for writing, the editor's preface is not only an indication of his critical distance; it is also a reinforcement of the apocryphal nature of the text, a fiction reflecting the altered quality of the encounter, a encounter which is unfortunately not a dialogue between entities. Noting that "the same words recurred over and over again",[162] these recurrences enhance the signifying function of writing by admitting an element of estrangement. After multiple enunciations of the same words, these words lose their meaning. Similarly, this semantic void is made explicit in Qui Zhijie's installation/performance, *Shuxie yiqianbian Lantingxu* or *Copying the "Orchid Pavilion Preface" a Thousand Times* (1992-1995). Owing to the connection between postmodernism and late capitalism, the image has become its own referent just as the multiple copies of the same calligraphic character empty the signifier of its signifying content. What we have, instead, would be the self-referentiality of the image as a composite of strokes, comparable to the string-like elements Berton sees on his oceanic expedition. Berton's detailed description of the events, in filmic sense, occurs in "an instant of time" but viewed within a temporal suspension, thus

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[160] *The Apocrypha* is included here because, first, its uncertain origin testifies to the (non)originary *archi-écriture* and, second, it also recalls the non-canonical fourteen books of the *Apocrypha*, books rejected by proponents of the religion.

[161] Ibid. pp. 81.

[162] Ibid.

opening up a gap between real and irreal time. Because of his proximity to the ocean, Berton "saw a sort of yellow sludge which was spouting vertical filaments. … These glutinous filaments merged and became intertwined; great bubbles swelled upon the surface and slowly began to change shape".[163] Later he sees a baby whose physical form is exactly the same as a human infant but its surreal massiveness and puppet-like gesticulations anticipates one's puppetry of whose actions are manoeuvred by the strings of one's desire to be the desire of the Other. This can be linked to Walter Benjamin's mention of the "automaton" which plays "a winning game of chess", a puppet called "historical materialism", which resounds the ideological machinations that control human existence: "A system of mirrors created an illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings".[164] These intertwined filaments represent interwoven textual threads making the metamorphic ocean a figure of arche-writing to which the giant bubbles taking shape append, having metaphorical significance in the discussion on writing as a khoral materialisation, a ballooning of woven textual threads from the choral waters. More importantly, Lem's thread-like entities, figured in Pollock's *Number 7*, anticipate the string and the superstring theories which I shall elaborate in the next section. In order to bring to consciousness what is intuited about the unconscious, Pollock's *Number 7* is introduced to supplement what Berton, the pilot in *Solaris*, describes.

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[163] Ibid. pp. 83. The flaw in Kant's critical philosophy evinces as the examples found are not the support of the axiom; the example is an instance of the axiomatic manifestation and nothing more.

[164] Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Pimlico, 1999. pp. 253.

Jackson Pollock
Number 7 (1951)

Contemporary critique on Pollock's paintings focuses on the way he represents the Modern Man, capturing the conflicting impulses of domination and liberation, consciousness and unconsciousness, order and chaos. These references to the contradictory elements found in his paintings are crucial to understanding Pollock's *facture*: his manner of handling artistic materials in order to manifest visually his ideas. Some critique gestures to the flatness and apparent lack of artistic skill in his aesthetic pieces and negative commentary highlights the *inaccessibility* of his forms but they do not realise that the flatness of his works corresponds to the new theories of physics: the fact that no measuring scale can be "real" in the absolute sense since all value co-ordinates are assumptions specified. Thus, the density of a rod can be deformed to that of a plane depending on the position of perception: "If we, for instance, assumed that the dimensions of all objects are lengthened or shortened in one direction only, say that of the earth's axis, we should

again not notice this transformation, although the shape of bodies would have changed completely, spheres becoming ellipsoids of rotation, cubes becoming parallelepipeds …".[165] Pollock's artworks are labelled abstract expressionistic for a reason: "Time and Space can be disassociated from physical things and events only in abstraction, i.e., mentally".[166] Although Schlick provides further support by stating: "So, on the basis of the general theory of relativity, we may now say that this synthesis itself has become a mere shadow, an abstraction; and that the oneness of space, time, and things has an independent existence",[167] part of his statement is incorrect due to the recent research into nonlinear dynamic systems. Pollock's *oeuvre* may be seen as an expression of his cultural situation, the New York during and after World War II, but the reading of *Number 7* and *The Moon Woman Cuts the Circle* espouses the *timeless* quality of his artistry. Pollock's manipulation of artistic materials provides an insight into his existential belief that friction is the prime motivator of creation. It has been said that Pollock's works are energy made manifest but his works are read as *examples of working the frame*, the spacing given by the non-site, *khōra,* given further expansion by Parker Tyler's description in "Jackson Pollock: The Infinite Labyrinth", of the labyrinthine nature of Pollock's paintings, cited by Michael Leja in his analysis of the painter's use of space: "For how can what is man-made be "non-human"? The spectator does not experience vertigo before these works, where he is as surely anchored as though he were in front of St. Peter's in Rome or gazing at Radio City from the top of the Chrysler Building. If one felt vertigo before Pollock's differentiation of space, then truly one would be lost in the abyss of an endless definition of being. One would be enclosed, trapped by the labyrinth of the picture-space. But we are safely looking at it, seeing it steadily

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[165] Schlick, Moritz. *Space and Time in Contemporary Physics: An Introduction to the Theory of Relavity and Gravitation*. Trans. Henry L. Brose. New York: Dove Publications, Inc. pp. 26.
[166] Ibid. pp. 36.
[167] Ibid. pp. 66.

and seeing it whole, from a point outside. Only *man*, in his paradoxical role of the *superman*, can achieve such a feat of absolute contemplation: the sight of an image of space *in which he does not exist*".[168] My thesis refutes the italicised phrase of the above citation because we are not safely outside the labyrinth. The image reflects the labyrinthine core within us which makes the control we think we have illusory.

However, Tyler's remark is astoundingly precise in depicting Pollock's vision of being, a vision that propels and extends the reach of man beyond his material conditions. The last remark testifies to my reading that Pollock's artworks are visions of what lies before and beyond creation, the khoral space and the possibilities which *khōra* endows. Both Derrida and the high Modernists have been accused of idealism but the contention here gestures to the transcendence as self-overcoming which requires the thinking of the immanent. By activating his creative bent with a play of differences, Pollock positions himself on the verge where the immense risk also promises the greatest adventure, an off-the-wall situating that allows him to optically wrench the verticality of heights and depths to figurative planes. The visual rise and fall are not lost; instead they are enhanced by the images Pollock employs; a profundity and transcendence verbalised critically in metaphors of webs, vortices, labyrinths, the cosmos and the oceanic depths. The design of *Number 7* calls forth *khōra* with its off-centre manipulation of space. At the bottom of the left, one discovers a net-like weave which can be read as the khoral matrix emerging with multiple filaments growing upwards. This image recalls the vertical filaments which Berton sees appearing from the sludge of the Solarian Ocean. However, the interweaving of filaments occurs at the bottom-left, the edge of the painting. The dotted lines and drizzling strokes manifest Pollock's artistic technique: the discontinuous handling of material equivocating between

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[168]This is a citation quoted by Michael Leja in his espousal of the metaphorical dimension in the aesthetic productions of Jackson Pollock: Leja, Michael. *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993. pp. 315. Author's emphasis.

spontaneity and regimentation. On the right side of *Number 7* is a figure split into a binary and fused by the interlinking of strokes, materialised with the collision of the divine and the human, male and female; but the transcendental implicit in Enlightenment thinking is overturned by Pollock's emphasis of the immanent of which the physiological de-tailing (an impressionistic art blurring the demarcations) of the half-woman-half-man/ half-beast-half-human figure verifies, which can be read as the fusion of the yin-yang of *dao*, the unifying One, as Pollock's style here is reminiscent of Chinese calligraphy. It is undeniable that *Number 7* and *Moon Woman* have, what I may describe in a tongue-in-cheek manner, a distinctly oriental flavour.

This painting, in conjunction with Lem's depiction of the Solarian Ocean, reflects the crossing over of the multiple *khoral* to the unifying One of *dao*, a leitmotif inverted in Qui's installation/performance which mirrors the fragmentation of the One to the many. *Copying the "Orchid Pavilion Preface" a Thousand Times* is Qui's critique of the traditional way of learning calligraphy which the learner must copy repeatedly the *Orchid Pavilion Preface* by Wang Xizhi (fourth century AD) if s/he wants to learn the "Wang style" of calligraphy. The installation/performance questions the importance given to the act of imitation as the approximation of the calligraphic style after mimicking the esteemed piece a thousand times, firstly, makes the calligraphic characters emptied of their semantic content and, secondly, heightens the sense that the calligraphic writing is nothing but ink strokes on rice paper. The dissemination of the One to many, which also implies the many to One, a whole to a part or a part to a whole, as *terminus a quo* flowing to a *terminus ad quem* with the fluidity of the oceanic waves, disturbs because of the notion of the "one *too* many", what Alain Badiou calls "the inconsistent multiple", the unpredictable residues from the unforeseeable constraints of the non-philosophical, the impasses of the mathematical Real, possibly resulting in *incalculable*

sacrifices. In other words, something has to give in one's pursuit of the other: at best, a zero-sum loss, at worst, the nonzero-sum measure of losing one's prized possession, the loss of that for which one has been striving. In nonzero-sum situations, there are unaccountable surpluses in the wins or losses unlike the losses or gains in zero-sum games like poker and chess where the loss of one player is the gain of the other player(s). This literary device, like the black box theory, reads the image transmission from the precognitive to the cognitive as one that becomes inverted because of the irretrievable forfeit or unaccountable gain. How this mathematic (in)equation works in writing and, by extension, real-life situations owing to unanticipated shifts will be explored here. Like Badiou's *Being and Event*, this critical endeavour is a choreography of constellations, a *khoral dance* in step with and in due respect of the Other, the mammoth swelling of a Solarian bubble before it bursts, which, in turn, is an acknowledgement of its inessential existential ground. Solaris reflects the Derridean strategic *economy*; its Greek root *oikonomia* from *oĭko(s)* indicates the "home" of the *unhiemlich*. The writing here is a hand extended as a gesture of solidarity with alterity just as Kris Kelvin reaches out to an oceanic manifestation in an enactment of openness and acceptance.

Žižek refers to the ocean as "the monstrous asexual Alien Thing which reproduces itself by direct cloning (such an object is a common motif in science fiction, its best-known example being *the gigantic planet which materializes thought* in Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris*)" in his essay "Of Cells and Selves"[169], a massive Derridean amoeba-like plasma or the Lacanian "undead lamella"; which he describes as a *l'hommelette*, "little female-man omelette",[170] "like, a *vulgari eloquentia*, a vagina in an unending period", an ultimate object of horror because it dwells

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[169] Žižek, Slavoj. "Of Cells and Selves". *The Žižek Reader*. Ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999. pp. 306.
[170] Žižek, Slavoj. "A Hair of the Dog that Bit You". *The Žižek Reader*. Ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999. pp. 280-281.

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between two deaths. Žižek explains, in "Of Cells and Selves" why the Solarian Ocean as a monstrous Alien Thing terrifies because it does not give cognitive accessibility; there is a lack of cognitive relation between the observer and the observed. Lem is known to exploit the black box theory, a theory explaining the mechanistic nature of being with its input and output movements. The ocean on Solaris and the Black Cloud in *The Invincible* are figures of the full absence at the heart of being, the Derridean impossible placed at a third position between polarities. Lem plays with this notion of the formless using game theories, schematically translating the shifts from zero-sum calculation to nonzero-sum measure to symbolise the "empty spot" in literature. *Here, I am*, merely the accidental tourist, proposing that the antagonism between polarities results from countenancing the indistinguishable anomaly within one's locus in the Other: the unrelenting grip of this "structural anachronism" comparable to the chameleonic machinations of *dao*, which is also "The gateway of the mysterious female",[171] a figure heightened by the *sui generic*, *khōra*:

> On the one hand, *khōra* would be the 'receptacle – as it were, the nurse – of any birth' … As a nurse, she thus drives from the *tertium quid* whose logic commands all that is attributed to it. On the other hand, a little further on, another suitable 'comparison' is proposed to us: 'And it is convenient to compare [*proseikasai prepei*] the receptacle to a mother, the paradigm to a father, and the intermediary nature between the two to a child [*ekgonon*] (50d). And yet to follow this other figure, although it no longer has the place of the nurse but that of the mother, *khōra* does not couple with the father, in other words, with the paradigmatic model. *She is a third gender/genus (48c); she does not belong to an oppositional couple, for example, to that which the intelligible paradigm forms with the sensible becoming and which looks rather like a father/son couple* (emphasis mine). The 'mother' is supposedly apart. And since it's only a figure, a schema, therefore one of

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[171] Lau. D.C. (trans.) *Tao Te Jing*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 11.

these determinations which *khōra* receives, *khōra* is *not* more of a mother than a nurse, is no more than a woman. This *triton genos* is not a *genos*, first of all because it is a unique individual. She does not belong to the 'race of women' (*genos gynaikōn*). *Khōra* marks a place apart, the spacing which keeps a dissymmetrical relation to all that which 'in herself,' beside or in addition to herself, seems to make a couple with her. In the couple outside of the couple, this strange mother who gives place without engendering can no longer be considered as an origin. She/it eludes all anthropo-theological schemes, all history, all revelation, and all truth. Preoriginary, before and outside of all generation, she no longer even has the meaning of the past, of the present that is past. *Before* signifies no temporal anteriority. The relation of independence, the nonrelation, looks more like the relation of the interval or the spacing to what is lodged in it to be received in it.[172]

Khōra, as a third gender, is a chimerical figure like the ineffable silhouette of *dao* which encompasses both the *yin* and the *yang*. The person of *dao*, called *shen ren*, godlike as a creator, is a figure mentioned by the madman of Chu. Steve Coutinho translates: "Such person's teachings are ripe with meaning. Such a person, such power, can embrace all things as one. When the world approaches disorder, who would wear himself out in service of the empire?"[173] Noteworthy to this thesis is the footnote attached to the sentence: "Such person's teachings are ripe with meaning", translated literally as "*like* a timely woman". The third kinds are non-recognisable and their shape-shifting ability arouses metaphysical terror in those who are accustomed to the security of the familiar. There will always be something out of joint in the state of translation and the alienating symptom shakes the hermeneutic ground, inversely

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[172] Derrida, Jacques. "*Khōra*." *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*. Ed. Julian Wolfreys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. pp. 257.
[173] Coutinho, Steve. *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation and Paradox*. Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004. pp. 71.

heightening the desire to monopolise it. The themes of fear, desire and violence are explored with the interfacing of Western modernist and Eastern *avant garde* aesthetics. This intentional inversion attempts to tease out the repressed within metaphysical unconscious of the East and the West.

Jackson Pollock
The Moon Woman Cuts the Circle (1942)

Pollock's *Moon Woman* is included here to give space to the stargazers and the moon-dreamers because, without the *fantastic* visions of other worlds, we are trapped like goldfishes in a little glass bowl. In an essay on postmodern fiction by an eminent colleague, we are told to *dream on* since no one except literary academics read meta-fictions. The "failure" of postmodern fiction to attract a wide readership has to do with its *metafictional* facet – no one wants to be reminded of what we have instinctively repressed. If literary academia is a moon, perhaps, this explains why we are always obsessing about the sun. Life without the imagination of the

fantastic is comparable to riding "this claustrophobic elevator up and down without getting out", much like the going back and forth of philosophical dialectics due to the unfortunate fact that "the journey is the destination". Enlightenment philosophy, with its privileged conceptuality, is probably what makes some academics take flight to remote and improbable planets instead of deconstruction or fantastic fictions, which, ever so often, recall the tedious reality outside. As to Pollock, Leja claims: "Yet there is an aspect of his work that undermines any attempt to treat figuration and abstraction as contradictory. The contrivance, simplification, and conceptual inadequacy of the opposition are crystallized in Pollock's paintings. The identification of a work as "abstract" hinges upon evidence that figuration deliberately has been suppressed, controlled, veiled, erased, expunged, etc., from the work. A painting's status as an abstraction is contingent upon figuration's hovering at the margins, as difference or absence; its eschewal must be verified continually at every level and in every corner of the picture. In Pollock's abstract paintings, figuration's possibility is so close, so palpable, its functioning as absence so inconclusive, that it becomes ironically a ghostly presence, an irrepressible suspicion strong enough to jeopardize the picture's classification as abstraction. The paintings invite consideration of the abstraction/figuration issue, and thus frustrate efforts to resolve it; this dynamic simultaneously *animates* the pictures and asserts the impossibility of simple resolutions".[174] The complexity of Pollock's paintings is the precondition to figuration, a coming forth of the image which relies on an approximation that can be valued qualitatively and not quantitatively; the loss in translation cannot be measured logically. Thus, the figuration is an *abstraction*, a bricolage like the laying of the bricks extracted from the space-time conditions in which we exist, an extraction bending the space-time continuum in Pollock's emphasis on translation.

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[174] Leja, Michael. *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993. pp. 286.

The above citation effectively undermines Leja's observation about the relation between figure and pictorial field: "The lines forming the figural architecture are freely cut short or overextended; they are converted into non-figurative lines and allowed to wander or to merge with the other elements of the scene. This gives the production of the figure a causal, automatic, spontaneous character, a character contradicted by the fact that the figure is built into the pictorial field and structures it".[175] My thesis inverts his reading, which takes its centre from the figure, by shifting the focus to the frame. With reference to *khōra* – the *bete noire* with hooves instead of feet – who leaves her deep imprints marring the absolute mastery implicit in the Subject and upsetting the calling forth of the structuring principle, I shall argue that the pictorial field effuses the figure of the moon woman, structured in accordance to the demands of reading. The non-figurative lines emerging from the pictorial field, framed by the notion of aesthetic representation, roam and converge into the figure of the title. Pollock's painting renders visible the double movements of deconstruction, movements which are both Leja's reading and mine. And "the moon woman's head is represented by a black crescent shape facing the opposite direction from a small crescent contained within it, which is punctured by the oval eye"[176] is an aesthetic performance of the subversion of the "I" in Subjectivity, symbolised by the "eye" of the small crescent, by inscribing it in an inverse manner within the black crescent of the moon woman's head. *The Moon Woman Cuts the Circle* is selected to complement *Number 7* for it can be interpreted as a critique of the human condition – the goal is reached only with a decisive cut across the gap between the universal and the particular, a cut projected and impressed with the force of passion. Pollock revolutionises the phallic dream by giving the woman, read as the figure of *archi-écriture*, the ability to project her desires into multiple addendums, the

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[175] Ibid. pp. 288.
[176] Ibid. pp. 287.

labyrinthine paths of writing, without masculine insemination. She, like the figure in *Number 7*, has within her masculine traits. However, this idea is not and cannot be the Immaculate Conception of the Platonic ideal for it requires the merging of earth and heaven, the dark side of the moon and the sun, the Dionysian and the Apollonian, in order to launch this writing machine. What needs attention is this machine which enables an *abstraction* of ideas from the art objects, the word "abstraction" defined as extraction – the *violation* that Lyotard speaks of in "Gesture and Commentary" – as well as conceptualisation. Experimental creation, whether as critical exegesis or aesthetic production, is, then, an ethical approach to singularity, an encounter preceded by *openness* to alterity. Kris Kelvin's eventual response to the ocean, a "sublime sentiment" toward the overwhelming inability to unravel the cryptic phenomenon, an emotion that is both fear and acquiescence, is significant when the fiction is read as a dramatisation of mankind's epistemological pursuit of the Absolute. Instead of a violent protestation against that which is always already a compromised contact, *Solaris* is an avowal of the intrinsic play in *mimēsis*.

The Magic Symbols Giving Us the Spice of Life: Images and Numbers Revised

As a way of introducing this book of self-rejoining, self-escaping repetition, as a way of designating the strange logic that will be articulated in it, "this time at last" thus does not point to some unique ultimate accomplishment but also to a displacement and a rift, to the open system consisting of the repetitions of rifts.

Whence the continued impossibility of choosing one's place and the even greater difficulty of getting one's bearings in it. Yet the impossibility thus mounted is never simply stated, no more than it was ever simply *shown*. It is not declared merely as a *theorem*, even though, on occasion, in the form of reinscribed logicomathematical statements (Hilbert, Frege, Wittgenstein, Bourbaki, etc.), the latent proposition is sometimes roused through the enormous condemned margins of our domestic library (Islamic, Mexican, and Indian mythologies, the Zohar, the Tao Te King; Empedocles, Nicholas of Cusa, Bruno, Marx, Nietzsche, Lenin, Artaud, Mao Tse-tung, Bataille, etc.; and within another margin, ore internal or less visible, effaced: Lucretius, Dante, Pascal, Leibniz, Hegel, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and others). The impossibility is *practiced*.

Jacques Derrida

"The Trigger"
Dissemination

In the frame of the text, one side of the square, one surface of the cube will represent this nonempirical error, this transcendental illusion. More simply put, it will represent: it will be the opening to the classical representative scene. In representing representation, it will represent and reflect it in a very singular mirror. It will speak representation, referring its discourse through a kind of "square mouth," "oblivion closed by the frame."

Jacques Derrida
"The Apparatus or Frame"
Dissemination

Interpretation works very much like the membranous layer that covers our body – the skin which divides the inner self from one's outer environment allows the inward and outward flows between self and the other giving to substantial permutations. This reading of translation is supported by Mark Edward Lewis who states that "… I will examine ways in which the body formed one element of a larger whole, with *the skin figuring primarily not as a boundary but as an interface from which certain energies and substances were projected and through which others are absorbed*".[177] The critical term for the above description is "transubstantiation". At this turn of the new century, a pretext that warrants a new reading of poetics which is Paul de Man's term for translation: *dao* and *khōra*, on the surface, may appear to coincide with the late Qing's interpretation of the polarity, East and West, but *dao* is (dis)joined to *khōra* in a different way here. As the third kind, they supersede polarities and the categories of gender and genre. The third genera are read numerically as conjoined twins, the "One" of the East, the Grand Uniformity of *Tai Ch'i* and the "One" of the West, the *quasi*[178]-transcendental *Khōra or Différance or Trace et cetera*, both primed, capitalised and stringed with the reshaping process here, the weakest links infused with the strength conferred by their adoptability and adaptability. Then, they are split into the "two" of the East and "two" of the West making the four of a square,

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[177] Lewis, Mark Edward. *The Construction of Space in Early China*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2006. pp. 13. Emphasis mine.
[178] Dictionary.com. "Quasi" means "resembling, seeming, virtual" and "as if" from Latin *quam* "as" and *si* "if".

a counterbalance that eventually sees the square expanding to the volume of a cube and, then, to a sphere. *Reversing* the eternal return of the same, the process is repeated in the opposing direction. It is the very violence of writing itself which allows this manoeuvre of mine but violence acknowledged to be temporary as one can never completely control that which is beyond the self. According to Derrida in his reading of Sollers's *Numbers*: "While we remain attentive, fascinated, glued to *what* presents itself, we are unable to see presence as such, since presence does not present itself, no more than does the visibility of the visible, the audibility of the audible, the medium of the "air," which disappears in the act of allowing to appear".[179] This "air" that mediates the elemental appearance is not "a simple medium – nor is the "air" (this will be remembered since one can only say it, not see it) a univocal signification – but the opening carved out of it is in fact a closed opening, neither quite open nor quite closed. It is a false exit. A mirror. And it is not just any mirror. It should be added that this mirror will have been turned toward the back of the stage, "toward the other three sides," offering us only the side of its tain".[180] Thus, the invisible fourth wall is synonymous to the mirror reflecting the performance in an inverted manner but, nonetheless, giving us the four-sided figure of a square – the (im)perfect surface of Derrida's *papier machine*.

Haun Saussy's insightful extrapolation of *Shijing* (the *Book of Odes*) also makes referrals to the first part of the *Odes* entitled *feng* or "Airs" also known as the first of the Six Arts[181] used "to influence move, teach, and transform (for the superiors); for the inferiors, it is to persuade and admonish the superior".[182] Confucius's teaching-through-transformation provides a façade of

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[179] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans and intro. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 314.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Saussy, Haun. *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetics*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993. pp 79. Saussy informs us that the first is *feng* ["airs'], the second is *fu* ["exposition"], the third is *pi* ["comparison"], the fourth is *hsing* ["allusion" or "evocation"], the fifth is *ya* ["elegantiae"] the sixth is sung ["laudes"].
[182] Ibid. pp. 80.

harmony even if there were friction between the hierarchical rungs. The conflict is disguised with the grace and decorum of poetics. Thus, Chinese aesthetics are shown to be closely tied to the political with *The Prefaces*, written sometime around the middle Han period, which are known as "Appended Verbalizations",[183] *corrections appended* to *Shijing* emphasising shape and form (*hsing-jung*) – readings endeavouring to capture authorial intent although ultimately defacing the lyrical verses for the propriety of rituals or customs (also called *feng*). *The Great Prefaces* illustrate the importance of tone, quoting the "Record of Music" from the *Record of Ritual* that feeling is moved inwardly but expressed outwardly as speech and giving us the sensorial dimension of Chinese poetics but senses ordered in accordance to rites. But the crisis unveils itself with every reception as contexts and agendas change.

Derrida's citation of Mallarmé's *Crise de vers* (*Crisis of verse*) points to the multiple little *i*s: "He who grants a place, or the primary place, to this function can recognize therein the current event: we are witnessing, as the century nears its finale not as it was in the previous one, an upheaval; but, far from the public square, a certain disquiet stirs the veil in the temple with significant crinklings [*plis*] and, a little bit, its rending… With its critical, pointed, sharpened dot, the *i* here signs the exquisite crisis "literature" is going through the significant crinkles and folds which – the hymen again – tear it "a little bit" without tearing it, fastening down the tissue".[184] Coincidentally, Saussy's reading of Ode 6, "*T'ao-yao*", refers to the number of *i* in the song (noted as a wedding song with imperatives given to the bride by Marcel Granet and a song that insists on the "general pattern" of change premised upon nature by Yeh):

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[183] Gu, Ming Dong. *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing: A Route to Hermeneutics and Open Poetics*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005. pp. 36.

[184] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans and intro. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 237.

Perhaps the imperative is meant to counter another imperative. If so, that first imperative is not far to see. For behind the approving comment "she will order well her house" lurks the whole machinery of exemplarity and royal sagehood. The gloss on "*i ch'i*" …" adopted by Karlgren's translation ("she will order well her chamber and house") has a prestigious ancient source in the "Great Learning" but it seems to have remained a dormant or peripheral reading until the nineteenth century. For a commentator such as Ch'en Huan (1786-1863), the reading "she will order …" justifies the preface and *keeps the queen in the poems*, it rebuts the skepticism of readers like Chu Hsi. The original Mao commentary to lines three and four, however, only paraphrases *i ch'i shih-chia* meaning "suited to having a household, [because of] not having missed the proper time [for being married]." We are meant to hear an echo of the preface in the word *i* ("suited," "apt," "fitting"), then – *that will account for the poem's existence and give it the moral character of a reward*. The bride is worth (*i*) commemorating because she has chosen to be married at the proper (*i*) time, in emulation of that virtuous queen and in obedience to the dictates of the former kings.[185]

The focus of the Pre*faces* is on female propriety for patrilineal purposes, another face to Western traditional emphasis on feminine chastity, an emphasis implying the place of the feminine. And the order imperative to the well-being of her household demonstrates how Confucian teachings permeate from the macrocosmic rituals necessary to the running of the empire to the nucleus of Chinese society. If the queen is kept in the poems only if she behaves, then the poems accidentally show up the encrypted secret upon which they rely for their existence. As a tribute to my two founding fathers, the recreant reading of the two and a half must bring to the fore the

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[185] Saussy, Haun. *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetics*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993. pp. 112. Emphasis mine.

encompassing capacity of Derrida's *khōra* and *dao*, which I must qualify here as the motivation for Derrida's writing more so than Lacan's preoccupation with the phallus as a figure of power and the raising of castration-as-lack to the transcendental signifier in his earlier seminars shows the implicit value given to the magic rod. Derrida's *Dissemination* can be said to counter the privilege accorded to the phallus as the transcendental signifier.

Derrida's reading of Mallarmé's *Crise de vers* suggests that "Literature, all along, in its exquisite crisis, shivers and flaps its wings, and goes trembling through the great divestment of winter. I found myself wondering at first what might have prompted a title as strange as *Crise de vers*. Sensing that it harbours virtual associations, in varied or toyed with certain elements. Unfailingly, the *i* and the *r* remained: *crise de nerfs* or *hystère* [hysterics], '*bise d' hiver*" or "*brise d' hiver*" [winter winds] (cf. the play on "winds" and the winter atmosphere in *Sa fosse est fermée* [*Her Grave is Closed*], added to "*bris de verre*" [sliver of glass], which retains a glint of so many other Mallarméan "*brisures*" [breaks], reflecting a certain "*brise de mystère*" [whiff of mystery] (Yes, without the folding back of the paper and the undersides this installs, the shadow dispersed in the black lettering would present no reason to emanate like a whiff of mystery, on the surface, in the parting prodded by the finger)".[186] The grave of the feminine is reopened and unfolded, casting a shadow on the black lettering, akin to the eclipse of the sun, a circle of blinding light covered by another circle of darkness; the sun god is effaced momentarily but waits to make his reappearance ever so brilliant and scorching. The whiff of mystery recollects the use of the allegory to tie fragrance to virtue in *Shijing* and Lacan's use of the olfactory sense in his discussion on the fetish. Perhaps what bestows mystery to the feminine is also that which

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[186] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans and intro. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University f Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 280.

assigns mysteries to *Yijing*, a text whose hexagammes "appear to many people to be more puzzling than 'a riddle *wrapped* in a mystery inside an enigma'".[187]

Even as the *Prefaces* to *Shijing* attempt to cage the feminine, Mallarmé's poetics give ferine release to the hymeneal figure. The Mallarméan "recess" in "The Double Session" provides Derrida the referral needed to gesture to the question of the liminary, not the luminary, the space between the fold and the re-fold of the hymen: "Between the two, there is confusion and distinction ("exquisite confusion"), the hymen, the dance of the penna (in the footnotes, there is a wordplay on "penna" panning from the "plume" of the circling bird to "butterfly wings" to "pen-is", which is, perhaps, a reverse recognition of the minute tomb enclosing and producing jet-black ink), the flight of the Idea … The hesitations of the "veil" [voile] the "flight" [vol], the "leap" [voltige], as they condense down toward the point of an idea or of a dancer's toes … are always, *in addition*, descriptions/inscriptions of the structure and movement of the literary textile, a "hesitation" turning into writing" (author's emphasis and mine). And the "pirouette" gives to " a certain lateral movement, in turning incessantly on its point, the hieroglyph, the sign, the cipher moves away from its "here and now," … the other point toward which it continually drifts, the other pirouette that, in each vaulting spin, in the whirls of flying tissue, is instantly remarked. … The "cipher of pirouettes prolonged toward another motif" thus suggests the line – which unites and also divides – between two "words" or "signifiers," for example between two occurrences of the signifier "pirouette" which, from one text to the other and first of all in the blank space of the inter-text, entrain, entail, and encipher each other, moving like silhouettes, cut out like black shadows against a white background, profiles without faces, sketches forever presented askew, turning the shafts of a wheel, the invisible axis of

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[187] Wei, Tat. *An Exposition of the I-Ching or the Book of Changes*. Hong Kong: Dai Nippon Printing Co., (H.K.) Ltd., 1977. The foreword to the text.

writing, a potter's wheel endlessly spinning away. *This mute writing, like that of a circling bird, rises up, removes its point at the very instant it jabs*".[188] First, the Mallarméan writing spins in "pirouettes" across texts. Then, it transforms to an encircling like a bird, perhaps the *peng* in *Zhuangzi*, since what describes the hieroglyphs can be read as describing too the Chinese ideographic graph, and disappearing the moment it inscribes. It leaves the invisible impression and becomes the *kun* of the celestial waters, comparable to Hegel's analogy of water as the elemental equivalent of semiotics in Derrida's epigraph to "The Pit and the Pyramid" and Derrida's mention of the lake (*lac*) in "Telepathy" whose calm waters covers the unfamiliar, the non-excisable at the centre inversely mirroring the Weiming Lake so comforting to the protagonist, Diane Weiliang. Water, then, is overwhelming in its aggressive force and breathtaking in its stillness – a figure of the lady of the lake which avers the idiomatic, "still water runs deep", for Diane Wei Liang writes a confessional novel depicting a maturation that relies on understanding the frailty of human lives and a forgiveness paradoxically self-redemptive, overcoming the catastrophic impact of the unsuccessful revolution of 1989.

Naas provides a passage to Derrida's thoughts on the apocalypse which is cited in full here: "To put one's paws on it, or else to sniff out the territory, to follow the traces or *vibrations* in order to follow and "think" our resistance. In "Tympan" Derrida asks: "What is the specific resistance of philosophical discourse to deconstruction?" Two responses are proposed: hierarchy and envelopment. But is there a resistance specific to a lake, to a *lac*, to all the words in *l a c*? There are, no doubt, several, from the androgynous Claude, who goes both ways, to something that resists at the centre of all our *reflection*… Although nothing is more foreign to Derrida than a lake, there is, at the centre of the lake, something even more foreign than the foreign,

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[188] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans and intro. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 238-241. Emphasis mine.

something caught in the *laces* of all these words in *l a c*, *une cale* or *un cal* in *le lac*, an original *caluqe*, an originary tracing or transparency on the surface that ruins every origin by doubling, every reflection by echoing it, a *cal* wedged into the eye of all foresight and all revelation: the prophecy returning to itself from the future of its own to-come".[189] This bewitching citation of Derrida's work within the metaphysical tradition requires an addition: the resistance against the tradition comes in several forms only because Derrida's focus is on the singularity of the specific. And in response to the question: "But is there a resistance specific to a lake, to a *lac*, to all the words in *l a c*?", the thesis foregrounds the fact that *l a c* are not words but letters and, perhaps, the specific resistance to which Derrida refers *is the letter and not the word*, encouraging thoughts on anagrammes, signifiers, antonyms, synonyms, homonyms, etc.

The lake is foreign to Derrida for its supposed clarity and transparency; what is implied by the phrase, "there is", is illusory. That which is more foreign than the alien at the centre, the othered of the West, is the Lacanian hard kernel to which Žižek alludes time and again. When A.C. Graham calls forth "the law of the excluded third" in his reading of Zhuangzi's "Seeing Things as Equal", he opens the discussion on what is right or wrong with the notion of identity: "that anything is either X or not X",[190] is relative to the context and the speaking individual. Zhuangzi, contrary to most critique, is not a radical relativist. He calls to question the notion of identity because the separation and classification of things imply preference, interest and desire: "Now suppose that I speak of something, and do not know whether it is a kind with the "it" in question or not of a kind. If what is of a kind and what is not are grouped together as a kind with

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[189] Naas, Michael. *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. pp. 90-91.
[190] Graham, A.C. "Chuang Tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal". *A Companion to Angus C. Graham's Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Harold D. Roth. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 203. pp. 112.

one another there is no longer any difference from an "other".[191] This citation is pertinent to my thesis for its focus on "species" and it is used as an example to refute the charge of nihilism against Zhuangzi. His teachings affirm being in its multiplicity. To serve the intersection of *dao* and *khōra*, which affirms both identity and difference, the thesis also defends Laozi's Daoist teachings from the above accusation, using the recently discovered manuscripts of Ma Wang Tui. Found in December 1973 in a Han tomb at Ma Wang Tui, the two manuscripts are named *chia pen*, 'A', and *yi pen*, 'B', texts that differ from the transmitted ones in crucial ways. *Contra* D. C. Lau, the differences read in relation to Zhuangzi's "Inner Chapters" is of paramount importance to the thetic arguement that the Daoist teachings of Zhuangzi and Laozi affirm the third kind. In Lau's discussion of the differences of the conventional versions and the newly discovered ones, he notes the use of *fu*, the name of Emperor Chao, instead of *pu* to signify the negative. This substitution, according to him, "is of some grammatical interest. As is well known, although both *fu* and *pu* are alike in being negatives, implicit in *fu* is a *third person object* [the *It*]. Thus, by substituting *pu* for *fu* the line is blurred between transitive and intransitive constructions".[192] The concepts of the transitive and the intransitive when put under erasure have grammatical significance in terms of subjectivity and its relation to the object in epistemological terms – the third-person object is subsumed and appropriated by the first (the subject and agent of the statement) supporting the argument of the politics of representation; this implication also ties in with Lacan's notion of "the objectively subjective", a thinking of "reality" as *constituted* from perspectives.

As Graham suggests: "Chuang Tzu believes that to distinguish alternatives is always to miss something out (¶10: "The displaying of It and Other is the reason why something is missing

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[191] Ibid. pp. 113.
[192] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. D.C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 163

from the Way"). To show this he takes as example "beginning." … There is "having begun," there is "not having begun." The description or its negation does apply to every concrete thing, which has either already begun or not yet begun. But if we negate the negation we do not return to the affirmation, but arrive at a third possibility: "There is 'not yet having not yet begun.'" This brings us nearer to what the two alternatives left out, the Tao which at no time in the past has not yet begun. But the "not yet" still implies a beginning in the future, and we are caught in an infinite regress which never quite brings us to what neither had nor will have a beginning".[193]

This discussion on "beginning" is reminiscent of Derrida's statement of a past that has never been present and what he says about the "beginning" which opposes linear time: "We must begin *wherever we are* and the thought of the trace, which cannot not take the scent into account, has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. *Wherever we are*: in a text already where we believe ourselves to be".[194] The author's emphasis is crucial to my thesis which insists that the appointment of the Titans, although concerning time, ought to be thought spatially as well, a mapping which is performed in the first chapter. Moreover, Derrida's indirect referral to space as that which initiates the thinking of being and writing can be used to refute Saussy's quarrel with Sollers's and Foucault's writings on Chineseness. As to the rather enigmatic assertion about scent, it may have something to do with Lacan's allusion to smell – the odour of the fetish, the pungency of *soullove*; the temptation to make a comparison here could not be resisted and a comparison stretched to Saussy's question of Chinese allegory: "Whatever it is that is "true both literally and metaphorically" about Ch'ü Yuan's use of the word "fragrant" is true in different ways in Chinese and English. Yu's comment that the phrase is to be taken

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[193] Graham, A.C. "Chuang Tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal". *A Companion to Angus C. Graham's Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Harold D. Roth. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 203. pp 113.
[194] Derrida, Jacques. " … The Dangerous Supplement …". *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 107.

both literally and metaphorically proposes a riddle to the English reader, for we can do that only with by constructing a new idiolect in which smells have a moral sense, one in which "fragrant" and "virtue" may join in previously unheard of combinations".[195] This, I contest, especially if the English reader has some understanding of Lacanian psychoanalysis. What is morality to the Chinese may not be entirely the same as the Western concept of morality but the fundamentals are similar. The Chinese *li*, according to Leibniz, is reason, the ground of all nature: "From *li* emanates the five virtues of Piety, Justice, Religion, Prudence, and Faith".[196] Akin to the West, that which is considered exterior to morality is disfavoured as illegitimate and improper.

The ancient Greeks had their mystical rites, observances similar to Confucian customs, both of which are attempts to rei(g)n in the threat of overwhelming chaos, now corroborated by the discovery of quantum chaos. The 1963 Nobel Prize winner for physics, Eugene Paul Wigner, known also as "The Silent Genius", expanded Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, a principle of correspondence, with an exposition on nonlinear dynamic systems. While deterministic chaos (the word "chaos" in chaos theory is used in an unconventional sense as the theory assumes a certain order underlying what appears to be random occurrences) upholds the cause and effect of the sciences with chaotic systems; the Lorenz attractor (named after Edward Lorenz, one of the pioneers of chaos theory) gives rise to a pattern that looks like the wings of a butterfly, upset later by the feminised set of coordinates called the *Julia set* expounding the existence of *strange repellers* that results in fractal structures. Wigner brings to this methodical research a supernal approach by scrutinising errors which exponentially accrue due to minute shifts of the initial

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[195] Saussy, Haun. *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetics*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993. pp. 16.
[196] See Haun Saussy's *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic*. pp. 39. *Li* can be translated as rites as in the Confucian rites. If Plato believes in the Form of the Good, Confucius, too, believes in the forms of the good as expressed in these rites. Morality, according to the Confucian teachings, is humanistic as noted by man Chinese scholars and Western sinologists.

conditions, later known as "the butterfly effect" – a scientific description that recollects the nominal destabilisation described by Derrida's *différance* since chaotic systems are known to be topologically mixing. With the advent of theories of complexity, it is discovered that large numbers of independent components interact and there are multiple pathways by which nonlinear dynamic systems can evolve and unfold over time. The dynamic networks of multiplicity also mean that boundaries are indeterminate with higher orders of emergent behaviour.

The typographical topography below calls to question Saussy's critique of Sollers's and Foucault's readings of Chinese writing as opposed to alphabetic writing. The difference depends on the shift of a stroke making the scientific calculation irrational – a difference so minute that the hypothesis has yet to be an unproblematic articulation in mathematical formulae. The sameness in terms of a point is vastly different microscopically – a cusp deferring and differing owing to the many strands of strings constituting the angle – that makes any calculation, whether the parallax, chaos, complexity or strings and superstrings theories, fraught with errors invisible to the naked eye.
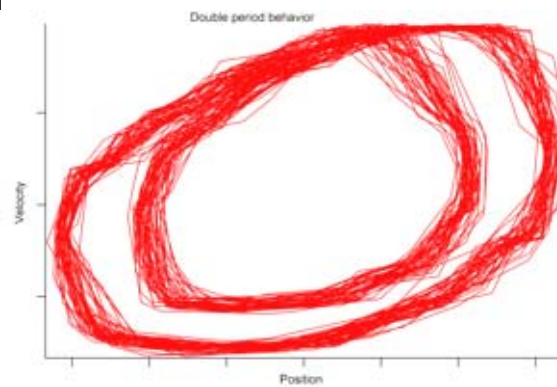
The Lorenz attractor   Double period motion

The mathematical mapping of any point along the *x-y* axes ranging from 0 to 2π to $2x\text{-}y + a$ (an example of an initial equation) whereby *a* (noting the possible connection to the Derridean

différance) can take any value displays a particular sensitivity to the initial conditions making the calculations of *a*/2π illogical. The initial conditions are fields of differential equations and, in this case, analogous to the differential khoral or daoist relations. Significant to the above calculation is the mathematical crisis of the initial equation in which an ordinary differential equation together with a specified vaue gives us an initial value problem. This owes much to the doubling of the first coordinate, thus making an incalculable and unpredictable reencircling and constituting a two-dimensional *torus* which, in scientific terms, is called the double period motion figured above – a donut-shaped figure that is produced by the revolution of a circle about an exterior line lying in its plane (it is of importance to note that *torus* means the receptacle of a flower as well) known as limit cycles which produce attractors. In order to model a system which, by the way, appears random although it is calculatively deterministic, involves solving an initial problem.

Chaos theory is later extrapolated though the complexity theory whereby complex systems have structures extremely vulnerable to any transformation of the initial conditions and tiny disturbances can result in vastly varied reactions. This has to do with the large number of independent interacting components or the multiple pathways the system can evolve. Thus, the limit cycles become complicated producing *strange attractors* such as the Lorenz attractor. Complex processes are difficult to comprehend and verify because of the differentiating element in *function* and *design* which evolve constantly and unfold gradually. This verifies Laozi's saying: "The way that can be spoken of / Is not the constant way/ The name that can be named / Is not the constant name".[197] The two-dimensional torus can develop due to the complexity of the system corroborating, in a way, Lacan's psychoanalytic-philosophical discussion of the flattened

[197] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. D. C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001. pp. 5.

Borromean knots in "Rings of String".[198] Lacan explains to us that the expression "threefold point" does not describe the idea of a point well: "This point is not constituted here by the convergence of these lines, if nothing else because there are two different points – a right and a left".[199] What Lacan says about the lack of an inter-course between the two points ushers in strings theories; the left-moving strings and the right-moving ones, we are told, do not interact and they operate without any consideration for the other. Lacan, then, continues: "What the Boromean knot demonstrates is not the fact that it is made of a ring of string, around which it suffices to bend another ring like two ear such that a third, linking the two loops, cannot become unbuckled due to the first ring. It is a fact that, of these three rings, any one of them can function as the first and last, the third functioning thus as *the intermediate link*, that is, as the bent ears".[200] More will be said about the bent ears later in the dissertation.

Coincidentally, Wigner's later turn to *Verdānta* philosophy is, perhaps, significant as Daoism, Buddhism and Hinduism are known collectively as the Dharmic religions because they share certain similarities based mainly on the idea of *dharma*, the "natural law" notably not the positive natural law of the West. Etymologically, the word means "the end of the Vedas" with *veda* meaning knowledge and *anta* "conclusion" as well as "core", "essence" and "inside". The etymological findings of *Verdānta* philosophy corresponds to what Derrida says in "On an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy", namely that what concludes knowledge is already lodged in the inner core of the epistemological configuration, the aporia; in other words, the finishing line is already "programmed" in the beginning of the project. The aporetic locus as a knot is what ends and begins philosophy since every beginning entails an ending and every

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[198] Lacan, Jacques. *On Female Sexuality: the limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972–1973: Encore the Seminars of Jacques Lacan Book XX*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999. pp. 118-136.
[199] Ibid. pp. 132.
[200] Ibid. pp. 133.

creation implies a certain destruction. Perhaps, *Verdānta* philosophy corroborates Wigner's findings that the laws of physics can only be measured *in relation to human consciousness*. Primordial chaos, *Χάος* or *Khaos* to the Greeks, a vast, dark void of space (although it must be noted that when Derrida refers to chaos, he alludes to the legend of Gaia in Greek mythologies), homonymous to *Koine* or "house" – heightened here as an ironic reversal of the idea of home as shelter against external chaos – and, *Yuan Ch'i*, an undifferentiated cosmic mass, is to the Chinese that which gives to the structuration of the earth. Home, then, is figured here as the boundless ocean, specifically the Solarian Ocean, with the writer as one of its rhetorical revelers whose play involves the yellow oceanic filaments that Berton sees or the string-like strokes of Pollock's painting *Number 7* correlating to the string and superstring theories of recent sciences. Overriding the particle theory which posits the elemental particle as zero-dimensional or point-like, the string is a one-dimensional element with resonant or harmonic characteristics. The particle is known now as a string with a Planck length, a desirable feature for this dissertation as it gives to the Planck force – effects of quantum gravity. In other words, Derrida, Lacan, Lem and Pollock can be said to have anticipated string theories in their own creative ways. Of more import to this thesis are the heterotic strings, *peculiar* hybrids of closed and open strings, one left moving and the other right moving *and interacting with each other*. Closed strings have no endpoints making them topographically circular figures while open strings have two points of conclusions equivalent to that of line intervals. It is noteworthy that all systems have closed strings but not necessarily open strings. Some strings, possessing what is known as "orientation", which can be thought of as an internal arrow (the Greek *kairos*?) are distinct from the "unoriented" strings with no arrows. They spread out to a two-dimensional surface known as *the worldsheet*, analogous to the one-dimensional worldline traced out by a point particle. Within

quantum mechanics, these strings give to probability waves and interference patterns which result in *a particle spin*. The membranous worldsheets are further extrapolated in the M-theory, the "M" possibly standing for membrane, matrix, mystery, mother, or *a master theory*, otherwise known as theory of everything, coincidentally featured in one of Lem's science fictions. According to nonlinear dynamic scientists, the physical universe comprises energy and matter and nonlinear dynamic systems, a variation of quantum gravity suggests that the whole universe can be seen as a two-dimensional information structure "painted" on a boundary surface. The three-dimensional world we perceive is theoretically illusory; in other words, the worldsheets with their weave-like designs provide three-dimensional information added with the fourth-dimensional one of time. In addition, the word, "matrix", implies a web-like weave, these string-like substances interweaves to become membranes much like the skin, here, the diaphanous siik re-covering the open grave

of the feminine:
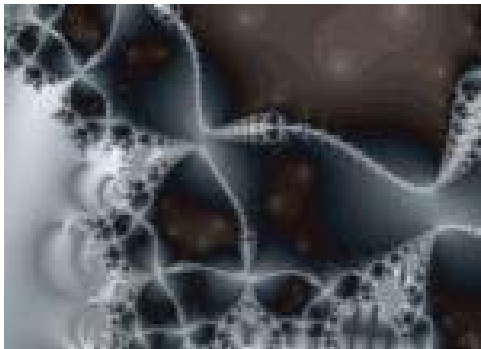
An Image of String Theory   An Image on Superstring Theory
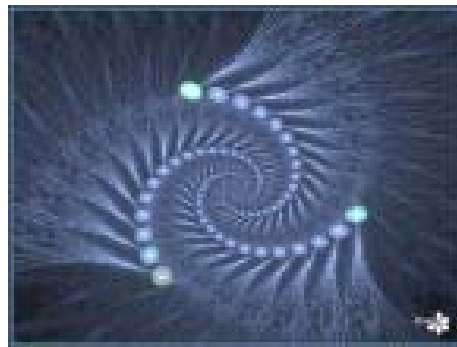
What, then, appears to us are matrices which involve our cognition so as to gain significance. Citing Žižek is crucial to understanding the importance of these matrices: "The Wachowski brothers' hit *Matrix* (1999) brought this logic to its climax: the material reality we all experience

and see around us is a virtual one, generated and co-ordinated by a gigantic mega-computer to which we are attached; when the hero… awakens into 'real reality', he sees a desolate landscape littered with burnt out ruins – what remains of Chicago after a global war. The resistance leader, Morpheus, utters the ironic greeting: 'Welcome to the desert of the real'".[201] While one may think that *being* unplugged means that one can gain access to the Real – a current postmodern fascination – but this location, as Lacan suggests, means that the life-support of the individual malfunctions. Neo's decision to join the Resistance is not just one that unplugs him from the mega-computer; on the contrary, it is a choice that makes him plugged to the Real in/of the Other. Its (over)proximity may cause a sense of revulsion in some but the Real of the Other attracts precisely because it is that which makes us impassioned, a catalyst to the velocity of the drive. The paradox manifests when we realise that the Real is sustained as the nightmarish haunting of some catastrophic encounter, constituting the backdrop to our minds.

The catastrophic foreign infiltration into China made the Chinese aware of the dangers of lagging behind technologically (it is crucial to note that in *Dissemination*, Derrida speaks of the double Greek meanings for *technē*, the artistic as well as technical knowledge, the mythological and the analytic in one word) which also meant economic and political subordination. Instead of just translating modernity, the thesis teases out another thread from David Wang's reading of late Qing's fantastic fictions, especially *The New Story of the Stone* by Wu Jianren. His statement on intertextuality is crucial to the argument here: "Wu Jianren works within the fascinating framework first laid out by Cao Xueqin; he puts a traditional romance into the new context of a scientific utopia, while weaving clues of historical decline into the *tableau* of an ancient creation

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[201] Žižek, Slavoj. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*. London and New York: Verso, 2002. pp. 15.

myth".[202] This recalls not just Yang Xiaobin's mention of "Wang Shizhen's conception of *shenyun* (spiritual diapason)" but "epitomized in Wang Guowei's theory of *jingjie*, or *jing*, meaning "the scene" (from Sanskrit *visaya*, referring to a cosmic domain that incorporates spirituality), which Wang divides into "the scene with self" and "the scene without the self" … greatly influenced by Schopenhauer's philosophical attempt to purge the self of desire, Wang Guowei regarded, though implicitly, "the scene without the self," which suggested a forgetting of the self or a questioning of the authenticity of the subjective projection, as superior to "the scene with self". In both cases, nevertheless, *jingjie/jing* referred to an objective realm empathized with subjectivity without being directly modified by emotional or intentional diction".[203] Besides, being (dis)connected to Lacan's conception of subjectivity – the subject of enunciation (the scene with self) and the enunciation of subject (the scene without self), the above also brings to mind the untimely meditations of Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *What is Philosophy?*: their critical approach is that of *setting up a plane* (scientifically akin to the worldsheet of string theory) where the questioning of crises is enacted, albeit irresolvable with the historical concepts under scrutiny, a horizontal gesture also found in Derrida's readings of his forefathers, Heidegger and Levinas, the very tradition of the crow-barred response. However, this interrogation manifests the value of the history of ideas when "we evaluate not only the historical novelty of the concepts created by the philosopher but also the power of their becoming when they pass into one another".[204] Their discussions on "criticism" echoes Derrida's "The First Session" where the *double scene of deconstruction* is discussed with the structural arrangement

[202] Wang, David, "Translating Modernity". *Translation and Creation: Readings of Western Literature in Early Modern China, 1840-1918*. Ed. David Pollard. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997. pp. 322. Emphasis mine.
[203] Yang, Xiaobin. *The Chinese Postmodern: Trauma and Irony in Chinese Avant-garde Fiction*. Ann Arbor: The University f Michigan, 2002. pp. 9-10.
[204] Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burch ell. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. pp. 32.

of Plato's text from *Philebus* (occupying the major part of the page) and Mallárme's *Mimique* (a poetic minutiae relegated to the south-east corner of the page) , a double scene demonstrating the act of reading as a rewriting prompted by the vibrant/vibrating rapport of the double science of *mythos* and *logos* in *archi-écriture*, a secret itinerary shared by Chinese literatures concerned with the *weilai* (the future) of China but given the impetus with a revisitation of the past: "Cao Xueqin's classic is one about deciphering – translating the mysterious text inscribed in the Stone. Wu makes a final hermetic gesture indicating that the sequel to *The Story of the Stone* cannot be fully understood without Western cultural resources. *The presence of the mysterious foreign inscription implies that the knowledge of English would at last give entry to Cao's labyrinthine text* (a phaeton crossing over to Borges's *Labyrinths* or contrariwise). Not unlike Jia Baoyu who must travel through several temporal zones to win access to Heaven, Wu's ideal reader apparently must travel through several linguistic zones before grasping the final significance of the Stone",[205] an acerbic significance implied by the ironic overtones of the worship of foreign gods but nonetheless important to the reading of Chineseness since the inside or the "essence" (a reminder of *Verdānta* philosophy) of the idea is always already contaminated by the outside of the limit.

The Stranger within the Patriarchal Mansion: The Umbra of the Sun

The centre is at the centre of totality, and yet, since the centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its centre *elsewhere*.

> Jacques Derrida
> Structure, Sign and Play in the
> Discourses of the Human

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[205]. Wang, David, "Translating Modernity". *Translation and Creation: Readings of Western Literature in Early Modern China, 1840-1918.* Ed. David Pollard. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997. pp. 326. Emphasis mine.

Sciences

Logos is thus *resource*. One must turn to it, and not merely when the solar source is *present* and risks burning the eyes if stared at; one has also to turn away toward logos when the sun seems to withdraw during its eclipse. Dead, extinguished, or hidden, that star is more dangerous than ever.

We will let these yarns of suns and sons spin on for a while. Up to now we have only followed this line so as to move from logos to the father, so as to tie speech to the *kurios*, the master, the lord, another name given in the *Republic* to the good-sun-capital-father (508a). Later, within the same tissue, within the same texts, we will draw on other filial filaments, pull the strings once more, and witness the weaving or unraveling of other designs.

Jacques Derrida
Pharmacia
Dissemination

A feeling for which I have no name, has taken possession of my soul – a sensation which will admit of no analysis, to which the lessons of by-gone times are inadequate, and for which I fear futurity itself will offer no key. To a mind constituted like my own, the latter consideration is an evil. I shall never – I know that I shall never – be satisfied with regard to the nature of my conceptions. Yet it is not wonderful that these conceptions are indefinite, since they have their origins in sources so utterly novel. A new sense – a new entity is added to my soul.

Edgar Allen Poe
MS. Found in a Bottle

The extract from Poe's short fiction directs our attention again to the supposed split between the intelligible and the sensible. On the surface, the narrator appears to be self-critical but the ironic tone indicates a latent text at variance to the surface text. The imaginary is given an apparently negative description but one can detect an opposing attitude on the problem of judgement. The layered quality has a ricochet effect that indirectly reflects on the desiccation of a mind predisposed to logic. In "A Descent into the Maelstrom", the narrator escapes imminent death by sheer will demonstrated through his ability to rationalise while descending into this monstrous vacuum. His escape then is attributed to not only self-possession but an analytic mind, read here as an allusion to Logic. On the other hand, in "MS. Found in a Bottle", the narrator's desire to escape is overwhelmed by his epistemological obsession. Instead of calculating a way to evade death, he is overcome by the need to know the 'essence' of the whirlpool and this is followed by existential finality. For days, the narrator is entrapped in a soporific storm and before he meets

this gigantic ship of four thousand tons, he describes the state of the ocean in phantasmagoric terms:

> – The sun rose with a sickly yellow luster, and clambered a very few degrees above the horizon – emitting no decisive light. – There were no clouds apparent, yet the wind was upon the increase. … About noon, as nearly as we could guess, our attention was again arrested by the appearance of the sun. *It gave no light, properly so called, but a dull and sullen glow without reflection, as if all its rays were polarized.* Just before sinking within the turgid sea, its central fires suddenly went out, as if hurriedly extinguished by some unaccountable power. It was dim, silver-like rim alone, as it rushed down the unfathomable sea. … Eternal night continued to envelop us, all unrelieved by the phosphoric sea-brilliancy to which we had been accustomed in the tropics.[206]

A phantasmagoria envelops this confrontation with the unknown that is contrary to the joyful illuminative play that occurs in Solaris when a mimoid is reconstructed. The awe and subsequent horror experienced by the narrator are projected onto an atmosphere described in dark and threatening shades. The ocean, at its most tormenting, has brought any imaginative revelry to a halt and, like the Kantian Sublime, inflicts "unabated violence" on the narrator's perception. His companion is overwhelmed by "superstitious terror' and the narrator's own soul is "wrapped up in silent wonder". The sun, symbolic of the light that shines forth from imaginative play, produces an unreflective, dead hue (much like the digitally desaturated image of Claude Monet's *Impression: Sunrise* whose artistic heist has the fluid reflection of the rising sun put under erasure) and if the rays appear polemically fixed in Poe's text, perhaps, it is a literary critique of the analytic in philosophy.

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[206] Poe, Edgar Allan. "MS. Found in a Bottle". *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*. Ed. Harold Beaver. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1976. pp 4. Emphasis mine.

Claude Monet   Digitally Desaturated Image
Impression: Sunrise
1872

Imaginative revelry, evident in the literary productions of fantastic worlds, is akin to light going through a prism leading to the deviant chromatic colouration. The differential play that is wanting in Poe's fiction is comparable to the nightmarish existential stasis pervading the literatures of the Chinese *avant-gardes* whose suggestive literary styles pervert the epistemological purism of Chinese realism propounded by Maoist literary conventions. Contrary to the Freudian treatment of the oedipal complex, it is the "phallic" mother (China is known euphemistically as the motherland and the maternal symbolises the regime) who is the familial oppressor. In Can Xue's novella, *Cangloa de fuyun* (*Old Floating Cloud*), "a blood red sun, horribly red"[207] hangs over the vegetation, a politically loaded signifier of Mao's regime, frightening the female protagonist, Xu Ruhua, with its horrifying intensity and contesting the "grand expression" of the master discourse for which her lover, Geng Shanwu, is searching, calming himself that "everything will be different when the sun is out", that it will be a sign of "rebirth". The lack of resurrection is reinforced by the ironic representations of the sun in *Yellow*

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[207] Can, Xue. *Old Floating Clouds: Two Novellas*. Trans. Ronald R. Janssen and Jian Zhang. Evanston, III: Northwestern University Press, 1991. pp 249/242.

Mud Street making it an omen indicative of the aggression and cruelty embodied by the red sun. "The days when the Sun was in the Sky", a chapter intertextually linked to the legend of Houyi shooting nine out of the ten suns down with arrows in order to relieve the peasants from the horrific scorching of the earth,[208] begins with this statement: "When the sun is up, everything goes rotten, everywhere", an extension of the earlier mention of the sun now tied to the notion of human bondage: "In these dreams there is always a strange-looking iron gate, a dirty, yellow, tiny sun. From this gate a row of barbs jut up menacingly. The tiny sun hangs in one corner of the gray, dusty sky forever, giving out the metallic light of death". There is no indication of a renaissance as the personae of the Chinese *avant-gardes* remain locked in some kind of dark, surreal and terrifying space. Paradoxically speaking, the idea of a whirlpool as a vortex that sucks everything into its depths appears to be in contradistinction to the abyss that defines the lack in mimetic representation which is an emptying out of meaning. However, it is only with the fall that the rise can occur. As objects are absorbed into this spiral of water, their imminent demise wipes out their identity,[209] indicating that the erasure of selfhood provides the possibility of a new or re-newed identity. In reference to the notion of truth as representation, *a priori*

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[208] The legend first appeared in Western Han period (206 B.C.- 24 A.D.), recorded in *Shanhaijing* (*Classics of Mountains and Seas*) which explains the Yin/Yang principles of *Yi Jing*. Houyi, the arch(er) immortal, saves the Chinese people from the intense heat of the ten suns by shooting down nine and only after he is given the pill of immortaliy by the Emperor of Heaven, the Jade Emperor, after his fall from grace because of the slanders against him by the other jealous immortals. Houyi, in one version, becomes a tyrant and in order to end his despotic rule, Chang'e, his wife, steals the elixir of life and consumes it enabling her to fly to the moon, making her the first to arrive, "the woman on the moon", long before Neil Armstrong, "the man on the moon".

[209] The narrator in "MS." is overtaken by the same sense of alienation because of the attempt to take reason to its extreme, beyond what is humanly possible. By attempting to go to the end of the spectrum of knowledge, his death-in-life is metaphorised not only by the obsolete mathematical tools found on the phantom carrier but also the cadaverous figures inhabiting the ship. If one reads his admiration for the captain who embodies the past and the future for him according to the footnotes that accompanied the story, one realises that the captain is his ghostly double, a figuration frozen in time because of his obsession with objective knowledge. Even though "his gray hairs are records of the past, and his grayer eyes are Sybils of the future" (10) to the narrator, that fact that his "cabin floor was thickly strewn with strange, iron-clasped folios, and mouldering instruments of science, and obsolete long-forgotten charts" (10) and he "pored, with a fiery unquiet eye" over a paper that "bore the signature of a monarch" (10), which implies the authoritative account, indicates the necrosis that has afflicted a man whose sole purpose in life is absolute knowledge. The grasp of the whirlpool that is also the end of the fiction signifies not only the conclusion of the tale but the eradication of a mind fixated with Truth.

revelations bearing testimony to the radical absence of the signified, the citations from Can Xue's surreal fictions are comparable to that which Derrida speaks in *Dissemination*, the spinning of yarns about suns/sons (which will be discussed in detail the next section), an exposé of the truth of the matter, a strange reality – the *irreal* instead of the surreal, which she indicates with the mentions of an old Chinese proverb *shuiluoshichu* (meaning *literally* "to examine until the water subsides and the rocks emerge" in her longer fictions.

Can's "strange-looking iron gate" with "a row of barbs" reminds us of the gate "Before the Law" – a tale that supports the saying that the accomplishment of an enterprise requires one-part bravery and three-part foolery. But the man from the countryside lacks even that part of courage. The gatekeeper, an enforcer of the Law, stands in front of the gates of the Law, refusing his entry. By assuming the authority of the Law in his preservation of its inviolable right, he precedes the law. In advance of the Law, he appropriates the authority. However, as a representative of the Law, he is with and, at the same time, without the Law. With the threat of violence in the form of the multiple gatekeepers he is supposed to encounter, a presupposition based on the gatekeeper's word, reiterating the "formless violence" of the police in Benjamin's "Critique of Violence", the man does not enter the gate even though the gate remains open to him. The comic tenor of the parable makes the tragic conclusion of the citizen all the more poignant. While he "sits for days and years",[210] by the side of the opened gate, with nobody to intervene on his behalf except the fleas on the gatekeeper's collar, he waits for permission from the gatekeeper. At the moment when he is no longer able to enter the realm of Law, he is told

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[210] Kafka, Franz. "Before the Law". *The Metamorphosis in the Penal Colony and Other Stories*. Trans. Joachim Neugroschel. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc. 1995. pp. 250. If the man's entry is prohibited, the interdiction rests on the Law's appropriation of the divine state of God. The Law is inaccessible to any man because its elevated, ideal state indicates its radical divorce from humanity. Kafka, in this parable, exposes the crisis in the law's aspiration to transcendence. The Law is forbidden to man because of its unlawful secret, thus its recidivism whenever it encounters its singular other. A glimpse of the Law occurs only with death, as signified by the undying glow, seen by the dying man, shining forth from the gateway to the Law, a light-in-death which is the fix-of-life.

that the gate is designated especially for him. His singularity is the obverse of the Law's transcendental state, which explains the doorkeeper's prohibition. The obscene underside of absolute transcendence is the immanent contingency of the ordinary man.

In his introduction to *Silent Partners*, Žižek finds Lacan's silence on Kafka baffling since Kafka is "the writer of obscene *jouissance*"[211] but the latter's reticence is, perhaps, a springboard for Mladen Dolar's "Kafka's Voices" who states the "paradox" of the law: "… it does not prohibit anything, but is itself prohibited, it is based on a prohibition of the prohibition, the prohibition itself is prohibited. … the transcendence of the law, on this account, epitomizes the unhappy fate of Kafka's subjects".[212] Dolar provides a reading which supports mine – the labyrinthine real of the law is a noisy nothingness that prompts the metonymic movement, "a movement of deferral": "the unfathomable secret behind some closed door, behind some inscrutable façade, is no secret at all – there is no secret outside this metonymic movement, which can be seen as the movement of desire. If the law has no interior, it has no exterior either: one is always-already inside the law, there is no outside of the law, the law is pure immanence – 'the unlimited field of immanence instead of infinite transcendence, to quote Deleuze and Gauttari'".[213] *Contra* Deleuze and Gauttari, the unlimited field of immanence – a Sisyphean curse – is infinite transcendence because at the extreme *ends* of the transcendence-immanence spectrum, one becomes the other, a solecism that attributes the subject's *jouissance* to the *frisson* discovered between the apparent opposites.

This thesis remains in the "immediate proximity" of the eureka spot so as to maintain a critical distance from the East and the West. My altered reading here attempts to pave invisible

[211] Žižek, Slavoj. (Ed). *Lacan*: *The Silent Partners*. London and New York: Verso, 2006. pp. 2.
[212] Dolar, Mladen. "Kafka Voices". Lacan: The Silent Partners. Ed. Slavoj Žižek. London and New York; Verso, 2006. pp. 312 .
[213] Ibid

passages proliferated with the help of the double helix in an attempt to go beyond the polar conflict: the dominant pole is a parasite feeding on the other in a vampirical struggle to survive. Derrida's focus on writing brings to the fore the problem underscoring Western metaphysics; its emphasis on speech as presence ignores the marginalised – the remainders or excesses – a faulty corner*stone* on which the entire philosophical discourse rests. The raising of a corner – China's *feng shui* fix[214] – topples the Western philosophical discourse, thus creating a loophole in the Western metaphysical bequest. Philosophy's longing for the ideal union of the word and its meaning is from time immemorial a *déjà vu* – an incessant repetition enacted by Western metaphysics but disrupted here by the *trompe l'oeil*, a trick of the eye prompted by the trick of the mind, rupturing this illusion of the continuum with another phantasm, that which is beyond the anthropomorphic dream, the super-natural, the more than natural, in the legendary *Hongluo meng* (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*) by Cao Xueqin also known as *Shitou ji*, *The Story of the Stone.*[215] To retrieve the forgotten requires a detour – *patience* in the sense of suffering a circuitous mapping. Instead of trying to move beyond the metaphysical realm, something which the other continental philosophers had attempted, Derrida lodges himself at the fissure making explicit our need for presence.

While *Solaris* mirrors Man's existence on Earth, the Chinese equivalent of the envisaged distopia is figured by Wu Jianren's *The New Story of the Stone* (1908), a fantastic remembrance of the above classic. There is no happy reunion for the lovers, Lin Daiyu and Jia Baoyu, as in the sequels of *The Dream*. Instead, Baoyu is depicted as a solitary time-traveller who finds himself in a politically tumultuous late Qing China. In the eighteenth century masterpiece, a myth on

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[214] It has been calculated way before modernity that the Middle Kingdom, marked already by the Chin and Han dynasties, occupies a territory south-east corner of a continent and the ancient geographers were right in their postulation. Perhaps, this explains why one's property, according to feng shui, has the best spatial arrangement when the front of the house faces south-east.

[215] Cai, Xueqin. *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. Singapore: Graham Brash, 1983.

creation, Goddess Nüwa decides to mend a cracked heaven due to the conflict between Huangdi and Gandi. She shapes thirty-six thousand, five hundred and one pieces of stone as material for her sacred project but leaves a piece behind unused. Baoyu embodies the neglected stone compensated with supernatural powers but left with an egregious sense because its wish to mend heaven (*butian*) is unfulfilled. In Cao Xueqin's version, Baoyu, the lost stone is condemned to wander all his life in search of Daiyu, his love, and, as the *unheimlich*, is recast in Wu Jianren's forty-chapter version as a hero in episodes portraying the socio-political crises of late Qing dynasty suggesting, perhaps, that the gap between heaven and earth is a missing stone, making *yu* which is Chinese for jade, a metaphor of desire. In one vignette, Baoyu captures the *peng*, the bird mentioned in *Zhuangzi*, which is set free with the citation from *Zhuangzi* in chapter one of this the*sis*.[216] In another, he meets Dongfang Qiang (translated here as "Strength of the East") who speaks to him about the Confucian idea of *ren* (benevolence), the ultimate principle of ruling which also makes all humanity heavenly beings. Wu's retelling of the tale is an attempt to merge the transcendental and the immanent, an effort that presents his political ideal but an always thwarted ideal because the hero's mission to heal heaven almighty is always a step behind his doppelganger, Dongfang Qiang, who turns out to be his earthly double, Zhen Baoyu (translated here as the "genuine treasured jade" that opposes the "fake treasured jade", Jia Baoyu) – a *double entendre* on the always already delayed endeavour to mend heaven with the materiality of an unanimated rock.

Naas, in "A Given Take", speaks of Derrida's reconsideration of Plato's *Phaedrus*, a controversial text that departs from Plato's organically structured dialogues which had philosophers speculating that he was either too young when he write the text or too old to have it

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[216] The word "thesis" is used here to denote "a release" since the suffix -sis is used with loan words to form verbs from abstract nouns of action (dictionary.com), tying in with the emphasis here on *being as a process*.

organised in his usual cogent fashion. But Derrida starts *Dissemination* with Plato's Pharmacy, "an *exemplary* scene – exemplary in Plato of the dangers of a written tradition", because the "more secret organization of themes"[217] unveils the dialogue's thread of supplementarity which overturns the father/son, king/servant, master/slave dichotomies with a dialectical suspension of the word "*pharmakon*" leading us to an alien territory within the text that finds its echo in young Socrates' dialogue with the Stranger at the footnotes to the section on *Pharmacia*:

> 3. "*Stranger*: It is difficult, my dear Socrates, to demonstrate anything of real importance without the use of examples. Every one of us is like a man who sees things in a dream and thinks that he knows them perfectly and then wakes up, as it were, to find he knows nothing. *Young Socrates*: What do you mean by this? *Stranger*: I have made a real fool of myself by choosing this moment to discuss our strange human plight where the winning of knowledge is concerned. *Young Socrates*: What do you mean? *Stranger*: Example, my good friend, has been found to require an example. *Young Socrates*: What is this? Say on and do not hesitate for my sake. *Stranger*: I will – in fact, I must since you are so ready to follow. When young children have only just learned their letters … (*hotan arti grammatōn empeiros gignōntai …*)" (277d-e, trans. Skemp). And the description of the interweaving (*sumplokē*) in writing necessitates recourse to the paradigm in grammatical experience, and then progressively leads to the use of this procedure in its "kingly" form and to the example or the paradigm of weaving.[218]

Socrates' conversation with the Stranger cited in the footnotes to *Pharmacia* is re-located to the dissertation proper because even though it is not a key feature of the Socratic inquiry, it is

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[217] Ibid. pp 4-5.
[218] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 65-66.

the secret quay of Western metaphysics. The decision to work with Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy", one of the three essays on writing in *Dissemination*, is an attempt to exemplify his interruption of the metaphysics of presence. Plato's *Phaedrus* is the launching pad for Derrida's essay which renders clear the role writing plays in classical philosophy. The hierarchical assignment of speech and writing can be undermined with the structural play inherent to the word "*pharmakon*" made evident by its several appearances in *Phaedrus*. It is *after the fact* that writing has been traditionally associated with the *pharmakon*, recited in "Plato's Pharmacy" as the poison. Derrida begins with Socrates' first words in the conversation, which "had concerned "not bothering about" mythologemes",[219] ironising Socrates' denial of the mythological in his pursuit of knowledge. Plato centres his dialogue on Phaedrus' reading of the speech written by Lysias (a sophist) to Socrates. Phaedrus, whose difficulty in learning the speech by heart, *carries with him* the text as a *pharmakon* to supplement his lack of living memory. His failure to verbally defend Lysias's speech leads to the Socratic discussion of the difference between the living voice (and by extension, the living memory) and writing. Writing is suspect, according to Socrates, due to its capacity for perversion and the fact that it has lured him outside the city walls proves the seductiveness of the *pharmakon*. Derrida's reading of *Phaedrus*, where Socrates considers writing inferior to the living voice, draws out a new thread from the text: the *pharmakon* as a reading supplement, a thread already made possible by the established conditions in Plato's reading of the Socratic dialogue. Instead of yielding his view of reading to the Greek word "*anagignosken*", which means "to know again, to recognise", Derrida reinterprets *Phaedrus* by looking at the *pharmakon* as a dangerous supplement – dangerous because, first, it allows space for the other interpretative possibilities to seep through and,

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[219]Ibid. pp. 67.

second, with these various potentials available, it leads to an estrangement, a critical distance paradoxically given by the proximity of an appraisal.

If "*pharmakon*" means the venom, the cure, the drug and the magical element in different parts of the dialogue, then the word can take on a particular meaning only by suppressing the other properties irrelevant to the priming of the name at a specific moment.[220] According to Derrida, "It will be seen to what extent the *malleable* unity of this concept, or rather its rules and the *strange logic* that links it with its signifier, has been dispersed, masked, obliterated, and rendered almost unreadable not only by the imprudence or empiricism of the translators, but first and foremost by the redoubtable, irreducible difficulty of translation"[221] and the crisis owes much to the fraught passage from Greek mythology to Greek logic involving a violence comparable to a psychological trauma and it is a crisis repeatable whenever there is translation. The signifier's capacity for various meanings is due to the malleability[222] of the signifying core of the word. This means that it can be hammered into a certain shape by the inscriptive tool or expanded from the pressure of catachresis, a misuse leading to a signifying stretch of the word. In the above quotation, Derrida asserts that the inherent signifying dispersal problematises the absolute carrying over of meaning from signifier to signifier. If the signifier (the aural or visual mark) can attach itself to a signified (the meaning), this is because it is *enabled* by the always

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[220] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1981. pp. 71-72. The key text is cited here: "We hope to display in the most striking manner the regular, ordered polysemy that has, through skewing, indetermination, or overdetermination, but without mistranslation, permitted the rendering of the same word by "remedy," "recipe," "poison," "drug," "philter," etc. It will also be seen to what extent the *malleable* unity of this concept, or rather its rules and the *strange logic* that links it with its signifier, has been dispersed, masked, obliterated, and rendered almost unreadable not only by the imprudence or empiricism of the translators, but first and foremost by the redoubtable, irreducible difficulty of translation. It is a difficulty inherent in its very principle, situated less in the passage from one language to another, from one philosophical language to another, than already, as we shall see, in the tradition between Greek and Greek; *a violent difficulty in the transference of a non-philosopheme into a philosopheme*. With this problem of translation we will thus be dealing with nothing less than *the problem of the very passage into philosophy*".

[221] Ibid.

[222] According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, "malleable" means "adj. 1. (of metal etc.) able to be hammered of pressed permanently out of shape without breaking or cracking. 2. adaptable; pliable, flexible… [Middle English via Old French and medieval Latin *malleabilis* from Latin *malleare* "to hammer", from *malleus* "hammer"]".

already detachable quality of the signifier. Thus, the difficulty of translation has to do with the loss experienced: when the translator chooses to capitalise on a particular meaning he thinks most suited to the occasion, he abandons the rest of the possible meanings. The difficulty of the translator's task manifests with the other possible meanings arising to disturb the reading – the signifier's adaptability is both the boon and bane of translation. *Taking on the tradition as a daughter*, this thesis gives emphasis to *Pharmacia*, the neglected female figure of Plato's *Phaedrus*. When Socrates and Phaedrus are driven "out of the city, into the countryside, along the river Ilissus", it is "a counterpoint-effect" which provides space for "[the] myth that serves as a pretext for the *khairein* and for the retreat into autoscopy can itself only arise, during the first steps of this excursion, at the sight of the Ilissus".[223]

It is at this spot, the river's edge, that the myth of *Pharmacia* is given its space: "This riverbank the diaphanous purity of these waters, must have welcomed the young virgins, or even drawn them *like a spell*, inciting them to pay here. Socrates then mockingly proposes a learned explanation of the myth in the rationalistic, physicalist style of the *sophoi*: it was while [Orithyia] was playing with Pharmacia (*sun Pharmakeiai paizousan*) that the boreal wind (*pneuma Boreou*) caught Orithyia up and blew her into the abyss, "down from the rocks hard by," "and having thus met her death was said to have been seized by Boreas … For my part, Phaedrus, I regard such theories as attractive no doubt, but as the invention of clever, industrious people who are not exactly to be envied" (229*d*)".[224] Derrida continues in an ironic fashion: "This brief vocation of Pharmacia at the beginning of the Phaedrus – is it an accident? An hors d'oeuvre? A fountain, "perhaps with curative powers," notes Robin, was dedicated to Pharmacia near the Ilissus. Let us in any case retain: that a little spot, a little stitch or mesh (*mascula*) woven into the back of the

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[223] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 69.

[224] Ibid. pp. 69-70.

canvas, marks out for the entire dialogue the scene where that virgin was cast into the abyss, surprised by death while playing with *Pharmacia*. Pharmacia (*Pharmakeia*) is also the common noun signifying the administration of the pharmakon, the dug: the medicine and/or poison. "Poisoning" was not the least usual meaning of "pharmacia". Antiphon has left us the logogram of an "accusation of poisoning against a mother-in-law" (*Pharmakeia kata tes mētryia*). Through her games, Pharmacia has dragged down to death a virginal purity and an unpenetrated interior",[225] exemplifying her/its threatening aspect. Socrates can be enticed by the pharmakon, "*Pharmacia*", to "stray from [his] general, natural, habitual paths and laws",[226] taking "Socrates out of his proper place and off his customary track" because she promises to give that which is withheld, writing's "power of fascination", and she retains her alluring powers only if she withdraws just before the fulfillment of the promise. It is significant that *Phaedrus* is textually woven from two myths. The *anima* of the patrilineal, to use a Jungian word, is gleaned and granted its place here. What is garnish to the recipe of the Socratic dialogue is taken as a gift and reinstated here as the entree, stamped/stomped with the law-founding violence of writing.

Derrida's question: "A *logos indebted* to a father, what does this mean? At least how can it be read within the stratum of the Platonic text that interests us here?"[227] is crucial to the understanding of how Philosophy comes to be instituted. It institutes itself with a design that represses the other filial filament, founding itself upon the valuation given to the nourishing source of light, the sun/son. *Logos*, as the son, is validated by the resources of the father, a returning to the patriarchal source: "The figure of the father is also of the good (*agathon*). Logos represents what it is indebted to: the father who is also chief, capital, and good(s). Or rather *the*

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[225] Ibid. pp. 70.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 81.

chief, *the* capital, *the* goods(s). *Patēr* in Greek means all that at once. Neither translators nor commentators of Plato seem to have accounted for the play of these schemas. It is extremely difficult, we must recognise, to respect this play in a translation, and the fact can at least be explained in that no one has ever raised the question. Thus, at the point in the Republic where Socrates backs away from speaking of the good in itself (VI, 506e), he immediately suggests replacing it with its *ekgonos*, its son, its offspring"[228] But Derrida asserts that: "One could say *anachronously* (emphasis mine) that the "speaking subject" is the *father* of [the son's] speech. … Logos is a son, then, a son that would be destroyed in his very *presence* without the present *attendance* of the father. … His father who speaks for him and answers for him. Without the father, he would be nothing but, in fact, writing".[229] Thus, it is the king, the father, who legitimates the logogramme (the son) of the script while the "graphics of supplementarity" mentioned above – the grapheme – is *Pharmacia*, the alluring, deceptive and mysterious daughter. Despite the apparent difficulty Socrates encounters in invoking the father, Derrida tells us that the father is the sun/son. The circuitous referencing is due to the fact that one should not speak of a source "which enables one to speak (being forbidden to speak of it) or to speak to it face to face"[230] from the fear of being harmed by the blinding force of the light. This danger, we are told, extends to that of a solar eclipse.

The solar eclipse does not lessen the threat; the invisibility of the sun makes the star more dangerous than ever. It evinces the phantom menace, coming back as Yu Hua, the adopted son of Kafka and the prodigal son of Maoist literary tradition. He wields a special pen, a double-bladed weapon of disseminating force with the second blade extended for the cutting-edge technology needed to win. In "1986", one of Yu Hua's most notorious short fictions, the fight is a battle

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[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid. pp. 77. Author's emphasis.
[230] Ibid. pp. 83.

fought with the character's nemesis, the inner darkness that results in his psychic fragmentation, like the dark heart of the red luminary of Maoist dictatorship. A high school *history* teacher disappears during "the tumultuous years of the cultural revolution"[231] after being released from the Red Guards' office but there has been no news of him for years. His wife, after taking a pile of old newspapers to the recycling station, picks up a old note stating: "The Five Punishments: Branding …, nose-cut …, leg-cut …, castration…, dismemberment…"[232] is a list of tortures executed by the imperial rule of the various dynasties. With the prolepsis and analepsis of nonlinear narration, the protagonist is depicted to be afflicted with schizophrenia, a madness that also affects his wife who catches a glimpse of him at the recycling station. Nomadic for years, he is in search of "those pretty red butterflies floating through the air, towing two shining black braids behind them",[233] an image of his love for wife and a leitmotif of the story, a horrifying chronicle of a man's slow death; while he is having a hallucination fighting off his ghostly assailants, he is self-mutilating. As he lays on the ground "saturated in blood", his daughter watches from her window not knowing that the dying madman in the middle of the road is her missing father: "She discovered that [the pedestrians] were moving like ants, swarming across the pavement, clustering around a single black spot. The *circle* around the spot was growing steadily thicker"[234] symbolic of the torus gaining volume. With a bellow at the top of his lungs, "he pounded the rock against the tail as hard as he possibly could" after "he splayed his legs in front of him and lifted the rock above his head".[235]

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[231] Yu, Hua. "1986". *China's Avant-garde Fiction: n Anthology*. Ed. Jing Wang. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998. pp. 74.
[232] Ibid. pp. 75.
[233] Ibid. pp. 76.
[234] Ibid. pp. 94.
[235] Ibid. pp. 97. Emphasis mine

In the middle of the many images of self-destruction, the man "raised a handful of the dark red film to eye level. He looked through it at the sun. He saw a dark red *square* of blood. After he gazed at the reddish square for a moment, he moved the pile to one side. Then, he began to pick up the pieces one by one and gazed excitedly through them at the sun. … He picked up the cleaver and lifted it to eye level. He saw a black rectangle surrounded by light".[236] The final scene of death invokes, first, an inexplicable terror at the symbolic sight of a man's physical emasculation and, then, an absolute sense of loss when he as a spirit looks upon his corpse and wonders if there is no homecoming and reunion for him: "He seemed to see himself walking across campus carrying an armful of heavy books. He saw his wife, hair in braids, walking in his direction. They didn't know each other yet. They passed each other without a word. He had glanced back to see *a pair of pretty red butterflies*… The sun had risen, and the hazy light slid down from between the clouds. The street began to stir with life. He watched people come in from the wings, appear on stage, talk with one another, strike poses. He was not one of them. Something separated him from them. They were who they were, and he was who he was. He felt himself stand up and move toward the edge of the stage. But he remained in place, and instead of moving toward him, the stage simply retreated further into the distance".[237] His death appears to *hail* his daughter to being. The family recovers from the depression resulting from the mother's malaise and, at the close of the short tale, the daughter requests for a rubber ball from her stepfather who "froze, nodded and walked away".[238] The interpellation provides the space for the appellation of the daughter but the appellation is as ephemeral as the red ribbons which pass on like that of a pair of pretty red butterflies.

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[236] Ibid. pp. 103. Emphasis mine
[237] Ibid. pp. 109. Emphasis mine.
[238] Ibid. pp. 111.

The violence of the self-emasculation in "1986" is psychic aggression made manifest, both a symbol and a synonymy of the banal barbarity found within Confucian Chinese society as the villagers (can) do nothing but gossip about the madman's plight over dinner like any other strange event that occurs in the village. Yu Hua's text is both a critique of the patriarchal dominance of Confucius teachings and the desensitised Chinese in their encounters of brutality suffered by others. In order to win, sometimes the violence is raised to such a critical level that irredeemable sacrifices are made, a Pyrrhic victory, turning people into violent killing machines. To undermine tyranny and nepotism, one still requires force, the force given by writing here, as "1986" can be read as an allegory of the *critical conditions* of reading. Thus, the protagonist is a signifier with a wandering signified – the pair of red ribbons – an apparition unable to go home because of his fragmented body. The embattled terrain of the text can be read then as a space where the possible clash of the Titans is enacted.

It is evident that Yu Hua's fictions are allegories of the brutality and terror of the totalitarian regime. The gradual draining of lifeblood in *To Live* can be said to figure the blood shed for the Communist regime, a thematic thread extended to the *Chronicle of the Blood Merchant* whereby Xu Sanguan's eldest son, Yile, is saved from imminent death by the money earned from the selling of Xu Sanguan's blood. The translator mentions the similarity between Fugui, the protagonist of *To Live*, and Xu Sanguan, two vastly distinct characters, for they are both given to the *jouissance* of the Other; although the Other are two very different objects which provide objectives and not objectivity for both characters. Thus, while the Other's satisfaction is crucial to their existence, the concluding chapter to their lives is absurdly tragic. Fugui's parable of the family as a little chicken eventually turning into an ox is given a twist at the end, "the turning of the ox" or *boustrophedonic*. Fugui, the man, is also the ox. The ox,

which is instrumental to work, is the metaphor for the man and by naming the ox "Fugui", the protagonist gives this away. Instead of the tenor being enhanced by the vehicle, the vehicle strangely becomes the tenor. Fugui's tale of the ox resonates the above: "The day I went to buy the ox I tucked my money away in my shirt and headed out to Xinfeng, where there's an animal market. On the way there I passed through one of the neighboring villages and saw a crowd of people gathered around the drying field. When I went over to take a look I saw this here ox. He was lying on the ground with his head tilted to one side, and tears were streaming from his eyes. Next to him was a bare-chested guy squatting on the ground and sharpening a butcher's knife (reminiscent of the butcher killing the livestock who later allows the cow to be cannibalised alive in "The Ancient Manuscript" whose secret link to *Laojing* (*Old Well*) may have to be explained somewhere else). The people crowding around were trying to determine the best spot to make the first incision. Seeing this ox weeping so intensely, I couldn't help but feel bad for him. I thought it must be terrible to be an ox. All their lives they're driven to the point of exhaustion for the work of man, and as soon as they get old and their energy start to go they get sent off to be slaughtered and eaten".[239] If we note the correspondence between what Fugui says here and what Xu thinks in *Chronicle* after Blood Chief Shen has told him that his blood is only good for the lacquer man "Because just before they lacquer a piece of furniture, they prime the wood with a coat of pig's blood",[240] then what Laozi says about "the straw dogs", a symbol of dispensable human lives, "only to be discarded and trampled upon as soon as they had served their purpose", rings true, like those sacrificed for Shih Huang Ti's monumental project of power in Borges's "The Wall and the Books" that still stands as a ruined relic of mastery.

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[239] Yu, Hua. *To Live*. Trans. and Afterword. Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books, 2003. pp. 231-232.
[240] Yu, Hua. *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*. Trans. and Afterword. Andrew F. Jones. New York: Anchor Books. 2004. pp. 247.

Deconstruction is the pause necessitated to alter the course of dialectical philosophy – a suspension of disbelief in order to conflate the either/or of transcendence and immanence, spirit and body. Instead of continuing the dialectical ground upon which Western metaphysics is built, Derrida wants us to look at the yawning gulf as a result of the disjuncture occurring within the boundaries of what are demarcated as good and bad, reason and madness, beautiful and ugly, the ideal and the empirical. Perhaps, the good retains its purity only with the expulsion of its evil properties; the beautiful undergoes extreme makeovers to present a flawless facade; the rational needs to classify inexplicable phenomena or occurrences and put them aside as oddities or madness in order to appear logical; the ideal needs to be in place to be of service to the elite and so forth. What the philosophers have not taken into account is this: the binaries are merely simplifications of the multiplicities with which we have to live. Being accountable to one entity means disloyalty to the others. In *On Translation*, Renato Poggoli strikes the chords by infusing the normative and restricted meaning of translation "The Added Artificer" with its creativity, thus making translators interpreters-creators:

> It is my contention that, like the original poet, the translator is a Narcissus who in this case chooses to contemplate his own likeness not in the spring of nature but in the pool of art … It may well be an error to believe that the translator has nothing to offer but an empty vessel which he fills with liquor he could not distill himself. One should play, at least tentatively, with the contrary hypothesis; one should even suppose, using a related, if opposite image, that the translator is a living vessel saturated with a formless fluid or sparkling spirit, which he cannot hold any longer in check; that when the spirit is about to fizzle, or the liquid to overflow, he ours it into the most suitable of all containers available to him, although he neither owns the container nor has he molded it with is own

hands… Translators are after all the most cosmopolitan among citizens of the Republic of the letters; their absence from the scene, or their presence in a too limited number, may mean that *the literary tradition will rest all too easily within the Chinese wall it has erected around itself.* By denying itself a look beyond that wall, a literature is bound to die of slow exhaustion or, as Goethe said, of self-boredom. … We know all too well that a culture survives only by a proper response to the challenge of change, and by its timely refusal to go on aping itself.[241]

As cited above, translation taken at its broadest sense is (re)interpretation. This thesis provides a high definition of that which is beyond genre or gender, the third genera, of which the Chinese *avant-garde* writings are exemplary. These literatures elude classification. The transition from "wound literature" to "root-finding literature" to the "new era literature" and to the *avant-garde* literature demonstrates the attempt to look beyond the great wall so as to counter the explicitly didactic purpose of Maoist literature. No matter how hard we fence up this land we call ours, the wind blows to scatter the seeds onto the other sides of the hedge giving rise to the hedging required to maintain ownership. One may have ensured the complete defeat of one's enemy but an offshoot may spring to counterattack. Under oppression, the repressed returns as the reaper with the inverted scythe using the same warring techniques to destroy the oppressor. Thus, the writing we know manifests because the structuring effort erases the other properties provisionally but the wandering ability of the signifier (necessary for the signifying properties to come together as a structure) also means, on the other hand, its capacity to disperse, which Derrida explicates using the agricultural analogy of sowing (seeds) and, its attendant pun, sewing (weaving). These properties scatter, each attaching itself to the interpreter becoming her/his

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[241] Poggioli, Renato. "The Added Artificer". *On Translation*. Ed. Reuben A. Brower. Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1959. pp. 138-147.

property. Thus, the word "pharmakon" is recognisable only as it adheres to the reader's judgement and perception, a (e)valuation already ideologically governed.

Derrida notes the scandal underlying the Platonic approach to truth with an insertion of the Socratic dialogue with the Stranger in the footnotes. According to the Stranger, who is significantly unnamed, what we think we know is only a dream and we awake at some point to realise this. This "strange human plight" goes unacknowledged even by the wisest and the Stranger admits that he is *a fool* to confess this at that particular moment in his conversation with young Socrates. The road to knowledge is difficult to illustrate simply because an example given will require another example for it to be explicated. The absence evoked here: "Every one of us is like a man who sees things in a dream and thinks that he knows them perfectly and then wakes up, as it were, *to find he knows nothing*".[242] Thus, the example provided by the translator *is* the hypothesis instead of merely exemplifying the hypothesis. There is nothing but the example so to speak. In order to gesture to the inherent irresponsibility of writing or speech, Derrida uses the familial analogy to describe inscriptive appearances: if Plato privileges speech (as the myth of Theuth, the god of writing meeting Thamus, the king of gods, illustrates) then the father of *logos* is the "king" who gives value to speech and *logos* the sons whose various theses result in the diverse passages and positions. As speech is bound to the master, lord or king, whose name can also be translated as good-sun-capital-father, the living memory (*mneme*) which is tied to speech as opposed to writing (*hypomnesis*), although should take place with the "king", Derrida, in his reading of "Plato's Pharmacy" demonstrates how value is already given by Theuth, the son and servant, at the moment he presents writing as *pharmakon*. Theuth, in his desire to promote the

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[242] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1981. pp. 65-66. This citation is found in the footnote to the beginning of the chapter "Pharmacia" where Derrida speaks of the "paradigm of the weaver, and especially because of the paradigm of the paradigm, the example of the example – writing – which immediatey precedes it".

advantages of writing to the Egyptians, addresses writing as the cure to the flaws of memory but Derrida interrupts the king's response with a decisive declaration: "Let us cut the king off here. He is faced with the pharmakon. Hs reply will be incisive".[243] Thamus instantly rejects and denigrates writing *reducing it* to poison. Derrida's remarking of the *pharmakon* shows that speech is subject to the structural play found within writing. That which is coming over the hill is not the angel of truth giving us the reassurance of a stable, univocal knowledge, as Plato wishes, but writing, the devilish shape-shifter which moulds itself according to the demands of the situation. Derrida states this in unequivocal terms the Stranger's answer: "When young children have only just learned their letters … And the description of the interweaving (*sumplokē*) in writing necessitates recourse to the paradigm in grammatical experience, and then progressively leads to the use of this procedure in its "kingly" form and to the example or the paradigm of weaving".[244] In order to answer Naas's challenge of retaking the tradition with the figure of *Pharmacia*, this is a response to the wake-up call of the ghostly other – an attempt to lay upon the festering wound inherent to the idea of Chineseness with the spinning of the golden yarns of *dao* and *khōra* since the rock does not suffice – a reinterpretation that may keep you and me ultimately hanging on and driven insane with the *Real Thing*, the irreality one can only have with specious presence.

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[243] Ibid. pp. 75.
[244] Ibid. pp.66.

Chapter 3

What is the X Factor of Chineseness?: The Myth of the Other[245] as the Pivots of the Double Wheels

To be a satirist is dangerous.

> Lu Xun
> *Seeds of Fire*

Chun-chieh Huang's and Erik Zürcher's remark in "Cultural Notions of Space and Time in China" demonstrates how the myth-making proclivity of Chinese historiography influences Chinese culture. Chinese historiography, *wen-shih*, is cultural as history is perceived as not just an objective recount of events; it is acknowledged as an ordering of events. Thus, both history and literature are seen as shaping processes that are not fully antithetical to each other; these mutually inclusive characteristics are what allow the readers to tell the difference, the speaking of facts as opposed to the telling of a story. History, according to Derrida, "has always been conceived as the movement of the resumption of history, as a detour between two presences".[246] Whether the full presence of history can be retrieved is always questionable but Derrida is more concerned about the inescapable configurative facet of any retrieval. It is only with retrospection, the simultaneous regressive and progressive movements between two moments, that the impact of any historical occurrence can be understood. Derrida continues to elaborate on the interaction between the historical event and its relevance to the contemporaneous context: "Therefore one can describe what is peculiar to the structural organization only by not taking into account, in the very moment of this description, its past conditions: by omitting to posit the problem of the transition from one structure to another, by putting history between brackets".[247] History makes sense to readers only by masking this transposition, an always already flawed interpretative

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[245] The title is a play of Zhang Longxi's title for the first chapter of *The Tao and the Logos*.
[246] Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 1978. pp 368.
[247] Ibid.

movement, from the moment of action to the moment of narration and this is possible because of a "rupture with its past, its origin, and its cause".[248] A genealogical probe will reveal what Michel Foucault calls an epistemic break. The reading is a misreading as the actual contextual elements that bolster the historical event are different in its actualisation, at the moment of writing and at the moment of reading.

Working toward an accurate recording is crucial to history but what is more important is the ability to represent the event in a way that makes a difference to the reader. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Benjamin recommends a different critical approach to history: "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at the moment of danger".[249] The historical retrieval is significant to the present moment only if one understands the transformative power involved in the translation of the event. How it is remembered is more crucial than what is recalled. The approach to Chineseness is tendentious precisely because the reading aims to expand boundaries in its response to the other. This reaching out to the other is not just defined by the otherness of Chinese culture but also the otherness of the reader. The inscriptive subjection of Chineseness is also my way of unfettering the idea by making Chineseness the subject. As both the subject and subjected, the interpretative arrestment, with all its violent connotations, is also a release here. By initiating a reading of Chineseness with modernist writings, one brings to the fore the violence[250] involved in any hermeneutic exercise.

The appropriation of these literatures is premised upon a *realignment* of Western aesthetics on China, pertinent to my discussion on violence in its various forms, a exploration

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[248] Ibid.

[249] Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Pimlico, 1999. pp. 257.

[250] According to *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, the word "violence" is a derivative of "violate", which, in Latin, means force. Thus, violence is etymologically translated as "exercise of force".

already precipitated by the Chinese *avant-gardes* (significantly, the school was started in 1987, two years before the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre) whose writings can be said to be predominantly allegories of the psychological violence inflicted by the Maoist regime imbrued in what is typified as indecorous and incorporeal themes of madness, psychic disorientation, communal isolation and physical dismemberment, an interlude from the social utility of Maoist literature and national preoccupation of post-Mao literature. Several critics of the new literature have noted the influence of Western modernist writers even as the impact from past fantastic writers like Pu Songling is undeniable, impressions that some of the Chinese writers themselves acknowledge. Jonathan D. Spence's percipient foreword to *Under-sky Under-ground*, an edition of writings published with the journal *Today*, clarifies the decision here to include the literatures of the Western modernists: "Yet Nan Fang too, like many of the other writers, seem strongly drawn to Borges and Calvino – the flickering interchanges of mood and time, combined with an apparently meticulous realism, at which both were consummate masters".[251] In the translator's afterword on *To Live*, a lengthier work from Yu Hua, China's foremost avant-gardist's third phase of creativity sees him writing essays paying "homages to his literary heroes, including Yasunari Kawabata, Franz Kafka, Gabriel García Márquez, William Faulkner and, of course, Lu Xun".[252] Jing Wang adds in his introduction to *China's Avant-Garde Fiction*: "The two pioneers of the school – Ma Yuan and Can Xue (the only female avant-gardist) were in fact a generation older. Ma Yuan's mischievous construction of the maze of narration began the discursive revolution as early as 1984 with his publication of "The Goddess of River Lhasa." It was an intriguing coincidence that during the same year, the Chinese translation of Borges's stories, a literary event important only in retrospect, was published in China. Many indigenous critics

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[251] Zhao, Henry and John Cayley. (Eds.) Under-sky Under*ground*: Chinese Writing *Today* .1. Foreword. Jonathan D. Spence. London: Wellsweep, 1994. pp. 2.
[252] Yu, Hua. *To Live*. Translated with afterword. Michael Berry. New York: Anchor Books, 2003. pp. 245.

traced the foreign lineage of the young avant-gardists to the Argentinean author ("the young generation of writers was mostly bastard sons of Borges"). *But in fact it was Ma Yuan (a Han Chinese writing about Tibet) whose idiosyncratic adventures into the labyrinths of narrative opened before our eyes the infinity of the inexhaustible form*".[253] The italicised counterstatement supports the argument here that the connection between the Chinese *avant-gardes* and the Western modernists is stranger than fiction for the thesis insists that the comparison can only be made obvious as reverse parallels postulating that the modernists from the West have fashioned their art with some inspiration from Eastern minimal and liminary stylistics. Perhaps this explains Borges's little obsession with a certain Chinese encyclopedia mentioned in many of his writings.

The citation from Villemain in "Preface du Dictionaire de l'Academie" is, perhaps, an allusion to the third genera of the East and West: "Modern scholarship has shown us that in a region of the *timeless East*, a language reaching its own state of perfection is deconstructed [s'est deconstruite] and altered from within itself according to the single law of change, natural to the human mind"[254] describes too the aesthetic representations of the modernist writers. Temporal and spatial indeterminacies contribute to the timeless quality of their inscriptions, a non-escha-teleological approach. Reading China from the writings of these modern authors illustrates the interfaces between Western modernist aesthetics and ancient Chinese thinking, Chinese "postmodernist" aesthetics and poststructuralist thinking. As the quotation from Huang and Zürcher below indicates, the mythological dimension of the abovementioned writings corresponds to the myth-making tendency in Chinese historiography. Chinese historiography is,

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[253] Wang, Jing. (Ed.). *China's Avant-Garde Fiction: An Anthology*. Durham and London: Duke University Press 1998. pp. 5.
[254] The citation is found in Jacques Derrida's "Letter to a Japanese Friend" that can be accessed from this website http://www.hydra.umn.edu/derrida/letter.html. Emphasis mine.

perhaps, the answer to the question of ethnographic authenticity. Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald and Malcolm Chapman, in their introduction to *History and Ethnicity*, speak of the problematic that underpins history and social anthropology: "The opposition between fact and fiction is of course deeply embedded in literary and scientific practice and understanding. The virtues of one are the vices of the other, and any amount of debate can be conducted across the divide. Because the discourse in which fact and fiction are opposed is so well established, it is difficult to escape from it – difficult to find a position that is not, in some way or another, an espousal of conventional oppositions".[255] In response to their take on the virtues and vices of fact and fiction, I prefer to think that it is through the vices of one that we appreciate the virtues of the other. Fiction, with its fantastic element, may enrich the privileged logical facet of factual recount. On the other hand, the mythic element requires the analytic support given by fact. The position, which this thesis holds, that is not "an espousal of conventional oppositions" can be found on the fringe, a situating that allows the negotiation between the two terms. The way to counter what the above writers call "a too complacent empiricism" and "extremities of idealism and conceptual nihilism"[256] is not to rewrite the assertion as "all ethnography is fiction". Perhaps, we ought to say, "all ethnography is fiction-fact", a more appropriate ad-dress to the crisis that social ethnography encounters.

The mythical element of fiction shows up the violence inherent to the analytic structuring and the categorising propensity of historicity. The configuring and classificatory *imposition* of the historical discourse is demonstrated by the mythological as an ordering process that is necessary but astatic. The logical imposition is revealed as a violent authorial exertion and

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[255] Tonkin, Elizabeth and Maryon McDonald and Malcom Chapman. (Eds.) *History and Ethnicity*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. pp. 11.
[256] Ibid.

exaction that are simultaneously deception.[257] Nonlinear dynamic systems propose "superimposition" as a description to the ways these systems function, implying a massive emission of energy. With the conjunctive "and", *dao* is superimposed onto *khōra*, perhaps, implying a prior separation. The French etymological version of "impose" highlights the representational in historicity. Thus, a historical imposition is a "laying on (in its various uses)" (Old French) – the laying on as a violent alignment of textual material, the laying on of a representational surface and the biblical laying-on of hands, an "exercise imposed as punishment" (Old French or Latin) – the commination and redemption ambivalently associated with the notion of sacrifice. The last root definition is crucial since writing as representation mimics the authorial power of theological authority and any hermeneutic exercise is an exercise imposed as punishment because its unending nature directs attention to the fallen state of language. If all inscriptive impositions are, by definition, impostures, then historicity faces the charge of appropriating without any absolute grounding. History is representational appropriation,[258] an elemental extraction that returns to selfsameness. In its possession of what is deemed as other to identity, history is a textual gathering that is also a grasping of the other by constituting otherness as proper to itself, made evident by the Hegelian enterprise. The appropriation, as indicated by its base definition, is supersession as replacement, which is, in turn, a standing before (in place of) reality. Therefore, history is a regressive capturing of reality

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[257] In *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, "impose" is defined as "impute XV (Caxton); lay on (in various uses) XVI; exert influence *upon*, as with fraudulent intent or effect XVII. – (O)F. *imposer, emposer*, f. *em-, im-* IM- + *poser*, to repr. L. *impōnere* place on or into, inflict, set over, lay as a burden, deceive, trick; see POSE. Hence, **impos**ING exacting XVII; impressive XVIII, cf F. i*mposant* (Voltaire, 1732). So **imposition** … laying-on of hands XIV (Wycl. Bible); impost xv; exercise imposed as punishment xviii. – (O)F. or L.".

[258] According to *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, "appropriate" is defined as "make one's own, take to oneself. XV. f. *appropriate* … pp. and adj. (XV), or pp. stem of late L. *appropriāre* (whence F. *approprier ad* AP- +*proprius* own, PROPER; superseded earlier +*appropre, -ie* XIV-XVIII (from F.); see ATE. So **appropri** A.TION. XVI".

as temporal progression in its representation, a superficial supplanting of the past with the present.

The Grass is Greener on the Other Side or So It Seems: The Miscarriages More Often than Knot in Translation

Kafka's real genius was that he tried something entirely new: he sacrificed truth for the sake of clinging to its transmissibility, its haggadic element.

Walter Benjamin
Task of the Translators

Zhang Longxi's reading of *dao* as a semblance of *logos* is a response to the lack of *rapports de faits* within the comparative studies of the East and the West, "a discourse of difference".[259] The comparison here is based on his reading which strives to reveal the commonality between the metaphysical/literary traditions of the areas. The proposal that *dao* should be read with *khōra* springs from the more than subtle affiliations discovered between the two. Zhang informs us that Hegel's denigration of Chinese writing is bound to presence as truth: "Nevertheless, it is important to note that for Hegel the problem of writing does not lie in writing as such but only in the kind of writing that fails to represent logos or truth as self-presence in the inner speech. In his Eurocentric and ethnocentric view, German is the perfect language for philosophy, and it is only the language of the East, especially nonphonetic Chinese written script, that exemplifies the problems of writing".[260] My thesis displaces the Hegelian metaphysical hierarchy used to privilege phonetic writing: "The History of the World travels from the East to the West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning". If we reconsider what Zhuangzi says about "beginning" and "end", then Europe as the absolute end of History is also another

[259] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. xi.
[260] Ibid. pp. 20.

beginning for Asia. Zhang tells us that Hegel "goes on to argue that history does not travel in a circle around the globe but moves dialectically from the lower phase to a higher one" and "For Hegel, the nonphonetic Chinese script is exemplary of such an inadequate writing – the external form of language which obscures the voice, the inner speech, the "pure ego" by its opaque eternality".[261] While Zhang reacts against Hegel's valorisation of speech as presence and presence as truth, he does not realise that he is contradicting, at this point, his own project of associating *dao* with logos, a rational discourse predicated on truth as presence. Although I agree with Zhang's assertions on Hegel's Eurocentric views, the former's argument fails because the linear thinking of logos is not comparable to the cyclic thinking of Daoist teachings. In addition, the apparent clarity and coherence of Hegel's phonetic writing cannot be equated to the opaque and elliptical ideographic inscription. If ideographic writing, as a negative, ought to be sublated in one's inward journey home to phonetic writing, according to Hegel, he, too, has failed to consider how *Aufhebung*, "the perfect embodiment of Hegelian dialectics",[262] can be used to prompt "the coming-to-be" of Chinese writing with the "putting an end to" the predominance of phonetic writing as the path to Truth.

This, then, brings to mind the issue with which Chow engages: "Otherness in this instance (the instance of putting established signs under erasure) is conventionally accomplished through what Gayatri Spivak calls "the work of the negative" which may be used to describe the ethical critiques of Western culture from Hegel to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Lacan, Derrida, Bataille, Nancy, and others. The variety of "subversive" operations involved here are typically performed in a deconstructionist mode – a revolution based on the differencing – the differentiation and displacement – internal to the fundamental forms of logocentric signification

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[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid. pp. 21.

– be it language, the text, the psyche, the subject, or consciousness. Even the Marxian critique of capitalism, Spivak reminds us, begins with a labor of negation, a de-fetishization of the commodity form. And "woman," as Derrida's work on Nietzsche shows, has always been theorized as the other, the unsaid, the negative truth of man".[263] While it is true that Marx's work is an overturning of the Hegelian project which has not managed to escape the work of the transcendental, the "Spirit" of Hegel's discourse, Chow's critique of Derrida's reworking of Nietzsche's writing on "woman" is of special significance here, an import realised from Chow's misreading of *différance* as merely "differentiation and displacement". The play on difference with the replacement of a letter, *visually different but not aurally*, is predicated on a spatial difference and a temporal deferring giving us the fourth dimension of space and time, the unseen fourth wall to be added by the reader. The double emphasis on space is tautologically employed by the roué *to concentrate* on our earthly mother, the Geography to Hegel's History, perhaps, an indescribably immanent machination always already at work but invisible to the eye. However, this is not an indication that Derrida's work is one of the negative, although Christopher Morris in *The Figure of the Road* calls Derridean deconstruction "negative theology" after quoting a passage from "Force of Law": "A position like this resembles negative theology – the attempt to invoke a presence by appealing to the incapacity of language to express it. By imagining the "experience" of a contradiction that can't be experienced and that "traverses and travels toward a destination," Derrida may reinstate not only the linear but also a *teleological* or *transcendental* linear".[264] He, then, appeals to Richard Rorty as support to his assertion. As the inclusive "both/and" is part of the double oscillations occuring within the khoral space, it is already

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[263] Chow, Rey. *Ethics after Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998. pp. xvii.

[264] Morris, Christopher D. *The Figure of the Road: Deconstructive Studies in Humanities Disciplines*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. pp. 104. Author's emphasis.

indicative of the affirmative in deconstruction. Its movement *may appear to look like* negative theology but that is due to the fact that no rhetorical countermovement can happen otherwise within language. Derrida, in "Force of Law", speaks of the experience of the impossible (in this case, justice) that makes possible judicial action. This performance must have a particular goal in mind: a necessity for the decision to be made but there is no absolute assurance that the goal will be achieved or the destination reached.

Derrida explains in "*Différance*": "Here we are *touching upon the point* (emphasis mine) of greatest obscurity, on the very enigma of *différance*, on precisely that which divides its very concept by means of a strange cleavage. We must not hasten to decide. How are we to think simultaneously, on the one hand, *différance* as the economic detour which, in the element of the same, always aims at coming back to pleasure or the presence that have been deferred by (conscious or unconscious) calculation, and, on the other hand, *différance* as the relation to an impossible presence, as expenditure without reserve, as the irreparable loss of presence, the irreversible usage of energy, that is, as the death instinct, and as the entirely other relationship that apparently interrupts every economy? It is evident and this is evident itself – that the economical and the noneconomical, the same and the entirely other, etc, cannot be thought *together*".[265] Perhaps the enigma of *différance* is that of the Sublime Other whereby Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of "being singular plural",[266] another way of calling the heterogeneous Other, is

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[265] Derrida, Jacques. "*Différance.*" *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. 19. Author's emphasis unless stated otherwise.

[266] Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural*. Trans. R. D. Richard and A. O'Byrne. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000. pp. 49-50. One should note that Nancy's concept of the "being singular plural" is a reiteration of Derrida's mention of "a singular plural" in his response to Phillipe Sollers's *Numbers* in *Dissemination*: "It inscribes difference in the heart of life ("it is that very difference 'that implacable difference'] which is the condition for their operation. No thing is complete in itself, and it can only be completed by what it lacks. But what each particular thing lacks is infinite; we cannot know in advance what complement it calls for. We can thus only recognize it by the authority of fact and by our spirit's secret taste when the effective harmony, the essential, generative mother difference, had been found … A difference: the cause is radically that. It is not a positive difference, nor is it one included within the subject. It is what the subject s essentially lacking."); numerical

comparable, an engagement with Heidegger teasing out and clarifying the latter's "Being-with" in Section 26 of *Being and Time*: Heidegger's *Dasein* is inadvertently bound to *Mitsein*; being is always a being-with-others; the individual's existence ought to gain significance in her/his involvement with the community, a concept which has become problematic in late capitalism since plurality has made this radical Other the sense of the world, an experience of the impossible for every other is specifically irreducible to the common. As Derrida asserts, the radically Other is unthinkable because it is unrecognisable: "Therefore, there is no way to conceptualize the encounter: it is made possible by the other, the unforeseeable "resistant to all categories." Concept suppose an anticipation, a horizon within which alterity is amortized as soon as it is announced precisely because it has let itself be foreseen. The infinitely-other cannot be bound by a concept, cannot be thought of on the basis of a horizon; for a horizon is always a horizon of the same, the elementary unity within which eruptions and surprises are always welcomed by understanding and recognized".[267] Thus, the other is always reduced violently to the subject of knowledge, an appropriation making Han-Georg Gadamer's "fusion of horizons", in short, Zhang's thesis of *The Tao and the Logos*, questionable. Does the unrecognisable Other have a place in this "fusion of horizons"? Politically, does this "fusion of horizons" apply only to nation states recognised internationally and, sociologically, does this concept extend to *all* the dispossessed? This "fusion of horizons" suspiciously resounds the Hegelian project where the irrelevant others, the unrepresentable *X*s, are repressed.

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multiplicity does not sneak up like a death threat upon a germ cell previously one with itself. On the contrary, it serves as a pathbreaker for "the" seed, which therefore produces (itself) and advances only in the plural. It is a singular plural". Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1981. pp. 304.

[267] Derrida, Jacques. "Violence and Metaphysics". *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 1978. pp. 118.

Zhuangzi's refutation of the Mohist dichotomy, Self and Other, may signal a way out of this predicament:

> This indeed is Other; Other indeed is This. The former indeed unifies affirmation and rejection; the latter also unifies affirmation and rejection. Are there really Other and This? Or is there really no Other and This?[268]

Steve Coutinho explains the above as Zhuangzi "playing here with three pairs of related opposites: *shi* … and *bi* …, 'This' and 'Other'; *shi* … and *fei* …, 'affirmation' and 'rejection'; and *ci* … and *bi* …, 'this instance here' and 'the other one' (or, 'the latter' and 'the former'). *Shi* and *fei* are intimately related to the 'this' and 'that,' 'here' and 'there,' where this here is affirmed and that there is rejected".[269] The uncertainty as to whether the last statement above is really what Zhuangzi is saying leads to the following expurgation. As Zhuangzi is known to be playful and elliptical with words, I prefer to think that he is recommending expansiveness in our understanding of Self and Other. If, according to Coutinho, *here* is affirmed, it is affirmed because Zhuangzi proposes focusing on the task at hand and not the arrival at a projected destination. The in-between of Self and Other is where the transformative processes can be found, changes that shift *this to the other* and *the other to this*. This expansive understanding is comparable to the Derridean economy: differential relations between binaries that see the blurring of boundaries, what Coutinho calls "Zhuangzi's understanding of the mutual interpenetration and diffusion of opposites".[270] Interestingly, Graham translates Zhuangzi's saying as: What is "it" is also "other", what is "other" is also "it." There they say "that's it, that's not" from one point of view, here we say "that's it that's not" from another point of view. Are

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[268] Coutinho, Steve. *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation and Paradox*. Hampshire ad Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004. pp. 162.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Ibid.

there really It and Other? Or really no It or Other? Where neither It nor Other finds its opposite is called the axis of the Way. When once *the axis is found at the centre of the circle* there is no limit to responding with either, on the one hand no limit to what is *it*, on the other no limit to what is not. That is why I say, 'the best course is to throw things open to the light'".[271] Noteworthy in Zhuangzi's advice is the description of being-with in spatial terms which recalls Borges's "The Fearful Sphere of Pascal" where "absolute space which had inspired the hexametres of Lucretius, the absolute space which had meant liberation to (Giordano) Bruno, became a labyrinth and an abyss to Pascal".[272] What is joyous play in boundlessness to one becomes the terrifying infinite sphere to another resulting in existential vertigo. But, as Moritz Schlick claims, this absolute space is an abstraction because space must be related to time and the observer to mean something. But the above does explain the need for classification. However, Zhuangzi believes that determinations cannot overcome the abyss of being because *dao exceeds and precedes* the assigned, thus his proposal of an open rhetoric similar to Nietzsche's styles, alternative rhetorical strategies which destabilise the presupposed fixed ground of metaphysics. Furthermore, the above description facilitates the thetic moves from locus to locus, the crisscross weaving of the inscriptive fabric.

In *Spurs*: *Nietzsche's Styles*, Derrida makes more evident what is at stake here: "Woman deploys the process of the operation in the interval of this apparent contradiction where she is twice model, at once lauded and condemned. *Here*, in a manner like that of writing surely and safely, she forces the proxy's argument to bend before a sort of *kettle logic*. Since she is a model

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[271] Graham, A. C. "Chuang Tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal". *A Companion to A.C. Graham's Chuang Tzu*: *The Inner Chapters*. Harold D. Roth. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003. pp. 121. Emphasis mine.

[272] Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Fearful Sphere of Pascal". *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. Ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1970. pp. 224-227. Reading Borges's description o Giordano Bruno's intuitive response to the boundless sphere, one is reminded of Zhuangzi and his proposal of a leap into the boundless to make to our home.

for truth she is able to display the gifts of her seductive power, which rules over dogmatism, and disorients and routs those credulous men, the philosophers. And because she does not believe in the truth (still, she does find that uninteresting truth in her interest) woman remains a model, only this time a good model. But because she is a good model, she is in fact a bad model. She plays at dissimulation, deceit, artifice, at an artist's philosophy. Hers is an affirmative power. And if she continues to be condemned, it is only from the man's point of view where she repudiates that affirmative power and, in her *specular reflection* of the foolish dogmatism that *she has provoked*, belies the belief in truth… the fact that Nietzsche often considers them in parallel roles might in fact be related to castration and simulacrum or which circumcision is the mark, indeed the name of the mark. … In a parody of Aristotle, Nietzsche just as devastatingly overwhelms these small women. (*Joyful Wisdom*, 75, *The Third Sex*)… And our artists are only too closely related to little hysterical women".[273] Lacan, too, has something to add to the notion of "little hysterical women", women propelled by inquisitive and acquisitive drives, small limpets seriously attached to the Other. Thus, one can say that all that has been said and all that will be said has everything to do with the so-called "nothingness" that is "woman". She can be illustrated as a (im)perfect model of truth because she is that "something else", "the not whole and more", the third thing between the said and the unsaid, gesturing to the hole within the whole, the affirmative power of the "specular reflection" corroborated by D.C. Lau's translation of *Daodejing*: "As a thing the way is / Shadowy, indistinct. Indistinct and shadowy, / Yet within it *is an image*",[274] that pushes to the fore the futility of the dogmatic suppression of rhetorical revelry, comparable to a well-known Chinese idiom, *cidiwuyin sanbailiang,* translated here as the foolish covering of a hole that inversely points to the crevice. One ought to note that Laozi goes on to assert: "Shadowy and

[273] Derrida Jacques. *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Trans. Barbara Johnson and Intro. Stefano Agosti. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978. pp. 67-71.

[274] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. D.C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 31.

indistinct, / Yet within it is substance. / Dim and dark, / Yet within it is essence. / This essence is quite genuine / And within it is something that can be tested. / From the present back to antiquity / Its name never deserted it. / *It serves as a means for inspecting the fathers of the multitude*"[275] bringing to mind what Saussy says about the function of poetics proposed by the *Prefaces* to *Shijing*. If one connects all the nouns that end the poetic prose, it reads like Derrida's "chain of supplements" leaving us with "an image" which is the "substance" which is also its "essence". This means that the trace of the other, always perceived as apparitional, has the capacity of presence since the word "apparitional" is derived from the verb "appear".

It is to my interest to highlight Spivak's astute comment on the issue of "woman" in Nietzsche's writing, an issue which Heidegger misses but Derrida recollects. What is a negative that cannot be sublated? According to Spivak, it is "the full irony of the word 'truth'" – the incompleteness of the "castrated woman": "To possess the woman, one must *be* the woman … The masculine style of possession through the stylus, the stiletto, the spurs, breaks down as protection against the enigmatic femininity of truth … I should note here that Derrida always makes a ritual (and undoubtedly correct) gesture of dismissal toward these fathers: "It was within concepts inherited from metaphysics that Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger worked." (*ED* 413, *SC* 251) Heidegger came close to undoing them, "destroying" them (Heidegger's word), but gave in to them as well. Freud nearly always believed that he worked within them. But Nietzsche cracked them apart and then advocated forgetting the fact".[276] The unassailable negative, the Other of the symbolic Other, is a Trojan horse used to abrogate the Hegelian *aufhebung*, a spiral synthesising Self and Other and elevating metaphysics to ever higher levels in order to plug the Real within the Lacanian Symbolic. The hole is unplugged with a twist and the linguistic chain

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[275] Ibid. pp. 33.
[276] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans and Intro. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976. pp. xxxi-xxxviii.

twirled downwards – doubling the movement of selfsameness in an endeavour to oppose the Hegelian expropriation, the striking of a balance with Zhuangzi's "that's it, that's not", an adaptive "it" resting upon the potter's double wheels of heaven, which, according to Graham, is "called "going with both alternatives"[277] conferring the double impact for its affinities with Derridean deconstruction.

Zhang's critical engagement with Derrida begins with comments on Spivak's introduction to *Of Grammatology* (which can be translated also as *From Grammatology*) where she claims that Derrida's reticence in terms of the East is a type of "reverse ethnocentrism": "As a matter of fact, not only is the East never seriously studied or deconstructed but Derrida sees in the nonphonetic Chinese writing 'the testimony of a powerful movement of civilization developing outside of *all* logocentrism'".[278] Perhaps we should allude to Derrida's detachment from Chinese writing as "reversing ethnocentrism", a consequence of deconstructing Western metaphysics: "If "writing" signifies inscription and especially the durable institution of a sign (and that is the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing), writing in general covers the entire field of linguistic signs. In that field a certain sort of instituted signifiers may then appear, "graphic" in the narrow and derivative sense of the word, ordered by a certain relationship with other instituted – hence "written," even if they are phonic" – signifiers. The very idea of institution – hence of the arbitrariness of the sign – is unthinkable before the possibility of writing and outside of its horizon. Quite simply, that is outside of the horizon itself, outside the world as space of inscription, as the opening to the emission and to the spatial *distribution* of

[277] Graham, A. C. "Chuang Tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal". *A Companion to A.C. Graham's Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Harold D. Roth. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003. pp 121.
[278] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. 23.

signs, to the *regulated play* of their difference even if they are "phonic."[279] This may be Derrida's reason for stating indirectly that the neographism, "logocentrism" refers to the metaphysics of phonetic writing in the *Exergue* which Spivak uses to prop her point. But the "triple exergue is intended not only to focus attention on the *ethnocentrism* which, everywhere and always, had controlled the concept of writing. Not merely to focus attention on what I shall call *logocentrism*; the metaphysics of phonetic writing (for example, of the alphabet) which was fundamentally – for enigmatic yet essential reasons that are inaccessible to a simple historical relativism – nothing but the most original and powerful ethnocentrism, in the process of imposing itself upon the world, controlling in one and the same *order*".[280]

What are these "enigmatic yet essential reasons"? These reasons may have something to do with the interdiction at the centre, the Lacanian barred Other. Naas explains that silence is required for the emergence of the other gesture: "The *pharmakon* is neutralized as soon as it is put into play, but it is still given the chance each time it is neutralized to be received – to be received "as such," as the place or medium of transfer, transition, and translation. Although the sign of pharmakon marks an ambivalence within the platonic corpus that is neutralized each time by the decision of reading or translation, this neutralization cannot occur without this decision, reading, or translation, that is, without *our reception*".[281] What Naas says is significant to the khoral space where the other reading is already "programmed";[282] the programmatic is also demonstrative of the double necessity or moves of deconstruction: first, it is from within the metaphysical domain that one undermines it, and, second, one is required to move to the outer

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[279] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans and Intro. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976. pp. 44.
[280] Ibid. pp. 46.
[281] Naas, Michael. *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. pp. 13.
[282] Naas's remark about the programmed in *khōra* provides support to the discussion on Vedantic philosophyin chapter two.

limits where grounds can be breached. The double moves of deconstruction allay textual contradictions by recognising that the interior is always contaminated by its exterior. The khoral or daoist space located at the margins of the page allows interpretative expansion, thus this comparative endeavour which draws out the other within the same. However, the double moves do not mean that the reader escapes the unrelenting grip of metaphysics, Western or otherwise. It is assumed that Derrida includes pictographs when he states unequivocally that all forms of writing are subjected to the very same conditions of *arche-écriture*: "My efforts will now be directed toward slowly detaching these two concepts from the classical discourse *from which I necessarily borrow them*. The effort will be laborious and we know a priori that its effectiveness will never be pure and absolute … Simply, [the signifier] has no natural attachment to the signified within reality. For us, the rupture of that "natural attachment" puts in question the idea of naturalness rather than that of attachment".[283] The rupture, in this case, occurs with the idea of naturalness, the reverse ethnocentrism of the structuralists cited in *Of Grammatology* who believe that the lack of a writing system makes the indigenous closer to nature. Derrida contends this naïve proposition by foregrounding the structuring principle, always already in place in a society, perceived as civilised or not, which functions with language. According to Steve C. Combs, Laozi's rhetoric can be read as "the natural way of rhetoric",[284] coinciding with readers' consensus that *dao* is the way of nature with *zhi ran* translated as "nature"; it is my contention that *dao* does not refer just to "nature" because the phrase can be translated, too, as Zhuangzi's "spontaneity", thus the latter's "rhetoric of evocation".[285] Perhaps one can say that Daoist teachings provide an understanding of existence without any attachment to epistemology since

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[283] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans and Intro. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976. pp. 46. Emphasis mine.
[284] Combs, Steve C. *The Dao of Rhetoric*. Albany, New York: State University of New York, 2005. pp 23-36.
[285] Ibid. pp. 37-52.

the pursuit of knowledge is a kind of human bondage. What Derrida proposes above, more precisely, is the gradual detachment of the signifier from the signified, both of which have no natural attachment in reality. This is curiously a non-psychoanalytic expression of what Lacan has analysed about the human psyche. *It can be read as rhetorically comparable to Zhuangzi's emphasis on existential liberation, an emancipation reflected in the latter's playful rhetoric*. The Confucian *dao* is different from Zhuangzi's *dao*; the former is termed *ren dao* whose humanistic rigidity in terms of hierarchy and rites is inimical to the latter's *dao* whose cosmic focus encourages creative freedom, figured by his innovative rhetoric. The Daoist writers' use of language goes beyond its referential function; in fact, the difficulties encountered when reading *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* are problems related to language use. It can be said that their writings are meta-poetics since they acknowledge the inadequacy of language and their discourse are palimpsests; the polyglot or polylogue make manifest the ruptured or open texts of poetic prose whose generic anonymity and polysemy encourage the act of reading.

James Y. Liu's claim that *Zhuangzi* "has influenced Chinese artistic sensibility more profoundly than any other single book"[286] is cited to support my thesis that contemporary Chinese poetics and aesthetics are no more postmodern than they are poststructuralist although both have features closely correspondent to Daoist teachings. The similarities between Daoist teachings and poststructuralist thinking/postmodern aesthetics aver the proposal here that the two meet in a unique double crisscrossing. Zhang's following suggestion backs the assertion here that the poetic prose or poetic and literary styles favoured by Lu Xun and many of his descendents are literary bequests from their Chinese forbears: "This radical doubt of the adequacy of language appears to be one of the deep-sated cultural notions in the Chinese mind. That may explain why traditional Chinese criticism is largely written in the same kind of figurative

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[286] Lui, James Y. *Chinese Theories of Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975. pp. 31.

language as poetry itself. Knowing that they can hardly speak of poetry in a metapoetic language, Chinese critics either quote the exemplary lines to demonstrate what they believe to be an exquisite nature or indescribable quality, or try to suggest that nature or quality by means of images and metaphors, that is, *by showing rather than speaking*".[287] The above citation from Zhang also props my argument for the chiasmic meeting of *dao* and *khōra* because of Derrida's reading of *Phaedrus* in *Dissemination* which cites the Socratic dialogue with the Stranger regarding the demonstrative use of examples, not the Platonic "showing" which entirely ignores the performativity of speech acts. Moreover, it is reminiscent of Harold Bloom's seminal quotation about poetry and criticism (re-cited in Wolfrey's *Readings*) whose proposal may be slightly askew from the above but it is, nonetheless, an emphasis on the *soi-disant* of hybridity, its strength as such: "Every poem is a misinterpretation of a parent poem. A poem is not an overcoming of anxiety, but is that anxiety. Poets' misinterpretations or poems are more drastic than critics' misinterpretations or critics, but *this is only a difference in degree and not at all in kind*. There are no interpretations but only misinterpretations, and so all criticism is prose poetry".[288] Appended to this is Wolfreys' discerning reading: "Reading always takes time. It proceeds across time, as a matter of multiple temporalities: those of the reader and the narrator, for example. Furthermore, *reading takes place*, continues *to take place*, across time. From one reader to another, from one poet to another. At the same time, this suggests, as is well known, that reading remains *there is* reading-to-come".[289]

In order to append an altered reading to the critique on Derrida's silence when it comes to the East, the dissertation alludes to Zhang's questions regarding the possible existence of

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[287] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. 55.

[288] Wolfreys, Julian. *Readings: Acts of Close Reading in Literary Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. pp. 23.

[289] Ibid. pp. 24. Emphasis mine.

logocentrism in the East. The Chinese name, "Middle Kingdom", for China denotes centrism at its apex, a topological centring, albeit a movable one, underscoring the hegemonic in the Legalist/Confucian ideology: "One may begin to wonder, Is it possible that logocentrism or the metaphysical hierarchy with regard to thinking, speaking, and writing also exists in the Eastern tradition? Do the nonphonetic Chinese scripts really mark the outer boundaries of all logocentrism? And finally, is there a Chinese word that denotes, as the word logos does, something equivalent or similar to the Western metaphysical hierarchy?"[290] If a word is needed to designate the analytic principles of the Confucian/Legalist bequest to Chineseness, principles in accordance to the logicality of logocentrism, perhaps, it is *Legalism*. Although Confucius is supposedly one of the writers of *Yijing* from which the Analects emerged, his teachings were fused with the Legalist School because "Han Fei and Li Si (great Legalist advocators and scholars), who later became the prime minister of the Qin state and the Qin empire, were fellow students under the tutelage of the great renowned Confucian Xun Zi",[291] effecting the outer shell of Confucian ideology and the inner substance of Legalism in Chinese governance. Derrida's suggestive remark above may allude to the teachings deemed heretical in Chinese metaphysics, namely Buddhism, Daoism and possibly early Confucianism, whose workings are echoed profoundly in Chinese poetics, and, by extension, Chinese thinking even though the imperial system was predicated on Confucian/Legalist philosophy.

Dao and *khōra* are the disruptive spaces that make possible the structures of writing by first collapsing them. Zhang's argument caves in with his explanation of *dao*: "I try to make *dao* look like a *verb* in order to capture *the point of the pun* in the original text. According to Laozi,

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[290] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. 26.

[291] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and their Art of Ruling*. London: M. E. Sharp, 1996. pp. 20.

dao is both the immanent and transcendent; it is the *begetter* of all things; therefore, it is not and cannot be named after any of these things. In other words, *dao* is the ineffable, the "mystery of mysteries" beyond the power of language … "The *dao* is *forever nameless*." Laozi makes it clear that the totality of *dao* is kept intact only in knowing silence; hence this famous paradox that 'the one who knows does not speak; the one who speaks does not know'".[292] Zhang's description of *dao* evinces the textual crisis within *The Tao and the Logos*: perhaps, Derrida reciprocates the "knowing silence" with an eloquence essentially required in securing the wholeness of *dao*, a w(hole)ness irrecoverable with speech. In addition, Derrida's silence can be read as a vestibule that invites interpretative entry, the deconstructive pause prior to writing, an invitation for the other to speak, a hospitality this thesis will attempt to take up as the Eastern other. His reticence may say something about the proximity between Derrida's *oeuvre* and Chinese writing, *khōra* and *dao* as a tacit partnership, a secret coupling supported by Ming Dong Gu's reading of the Derridean *trace*.

The *Ershisi shipin* (*Twenty-four forms of Poetry*) bears witness to a poetic concept *Hanxu*; *Han* means "hold in the mouth" and *Xu* signifies "store up", translated by Gu as holding within the unsubstantiated and storing up the substantiated".[293] To him, the many different English translations of the concept attest to its "open-endedness": "'conservation' by H. A. Giles, 'the pregnant mode' by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, 'reserve' by Wai-lim Yip and 'potentiality' by Pauline Yu".[294] According to Gu, Lacanian writing is comparable to the semiotic openness of *hanxu* and its metaphysical suggestiveness – "saying nothing and therefore saying everything" – is expounded by Weng Fanggang as "'Not to attach a single word' is

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[292] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. 27.

[293] Gu, Ming Dong. *Chinese Theories of Reading and Writing: A Route to Hermeneutics and Open Poetics*. New York: State University of New York, 2005. pp. 64.

[294] Ibid.

precisely to say that this way can embrace myriads of existent things.' Second, it means that a

certain theme is implicitly presented not by directly touching the subject but through antithesis,

contrast, and the creation of an ethos. Third, it tries to convey profound emotions and evoke

unlimited responses through limited concrete but evocative images and scenes".[295] Many

Chinese scholars have connected the first couplet to *Dao*, the "Grand Ultimate": "Something is

truly in control of all this, / With which one should sink and swim", recollecting the sentient

Solarian Ocean, and deemed to be "the master of the universe".[296] The last two couplets of the

verse describing *hanxu* can be linked to the Derridean *trace* in writing. In Naas examination of

Derrida's reading of *khōra* in Plato's text, he asks: "Is it coincidence that in the midst of

Derrida's reading of Plato's *Timaeus* a detour should take the place whereby the abyss that opens

up Plato's text should return to open up Derrida's – as if the only way to receive Plato's

discourse on the *khōra* were at once to speak of *khōra* and become consumed or situated by it,

opened up to it and other texts – almost, one would want to say, automatically

uncontrollably?"[297] Naas's citation not only exemplifies the correlation between the third genii in

terms of the semantic reserve prompted by the signifying fissure but also the yawning gap

figured by the mouth opening to consume the reader as the other.

As Gu suggests from a psycholinguistic viewpoint: "the analogy of dust and foam may be

viewed as the free play of signification, endlessly generating new meanings and implications. …

In terms of literary creation, the analogy may be viewed as an intuitive grasp of what Derrida

calls "trace," a theoretical term associated with other terms like arche-writing, spacing, and

especially *différance*… Just as "trace" in Derrida's theory serves as a provisional analogy for the

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[295] Ibid. pp. 67.
[296] Ibid. pp. 68.
[297] Naas, Michael. *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. pp. 30.

production of meaning in language, so the analogy of dust in the sky and foam in the sea may be an intuitive understanding of the endless differing and deferring of meaning in language signification".[298] In other words, Sikong's *hanxu* testifies to the spatial differentiation and the temporal deferment of *différance*, the overflowing of the signifying boundaries, another way of alluding to *khōra*. There is agreement with Gu's reading of deconstruction with an exception though: Derridean deconstruction is neither a theory nor a method, the manner in which it works cannot be learnt in the normative sense as there are no formalistic steps that one takes in order to perform "deconstructively". In his introduction to *Spurs*, Agosti describes the steps taken – erratic steps on broken lines, a description catachrestically drawn to show the doubling of a butterfly's tongue, the double spiralling staircase where one goes downward and the other upward, opening up spaces for intervention, interceptions described with Derrida's postal principle. Therefore, deconstruction is not merely useful to metaphysics and literature as it makes manifest the assumptions as well as the palimpsests inherent and necessary to writing; it is a significant explication on the way rhetoric moves: "the how and where it goes" is the "what is".[299]

According to Barbara Johnson in her reading of Derrida reading Lacan reading Poe in "The Frame of Reference", psychical images are really knots since "The letter as a signifier is thus not a thing or the absence of a thing nor a word or the absence of a word, nor an organ or the absence of an organ, but a knot in a structure where words, things, and organs can neither be definably separated nor compatibly combined".[300] As a knot, the signifier calls out for analysis whose Greek root, which means "set free", indicates the disentangling of the problematic within

[298] Ibid. pp. 69-70.
[299] The pun is intended to pique the reader's interest. In case it is too obscure it gestures to the superimposition of the implied direction of "way" and "way" as the manner of writing.
[300] Johnson, Barbara. "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida. *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader*. Ed. Sue Vice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. pp. 97.

the structure. Images are signifiers travelling on the interpretative paths breaking through the multiple layers that make up our psyche. In "Envois" taken from *The Postcard: from Socrates to Freud and Beyond,*[301] the postal system is symbolic of Freud's psychical pathways just as the latter's psychical routes are used to illustrate the commemorative transmission of the metaphysical legacy. Reading the works of the predecessors sets the conditions for the possibility of textual rewriting. The reason for Derrida's focus on responsible reading which requires a certain irresponsible interruption of the circulatory transmission of the legacy back to selfsameness. In the above text, he tells us that this heritage has been received problematically by its heirs.

Heidegger's *sending of Being* clarifies the reception of the metaphysical legacy. He tells us that the conveyance is intimately tied to a *giving* that is simultaneously a *withdrawal*; the message is both a seconded meaning and a second guessing at the same time. In other words, we, the inheritors, although seemingly walking on a hermeneutic path that leads from Socrates, are walking instead on broken paths, web-like forest trails, as they are breached again and again in the problematic reception, the very condition of writing. To explain further what this transmission entails, it requires a historical retrieval (Heidegger refers to this as *Wiederholung*) that paradoxically retracts meaning. The apparent paradox of retraction and providence is comprehensible only if one is allowed a glimpse at the palimpsest within writing itself, the layering that envelops or encrypts the mysterious unconscious, an envelopment forbidding its complete materialisation. What is said bears the traces of what has been said or what has yet to be said. These traces are repressed so that univocal meaning can appear. For communicative purposes, the signifying properties must be structured in a coherent way so that the intended

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[301] Kamuf, Peggy. (Ed.) *The Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. New York: The Columbia University Press, 1991. pp. 484-515.

message can be relayed. The appearance of the message depends on the suppression of irrelevant elements. Moreover, we are cautioned by Derrida that the awareness of the multiplicity intrinsic to signification does not mean that anything is permissible. Gary Madison's introduction to *Working through Derrida* refers to this caution: "And although reading he insists – and quite rightly so – that "reading is transformation," he fully recognizes that "this transformation cannot be executed however one wishes and that it requires "protocols of reading".[302] The responsible reading to which Derrida refers necessitates the double movements in deconstruction. It is not the delicate balance between reading according to the conventions of interpretation and reading against them; it is an overriding of the hermeneutic conventions with a working through and against these hermeneutic norms.

In "Tele-types (Yes, Yes)",[303] Peggy Kamuf summarises Derrida's critique of the privilege given to speech over writing. Her analysis of the nature of the communicative circuit whose "attempted reversal and recuperation of dissemination … would allow one to inherit from oneself, to be one's own and only legitimate heir"[304] gestures to the writer's inherent need for mastery in his writing, Borges's fascination with Shih Huang Ti's monumental act of domination. This attempt to limit interpretative possibilities alludes to the credibility that the institutionalised reading hopes to gain. In order to legitimise itself, the reading has to be predicated on conceptuality. This legitimacy is comparable to the ideality achieved in the union between the subject of the masturbatory act and the object of the same act, the "I" and the "me": an auto-affective return to the self is also the reduction of the other to the selfsame. Kamuf renders the indeterminacy of the *s'envoyer* (the sender or messenger) interrogatively: "Who

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[302]Madison. Gary B. (Ed.) *Working through Derrida*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993. pp. 2.
[303]Kamuf, Peggy. (ed.) *The Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. New York: The Columbia University Press, 1991. pp. 459-600.
[304] Ibid. pp. 461.

sends what to whom? Which inherits from the other?"[305] revealing to us the very structure of writing as representation, assignment and inheritance, inscriptive movements caught within the circularity of Sameness. This message transmission from writer to text and text to reader revolves around. This does not mean, however, that our predecessors' writings are not read with a difference. The reading returns the inherited script to the sender, the academia, because of the need for legitimacy even though it is interpreted by another academic. Whereas Freud thinks that one can escape from this circularity, Derrida perceives the idea of Knowledge, one imposed by Plato and figured by the ideal postcard, an abstract, unified and wholly intelligible idea, as an inescapable conceptuality which is, at the same time, unrealised. He believes that the significance in this communicative route lies with the "retransmittal" of the same postcard, the "*reposting* of the same letter".[306] The painful truth here is paradoxically the perfect lie of this ideality. The utopia is a dystopia encouraging an ironic reposting of the message.

Derrida invokes Lacan's psychoanalytic theory in his discussion of the postal principle. Lacan adds to Freud's description of the psyche by adding to his analysis that the unconscious is structured like a language. Lacan's most quoted statement emphasises the impossibility of ever filling the lack that language discloses as the signified, never found to be in a place of rest, is a signifier floating through a chain. Circulatory in motion, it is a movement of signs, meanings, messages and letters, much like the communication system. Derrida's claim: "a letter can always not arrive at its destination",[307] an inversion of Lacan's interpretation of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Purloined Letter" refers to dissemination, a condition owing to the divisibility of the sign, a

[305] These questions are asked in relation to the circulatory manner of the communicative circuit. Kamuf is emphasising on the self-legitimating tendency of academic discourses. But the questions can also be interpreted as indicating the overse movement of the legacy, instead of being transmitted from father to son, goes from son to father since we have, in the postcard, Plato standing behind and guiding Socrates's writing.
[306]Ibid. Emphasis mine.
[307]Derrida, Jacques. *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, also cited in Kamuf's *The Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*.

detachment of the signifier from the signified, which provides the possibility of its sending in the first place. Dissemination engenders a signifying diffusion: the sign disperses not only because meaning requires the interaction between text and context; it also illustrates the inherent split within the sign. Instead of an absolutely secured signified to a signifier, there are chains of signifiers intercrossing. Kamuf's preface to the chapter, "Tele-types (Yes, Yes)" mentions that "On the one hand, *s'envoyer* describes the structure of the most proper sense of desire, which is the drive of the proper toward properness, toward self-appropriation. But, on the other hand, the fact that this desire is impossible, that its condition of possibility as desire is its condition of impossibility (just as the possibility of the letter's not arriving at its destination is the condition for its sending) opens a way to a thinking of affirmation which is heir more to a Nietzschean than a Platonic legacy".[308] Kamuf is alluding, of course, to the lack of authorial control or interpretative intention in writing also implied by Zhuangzi's parable of the dregs of the ancients, the excrescence recycled with the carriage of writing.

Poe's short fiction dramatises the always already interruptible course of the intended communication, the message *supposedly belonging* to the rightful owner. The Derridean statement: "the possibility of the letter's not arriving at its destination is the condition of its sending"[309] metaphorically represents the originary gap within the sign enabling the repetition of the interception. I shall draw out the thread implicit in Derrida's argument above by bringing to the fore Dupin's substitution of the letter with a facsimile, whose content is revealed to the readers at the fictional end. First, this replacement signals to us the supplementarity of the letter as a signifier; it looks the same but it is substantially different, and, second, Dupin manages to get way with the desired letter by copying the envelope of the stolen letter, enclosing an ironic

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[308] Ibid.
[309] Kamuf, Peggy. (ed.) *The Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. New York: The Columbia University Press, 1991. pp. 461.

message to the Minister, unfortunately misread by Lacan. This is an instance of the "reposting" of the letter Derrida mentions above, a reposting that stages the double performances of deconstruction, the lodging of oneself within the metaphysical realm in order to dis-lodge it. The envelope of the facsimile, interpreted as emblematic of the metaphysical discourse, enables the sending of a different message, a subversion allowing, first, the content of the original letter to be kept a secret in its re-envelopment and, second, attention to be drawn toward the facsimile as *mimesis* – a simulation which has difference already inscribed within it.

This section with conclude by addressing briefly what Johnson considers to be Derrida's misreading of Lacan's reading of "The Purloined Letter". She recites Lacan's enigmatic words at the end of his Seminar in support of her analysis: "'The sender,' writes Lacan 'receives from the receiver his own message in reverse form. Thus it is that what the "purloined letter", nay, the "letter in sufferance" means is that a letter always arrives at its destination' (SPL, p. 72) … When Derrida says that a letter can miss its destination and be disseminated, he reads 'destination' as a place that preexists the letter's movement".[310] In short, when Johnson critiques Derrida for the "differentiation of his own point of view from Lacan's enacts the law" of the frame, specifically stating that his reading is framed by his own interest misses the issue in question. The point Derrida is making in saying that "a letter can always not arrive at its destination" is this: the step taken by the subject is a projection making subjectivity a performance which may fail to reach its projected destiny (this, of course, explains the drive incited by the letter), whereas Lacan focuses on the protection the letter gives to the subject: the subject is the destined subjectivity predicated on the way s/he is linked to the object (the letter). The above comparison demonstrates that Lacan's transcendental signifier, truth-as-castration, has

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[310] Johnson, Barbara. "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida". *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader*. Ed. Sue Vice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. pp. 98.

become effectively the transcendental signified: "The lack can paradoxically function as the truth of a presence as soon as this lack itself has *a proper place* to which it can always return, i.e. the phallus".[311] As long as a signifier is prioritised, as in Lacan's "phallus", we are reiterating the structural principles of *logos* and, thus, succumbing to metaphysical recuperation. When Derrida mentions the rhetorical constraints that limits wordplay, he is suggesting in a way contextual limits – borders that have to submit to epochal restraints (in other words, culture and history) – what Morris states in terms of Derrida's approach to the figural in trying to gesture to a figureless figure: "… Derrida acknowledges that such leaving-the-path is impossible".[312] But "he still insists – lucidly but tautologically, if all writing is performative – any effort to leave the path at least *makes things happen*".[313] If Morris thinks what Derrida proposes above is tautological, perhaps, he may have to think beyond Western metaphysics to a place where the repetition of a figure is not tautological, a location where one finds the deconstructive workings or "function". As to de Man's world of inescapable figuration and repetition, Derrida in "Typewriter Ribbon" (2001) calls to question de Man's ascetic language machine where the free signifier floats through the linguistic chain. Morris's acerbic statement about the two proponents of deconstruction may provide an answer to the dilemma: "For de Man, there is no exit from the linear path of freely substitutable signs; for Derrida, an aporia can magically point the way to such an exit".[314] Confronting the aporia may be the occasion where the agent strives to overcome it with negotiation, with the faith that the other interlocutor is willing to engage in an exchange, an attempt prompted by the affective since Morris paraphrases Derrida: "A machine would be

[311] Derrida, Jacques. "Le Facteur de la Verite". *The Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. Ed. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. pp. 465. Emphasis mine.
[312] Morris, Christopher D. *The Figure of the Road: Deconstructive Studies in Humanities Disciplines*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. pp. 106.
[313] Ibid.
[314] Ibid.

unable to forgive, Derrida argues (335). It could also never produce an "event" to the extent that events are understood as "singular" (336) or even "traumatic" (358) – that is, as non-repetitions".[315] What escapes Morris appears to be the fact that, in Derridean deconstruction, every repetition is a repetition-in-difference. This is, perhaps, the difference between de Man's deconstructive thinking and Derrida's deconstruction, corroborated by Naas's thesis that sees "deconstruction as rhabdomancy, the art of feeling the resistance, of letting oneself be moved, *of feeling the vibrations through one's fingertips as they seek out the keys*".[316] In short, the being moved leads to the moving of Being.

Having been accused, once, of putting Chinese culture and ideographic inscriptions, perceived as Chinese themed mincemeat – minced with the connotation of concinnity, a harmonious fit in the adaptation of the parts to a w(hole), through the machinery of deconstruction and having it churned out Western sausages, I shall respond by highlighting the existence of oriental sausages (the use of the word "oriental" here must be noted as pointing to the specificity, condition and quality of the East in modernity with an ironic play capturing both the lure of the Orient and the possible displacement of the desire for power in any act of literary or cultural colonisation), which look very much like Western sausages, differing significantly in taste and texture. With the place given to *techné* in this paper, the sausage machine can be said to be an analogy for comparative writing because the same can be said of Western themed mincemeat emerging as Oriental sausages through the deconstructive machinery but the referral to it signals *something otherwise* – a countermovement which also undermines the classical division between *mimēsis* and *diegesis*, the Platonic "showing", a scenic presentation, as opposed to "telling", a reportorial narration, a performative within the constative. In the Chinese classic,

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[315] Ibid. pp. 107.

[316] Naas, Michael. *Taking on the Tradition: Jacques Derrida and the Legacies of Deconstruction*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003. pp. 91. Emphasis mine.

Shitou ji (*A Story of the Stone*), Cao Xuejin performs an ironic characterisation of Jia Baoyu which sees the overlapping of the two narrative styles:

Though outwardly a handsome sausage-skin,

He proved to have but sorry meat within.

A harum-scarum, to all duties blind,

A doltish mule, to study disinclined.

His acts outlandish and his nature queer;

Yet not a whit cared he how folk might jeer![317]

Jia Baoyu, when translated to English, literally means "Fake Precious Jade", a name auto-reflexively pointing to the character of the content. The vehicle transports the content but it comes out desubstantialised because of the spatial and temporal coordinates at the point of reading; the form in which the signifier appears remains the same but the signifying substance *metamorphoses* in accordance to the topographical and temporal differences. It must be emphasised that the *constitutional process of writing is the same* whether the critical response is from the East or the West: the form the reading takes is shaped by inscriptive conventions and this applies to both Eastern scholarship on the West and contrariwise. The meaty substance transmutes according to the distinct conditions of reception, although it must be added that a "deconstructive" reading requires a doubling interpretative movement: an interpretation that responds to the reading protocols by going against the grains the very same interpretative codes, thus countering the accusation that the poststructuralists endorse an "anything goes" reading. Noting the phallic connotation of sausages, the thesis insists that what comes out of this deconstructive machinery is not a sausage but an *exquisite type* of figs expanded so as to bridge

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[317] Cao, Xuejin. *Gengshen chaoben Shitou ji* (*The Gengshen copy of A Story of the Stone*). Vol 1. Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1977. pp. 102.

the gulf between the East and the West, the pathos as opposed to the logos, bearing witness to the figure of *Kun* hexagramme, a symbol of the feminine principle, *Yin*, its darkness at the summit in wintry nights, but endowed with the creative powers of the masculine *Yang*; *the juncture where and when darkness turns to light*, *thus manifesting dao*, liken to the making manifest of drama in Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, a reading of the emergence of Greek tragedies from Dionysian elements made possible by the Apollonian facet.

Jumping the Line with a Facer: The Stunning Blow of "Wen"

If Yeh wonders about the inextricable correspondence between Chinese culture and Chinese poetic writing and how the mention of one brings to mind the other,[318] which contradicts her response to Steve Owens's criticism of third-world poetry as reported by Chow,[319] then, perhaps, she has not understood writing and its power to bring about change. While the Chinese may have a long and rich tradition of poetry and the litterateurs had occupied traditionally the higher rungs of society, these are not the major reasons, in my view, for the connection between Chinese writing and culture. Culture in Chinese, *wen hua*, en-compasses the notions of writing, *wen yan*, and literature, *wen xue*. Etymologically, the word, "*wen*", alludes to "markings; patterns; stripes; streaks; lines; veins; whorls; bands; writing; graph; expression; composition; ceremony; culture; refinement; education; ornament; elegance; civility; civil as opposed to military; literature

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[318] Yeh, Michelle. "Chinese Postmodernism and the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Poetry". *Cross-cultural Readings of Chineseness: Narrative, Images, and Interpretations of the 1990s*. Ed. Wen-hsin Yeh. Berkeley: University of California, 2000. pp. 100-127.

[319] Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Bloomington an Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993. pp. 2. Yeh's reply in defense of Chinese poetics: "The cynicism is oddly out of step with the high regard in which Professor Owen holds poetry, for it not only ignores personal and literary history but also underestimates the power of poetry as a vital means of spiritual survival, of affirming individual dignity and faith when virtually all else fails".

(specifically belletristic prose in its distinction from poetry)".[320] Saussy notes the signifying enlargement one synonym gives to the other when the word is used tautologically, although he adds that the statement ""*wen* is *wen*" is never a tautology". The semantic multiplicity of the Chinese character attests to its suggestiveness and ambiguity, which is celebrated rather than rejected, perceived as enriching the language instead of impoverishing meaning. In the following argument about the ideographic quality of Chinese characters and the phonetic writing of the West, the contradiction within Saussy's referral to the former as "logograms" to signal to the translinguistic dimension of Chinese etymology, "an interpretant, a mediator of identity among diverse things".[321] According to him, "logograms represent the words, or – to acknowledge the vagueness of the term "word" – the distinct meaning-bearing units of a language through a corresponding vocabulary of distinct signs (The scholarly consensus at present is to consider Chinese characters a mainly logographic system.)";[322] George Steiner, in *After Babel*, too, refers to linguistic units as "logograms". When read against his quarrel with Ernest Fenollosa's description of the ideographic nature of Chinese writing, one is amazed with the similarity between how a logogramme functions in writing and the way which Fenollosa's version of the ideograph works. Saussy's etymological prescription of Chinese characters is convincing but it ought not to stop me from debating his use of the term "logogram", which carries with it the denotation of "unanalyzed wholes" in our comprehension of the signifying operations of not just sentences and clauses; it includes words as well. The point missed is this: the word or graph can be broken down to marks which are read as strokes here. With the focus on the letter instead of the word, *différance* or *khōra* rather than *logos*, alphabetic writing cannot be grasped merely as

[320] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 36.
[321] Ibid. pp. 43.
[322] Ibid. pp. 41.

"logograms". In fact, Saussy's translation of *wen* as "markings" verifies the grammatographic (rheto-graphic?) dimension of writing, the strokes which compose the word just as the grammatical units compose the sentence. Chinese graphs are mainly introduced in a grammatographic manner.

Instead of the term "logography", the thesis works with the Derridean term "grammatography"[323] in the allusion to Chinese characters, a shift from a prescriptive take of translation to a more descriptive move: "Now we must think that writing is at the same time more exterior to speech, not being its "image" or its "symbol," and more interior to speech, which is already in itself a writing. Even before it is linked to incision, engraving, drawing, or the letter, to a signifier referring in general to a signifier signified by it, the concept of the *graphie* [unit of a possible graphic system] implies the framework of the *instituted trace*, as the possibility common to all systems of signification. My efforts will be laborious and we know a priori that its effectiveness will never be pure and absolute".[324] Citing Derrida here props my argument that if Derrida privileges Chinese writing with his deconstructive silence, it is not because Chinese writing is ideographic. Chinese writing, to him, indicates the Chinese awareness of the contingencies in the materiality of the inscriptive support. The metonymic capacities of Chinese writing reverberate the associative dimension of phonetic writing and if one is more ideographic or phonetic than the other, they are just differing forms from the khoral or daoist abyss. Both phonetic and ideographic writings grammatically give to the sliding subjectivity, leaving the unifying function to the predicate with every signifying unit cohering only in reference to it. Writing, as construction, has an innate deconstructive dimension, permitting the "events" of writing to happen, "events" as processes of destructuration and restructuration. The

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[323] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. pp. 74.
[324] Ibid. pp. 46. Author's emphasis.

above etymological proliferation of "*wen*" exemplifies the inappropriateness of "ideography" (used as a term for universal writing) to refer to Chinese writing because the vertical relationship of the signifier (image) and the signified (idea or meaning) that Saussure propounds does not apply to Chinese inscription, nor does it apply to Western writing before or after poststructuralism; Chinese inscriptions lend themselves to wordplays disrupting the expectations of signifying fidelity. Instead of the signifying transparency and directness that most linguists and translators prefer to see in Chinese characters, we have paradoxes, puns and ambiguities, testimony to the lateral thinking of the Chinese, recorded in Wei Tat's exposition of *Yijing*:

> *Detailed logical reasoning – that function of the analytic intellect which so greatly distinguished the ancient Greek philosophers – seems to occupy only a secondary place in the Chinese mind.* It was therefore natural that the sage-rulers of ancient China should take advantage of this essential feature of the Chinese mind by adopting, in the absence of abstract terminology, a pictorial or symbolic method of imparting spiritual truths. Indeed, this symbolic way of thinking shows itself quite prominently in the Chinese system of writing. It is significant that the written characters of the Chinese language are not mere words but symbols of ideas. Thus, an idea can generally be expressed within this system symbolically, in and by itself; the symbolic image of a conceptual relation is painted and from its connection with a preceding or succeeding symbol the intended meaning is made plain.[325]

Wei has shown clearly in his reading of *Yijing* that Chinese thinking values the lateral, the horizontal tropological field of writing, rather than the verticality expounded by Western metaphysics. What is considered primary is always already secondary in Chinese writing and

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[325] Wei, Tat. *An Exposition of The I-Ching or the Book of Changes*. Hong Kong: Dai Nippon Printing CO., (H.K.) Ltd., 1977. pp. 27. Emphasis mine.

thinking. The last sentence in the above citation connotes the chainlike movement of Chinese thought, a grammatographic attestation to the awareness of the gap between the material and the transcendental which, in turn, foregrounds the abbreviated signification achieved with the metaphysics of presence.

Chinese writing, like the "crystal" quality of phonetic writing, half-illuminates the imagination with its multifaceted iridescence for the characters embody the intertwining *yin* and *yang*. Sublime in its elision of the imaginary, Chinese graphs are not representative of Leibniz's Characteristic, which "economizes on the spirit and the imagination, *whose expense must always be husbanded* … for it is this science that gives speech to writing, letters to speech, numbers to arithmetic, notes to music; it teaches us the secret of stabilizing reasoning, and of obliging it to leave visible marks on the paper in a little volume, to be examined at leisure: finally, it makes us reason at little cost, putting characters in the place of things in order to ease the imagination".[326] The emphasis here indicates the signifying surplus of the word, which can be contained only with inscriptive mastery, correlating to Lacan's barred Other. Leibniz's misinterpretation of the ideographic nature of Chinese writing as the one-to-one syntactic and semantic connections, runs contrary to Fenollosa's valorisation of the imaginative potency of the Chinese character, an inscriptive force that he attributes to the "vast interplay of verbs, not of nouns; nouns or things are merely "the terminal points, or rather the meeting points of action",[327] an expansion of Nietzsche's answer to the question of truth in writing: "A *mobile army* of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in a word a sum of human relations that have been poetically and rhetorically heightened, translated and ornamented, and after long use come to seem canonical and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are

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[326] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp.76. Emphasis mine.
[327] Ibid. pp. 40.

illusions".[328] Citing Nietzsche, here, propitiously foregrounds the threat posed by the dangerous fluidity of inscription: writing as the will to power, the affirmed groundless ground of the scribe. Fenollosa's subscription to the pictographic dimension of Chinese writing can be perceived as a fortunate iteration of Leibniz's problematic transcription of Chinese inscription. Saussy quotes him in order to refute his praiseworthy attempt to elevate the status of Chinese writing: "'In reading Chinese we do not seem to be juggling mental counters, but to be watching things work out their own fate'". In explaining how this can be so, Fenollosa with remarkable subtlety and prescience swerved away from the usual definition of the "ideograph," the definition that makes the character the picture of a thing".[329] Fenellosa's projection of Chinese writing can be read as the Lacanian fantasy, a link disguising the deficiency, ultimately the destiny of the subject. Saussy may find Fenollosa's emphasis on the pictographic quality of the Chinese graph debatable (as all emphases are) but the formal differentiation is in accordance to the privilege given to either the voice or vision and, despite the distinctions, they are still materialisations of the structures of writing, systematisations of/from *archi-écriture*, exemplified by the South Korean script which appears to be ideographic but it is made up of graphs based on phonetic elements.

Saussy's quarrel with Fenollosa and Ezra Pound over the "ideographic" nature of Chinese writing is given a new twist with my argument that the "grammatographic" qualities of writing give impetus to the inscriptive thrust, an implosive emission predicated on inflections and contradictions. The argument that Derrida has never looked upon Chinese writing as just ideographic, much less the universal writing that Fenollosa and Leibniz hope to find, can be supported by Derrida's chapter "Of Grammatology as a Positive Science", especially his

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[328] Ibid. pp. 41. Emphasis mine.
[329] Ibid. pp. 39.

suggestion that writing appears only in relation to its conditions of possibility found in cultural and historical contexts and it is open to change according to the conditions of its reception and reproduction:

> This movement goes far beyond the possibilities of the "intentional consciousness." It is an emergence that makes the *grammè* appear *as such* (that is to say according to a new structure of nonpresence) and undoubtedly makes possible the emergence of the systems of writing in the narrow sense. Since "genetic inscription" and the "short programmatic chains" regulating the behavior of the amoeba or the annelid up to the passage beyond alphabetic writing to the orders of logos and of a certain *homo sapiens*, the possibility of the *grammè* structures the movement of its history according to rigorously original levels, types, and rhythms. But one cannot think them without the most general concept of the *grammè*. That is irreducible and impregnable. If the expression ventured by Leroi-Gourhan is accepted, one could speak of a "liberation of memory," of an exteriorization always already begun but always larger than the trace which, beginning from the elementary programs of so-called "instinctive" behavior up to the constitution of electronic card-indexes and reading machines, enlarges differance and the possibility of putting in reserve: it at once and in the same movement constitutes and effaces so-called conscious subjectivity, its logos, and its theological attributes.[330]

Derrida speaks of the differential workings of writing because it is *différance* which gives to conceptualisation. *Différance*, the temporal deferral and the spatial differentiation, involves a certain inseparability of the interior and the exterior. The outside has always already inhabited the inside only because identity as the interior requires an exclusion of differences for it to mean

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[330] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. pp. 84. Author's emphasis.

anything, a totalising project akin to the "theological attributes" of God. Zhuangzi's godlike man serves the ethics of reading here: he who "yokes the clouds to his chariot, rides *the sun and the moon*[331] and roams beyond the four seas; death and life change nothing for him, and how much less the principles of benefit and harm",[332] – a reading that goes beyond dialectics. Dialectics creates a boundary where the doubling occurs: a demarcation shared by both the interior and the exterior. While naming is possible only with this separation, it also means that the name is circumscribed by an exterior that has been excluded. In order to bring about change, a deconstruction of the inside and the outside is needed, entailing the reversal and displacement of binaries that takes us from the genetic to the cybernetic, all supercessions *already restrained and regulated* because of the need for classification without which no knowledge can be gained.

Saussy's suggestion that Derrida's citation of Pound and Fenollosa evinces a misreading requires attention: "From a different quarter, Jacques Derrida has cited Fenollosa/Pound as an example of grammatology on nonphonetic, nonphonologocentric principles – not, perhaps, a wise choice. For Fenollosa's rejection of phonetic writing reproduces in particularly unequivocal terms the very intuition-grounded epistemology that Derrida's critique of phonetic theories of writing was meant to undermine".[333] At this juncture, it is imperative that Derrida's tentative approach to Chinese writing is accompanied with the view that writing in the broad sense covers all the aspects of inscription: phonological, ideographic or inflectional. We cannot dispute the undoubtedly predominantly pictographic element of the Chinese graph, ideographic as in a visual depiction of an idea to which *Xicizhuan* attests – an example of the Žižekian short-circuit of the

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[331] This made evident in the Chinese graph *ming* where the graph *yue* (moon) has as its radical *ri* (sun) thus, signalling that wisdom is akin to a lunar illumination, light reflected from the sun, since one cannot look directly at the sun for too long, owing to its blinding glare.
[332] Graham, A. C. "Chuang Tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal". *A Companion to A.C. Graham's Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Harold D. Roth. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003. pp. 125. Emphasis mine.
[333] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 38.

gulf between the immanent and the transcendental – and Derrida reworks the ideographic characteristic only as a move to counter the dominance of Western metaphysics with no intent to make it a universal writing. The following attests to my belief that all writing has the necessary sensorial components for transmission and significance and attention should be paid to what we can learn from the structural problematic in our address of the historical trauma: "The greatest difficulty was already to conceive, in a manner at once historical and systematic, the organized cohabitation, within the same graphic code, of figurative, symbolic, abstract, and phonetic elements".[334] Derrida targets the European hallucination of Chinese language as universal writing and reads this dream as "A blinding and misunderstood symptom of the crisis of the European consciousness", a consequence of the obsessive reduction of writing to the "philosophical question" with a theological base, a universal sublation obstructing the grammatographical path. The "Chinese prejudice" sees the Enlightenment projecting its search for universality on Chinese inscription, an inversion that becomes an ethnocentric return of writing to logocentrism: "In an original and non-"relativist" sense, logocentrism is an ethnocentric metaphysics. It is related to the history of the west. The Chinese model only apparently interrupts it when Leibniz refers to it to teach the Characteristic. Not only does this model remain a domestic representation, but also, it is praised only for the purpose of designating a lack and to define the necessary corrections".[335] Thus, value is given to Chinese only as a contrast to phonetic writing, corresponding to the Hegelian devalorisation of Chinese writing as a reflection of an uncultivated civilisation, a polemic argument predicated on the binary, culture and nature. The arbitrary quality of Chinese writing is misread by Leibniz as a gesture to the structural independence of writing from history. By foregrounding the fluid kernels

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[334] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. pp. 81.
[335] Ibid. pp. 79.

of Oriental writings which possess the shape-shifting capacity to transform according to context, Derrida indicates not only the reciprocity between the historical trauma – trauma as that which is repressed but returning as a symptom, and the structural problematic (buoyed by the etymological correlation between the semiotic and the symptomatic) but also the possibility of the disorientation of logocentrism. More precisely, Derridean deconstruction addresses the need for a detour, a retracing of the track left by our Chinese forebears in the reading of Chinese writing and culture, the rich heritage approached critically within a temporal suspension, an effect of the double crosses borne by this thesis.

What we have to learn from the structural problematic is Derrida's affirmation of the problem as a source, corresponding to the Chinese proverb, *zeng xia chi yuan*, as quoted in Wei's exposition of *Yijing*; textual deconstruction, then, is a strategic negotiation overturning the hegemonic dominance of the centralised term, a relational manoeuvre correlating to the Daoist teacher Sun Zi's art of war. Derrida's deconstruction of logocentrism in *Of Grammatology* rethinks the issue of race in the phonocentricism of Western thought, an ironic manipulation of the metaphysics of presence with a recoil to the absent presence of the *trace*. If Derrida's silence is interpreted as a sign of his disregard for the culture, I think it will be advisable to read *Of Grammatology* in relation to the writer's *oeuvre*. The deconstructive silence of Derrida, can be read, first, as an affirmation of the quasi-synonymy between Chinese writing and the founding violence of deconstruction, the most super-facial and profound connection between Western writing and its Eastern counterpart: *khōra* and *dao*, so as to ensure the transition. *Dao*, as a parking lot, is an intersection of the "feminine" principle, *Yin*, and "masculine" principle, *Yang* and *Daodejing* also alludes to *dao* as "the gateway of the mysterious female".[336] For further verification, Gu likens *dao* to Julia Kristeva's *chora* which resembles Derrida's *khōra*. *K'un*, the

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[336] Lau. D.C. (trans.) *Tao Te Jing*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 11.

hexagramme representing the "feminine" earth joined to *Ch'ien*, the hexagramme for the creative principle is *dao*; however, *it is the Kun's disseminative capacity that gives to dao*, Borges's garden of the forking paths: "The *K'un* hexagram (the female principle of *Yin*) shows an empty space stretching right through its entire length, indicating the capacity to receive and hold things … *K'un* is the symbol of the Earth, the container of all things".[337] The description can be interwoven *figuratively* to Derrida's illustration of *khōra*, "the feminine/masculine figure":

> Thinking and translating here traverse the same experience. If it must be tempted, such an experience or experiment [*expérience*] is not only of concern for a word or an atom of meaning but also for a whole tropological texture, let us not yet call it a system, and for ways of approaching, in order to *name* them, the elements of this 'tropology.' Whether they concern the word *khōra* itself ('place,' 'location,' '"region,' 'country') or what tradition calls the figures – comparisons, images, and metaphors – proposed by Timaeus ('mother,' 'nurse,' 'receptacle,' 'imprint-bearer'), the translation remain caught in networks of interpretation. They are led astray by retrospective projections which can always be suspected of being anachronistic. *This anachronism is not necessarily, not always, and not only a weakness from which a vigilant and rigorous interpretation would be able to escape entirely. We shall try to show no-one escapes from it.*[338]

The above emphasis is my way of approaching the structural problematic of writing. Instead of evading it, the thesis faces it so as to make visible the room with a view to all the possibilities of the meeting of the Chinese and the Greeks, a meeting invigorated by the synecdochal adaptability of tropes such as the key to the key-hole or the plug to the socket or the

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[337] Wei, Tat. *An Exposition of The I-Ching or the Book of Changes*. Hong Kong: Dai Nippon Printing CO., (H.K.) Ltd., 1977. pp. 454.
[338] Derrida, Jacques. "*Khōra.*" *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*. Ed. Julian Wolfreys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998. pp. 234. Emphasis mine.

glove to the hand or the shoe to the foot et cetera. *Khōra* is the empty space, an absence enabling the presentation of the image or the icon. In relation to what Derrida mentions above, *khōra* can be read as the Greek version of *dao*, a maternal receptacle producing the name. Like *dao*, it has a tropological texture, a web-like multiplication of symbols, a cover or a veil that provides the hermeneutic phantasm. Both a location and vessel, *khōra* is coterminous to *dao,* the sack of *K'un* embracing the creativity of *Ch'ien*, allowing meaning to overflow its empty space, roots branching out to the diverse paths the signifier can travel. The paradox, here, can be found in the anachronistic signifying flight, a dissemination which cannot evade the metaphysical hold of the analytic principle. Both the mythological and the logical principles are required for signification to occur but the mythological dimension of *khōra* and *dao* ensures the diasporic dimension of signification. Relating the diasporic to translation, we ought to note what Derrida states above: translation, according to him, is always already occurring across cultures, and, more importantly, within the language in which the word first appeared. This element of signifying deviance may be temporarily incarcerated but it can never be completely controlled. The trace is an uncontrollable Other and its emergence as identity occurs with the fractious interaction between two cultural systems, which can also be said to be between elements within the same system, thus Derrida's remark above. The anachronism lies with the fact that the trace, once articulated, is reduced always to the selfsame.

The above means that presence as representation is achievable only with the antagonistic relations between differing identities, making the Lacanian connection the acknowledged and affirmed illusory affixation out of the *dao* of Daoist teachings, the labyrinthine paths on which the signifier can travel and locate itself. In other words, to facilitate translations, including mine, parallels are connected by bridges whose essence is the inessentiality of projections which

capacitate the breaching in the first place. I agree with Saussy when he states that the connection is activated by rhetorical vehicles, the fundamentals of comparative studies and to the calling forth of the "exception" of the translational characteristic of world literature.[339] It is the argument here that the exception is that which cannot be incorporated and, yet, confers the ability to translate, *dao* and *khōra*. Therefore, all readings are inherently comparative or translational; this Saussy recognises in the section, "About Our Selflessness: An Origin Story": "The inclusion of Hungarian in an otherwise unremarkable list opens comparative literature to being something other than a science of origins. It can be seen as the first in a *long series of gestures by which comparative literature questions the criteria for inclusion in the set of objects known as "literature*," the ultimate ancestor of essays on orange juice jingles or shopping malls, and also the decisive swerve of an established academic discourse (the comparative philological method) toward a Goethean horizon in which world literature, coming from all directions, is whatever the world takes to be literature".[340] One can discover this lack of the exception in the analogous nature of the diachronic and the synchronic in the historical method, which does not preclude the spatial because temporality has to be spatialised for it to mean something to us. The differential movement of *différance* effectively erases the distinction between the historical and the comparative methods, which Saussy discusses in his essay, because both require a reading that is constituted by a contextual interfacing: different temporal contexts always already signal distinct spatial situations. The workings of *différance*, Derrida's radical stance – an interstitial positioning which Lacan believes to be impossible – demonstrates that the entire hermeneutic enterprise is premised on the comparative, including the use of theory to read historical examples, which Saussy expounds later in his essay.

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[339] Ibid. pp. 11.
[340] Ibid. pp. 8. Emphasis mine.

Saussy's critique of Derrida's inversion of the Hegelian transcendental dialectic in "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to the Semiology of Hegel" as underscored by ethnocentricism discloses a contradiction: "Derrida, who does not accept Hegel's major argument, drives home of the lesser premise that the inability of Hegel to admit that "thinking" could take the form of their writing, a writing independent of the voice. The challenge to raise would be this: "What would be a 'negative' that could never be sublated?" (since Hegel has accepted that writing is a necessary "negative" passage of thought from its inward home to the outside, acceptable only so long as it is to be "sublated" and returned to interiority by a reader). A negative that would no longer be answerable to the Spirit would be, according to Derrida, 'a machine, perhaps, a functioning machine'".[341] He reads Derrida's commentary of the machine as "the place of China and Egypt", "which merely by functioning and being "By itself. Outside," stands as a reproof to the Hegelian ambition to comprehend everything in a single narrative of world history".[342] His objection provides me with an opportunity to add to what Derrida says about China, which "By itself. Outside" functions mechanically opposed to the privileged theme of Hegel's ethnocentric totalisation, a completion which depends on the exclusive factor in Hegel's logic. As the one excluded, China can be used to deconstruct the Hegelian project, smashing the glass pane of Hegel's narrow window or even Wittgenstein's fishbowl whose transparency is taken for granted only because Western philosophy, with its analytic rigour, has predicated criticality upon clarity. In the stead of the transparency of the analytic, we have the opacity of a knot with letters, words, selves and others all bound to one another making murky and dank the waters before its flows and ciphers itself in order to become translucent. By referring to de Man's take on the Hegelian dialectics: "Rather than reading "the West" as a previously constituted self, viable, but limited in

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[341] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 180.
[342] Ibid. pp. 181.

ways that it cannot itself know (the option answered by Derrida's "machine," which refutes the West's claim to represent the universal self, the self everyone can become)",[343] Saussy insists that "de Man's example suggests reading "the West" as a substitute for itself, a "grammatical subject," a self produced proleptically in and through grammar rather than through meaning. "Outside" is where the non-self is *supposed* to be; by locating the East, the machine, and writing there, Derrida has missed a point worth disputing. For de Man, otherness or the machine is not outside us, it is within us, it makes our saying of ourselves happen".[344]

Saussy's misreading of Derrida's critique in the above quotation can be further explained by looking at what Derrida means by the "machine". The latter's espousal of mechanics overturns Hegel's valorisation of meaning or content, the Hegelian Spirit. The machine whose functioning is, according to Derrida, "unthinkable, as the unthinking that no thinking could redeem by constituting it as its opposite, as its own other".[345] The functioning of the machine is unthinkable because it can take on too many facades, the trace comparable to the changeable faces of the Shanghai opera masks, always already lodged at the core of the self-same. This machine has filiations to *dao*, "the gateway of manifold secrets".[346] Metaphysics, in prioritising presence, cannot think this thick absence of non-being, a signifying polyvalence Derrida calls *khōra*, as its *functioning*, although envisioned, cannot be seen with the naked eye. It requires the microscopic instrument of theoretical approaches for the close reading and the critical resistance.

The "I", a shifting subject position, in de Man's deconstruction of the Hegelian dialectics is an appendix to Derrida's take on grammatology. To understand why Derrida gestures to the beyond when referring to this functioning, we have to consider his rather cryptic statement about

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[343] Ibid. pp. 182
[344] Ibid. Author's emphasis.
[345] As quoted in Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 180.
[346] Lau, D.C. (trans.) *Tao Te Jing*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001. pp. 2.

the centre as always already situated elsewhere, on the outside. This dichotomous play of the within and the without is crucial to my reading of Chineseness as the Lacanian ex-sistent, the Other of the Other, the "not whole and more" in *On Female Sexuality*; its subtitle, *Encore* bears witness to the synonymous dimension of polarities, a doubling that sees difference encapsulated within the same. To refute Saussy's reference to de Man's grammatical subject, this thesis uses Zhuangzi's and Derrida's emphasis on rhetoric and, coupled with the former's "adaptive it", proposes the rhetorical subject. Moreover, Derrida's grammatographic description of writing in *Of Grammatology* means a conversion of the transcendental subject to a grammatical one. It is *from Grammatology* onwards that we speak of the subject as one governed by the predicate. Here, the thesis reasserts the correspondence of *dao* and *khōra*, premised on the newly discovered Ma Wang Tui texts where D. C. Lau speaks of a difference between the transmitted texts and the Ma Wang Tui texts where texts A and B have the taboo graph, *heng*, which was substituted by the graph, *ch'ang*, in the authoritative texts. Texts A and B use both *heng* and *ch'ang*. *Ch'ang* is used mainly as a substantive whereas *heng* is used either as an adjective as in the phrase, *heng dao,* or, *heng ming*, examples provided by Lau. However, according to Lau, in chapter twenty-seven, *heng shan chiu ren* "is a kind of construction where the line between a substantive and an adjective is indistinct",[347] supportive of the thetic link between *dao* and *khōra*.

More significant is the relation between Spivak's translation and Derrida's "*il n'y a pas de hors-text*", the infamous statement: "There is nothing outside the text". Every word Derrida writes gesture to something other than what we think we know. The rewriting of this notorious statement has to do with the void, the "nothing", at the heart of this assertion. According to Derrida, *when it comes to the void, nothing is decided. Placed* besides the present, singular form of the substantive verb "to be", it *in-forms* or tells us more about the predicate that follows,

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[347] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. Lau, D.C. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001. pp. 162.

signalling the full emptiness at the core of existence and knowledge. The demonstrative "there" is an allusion to Heidegger's *Dasein*, the "there Being" or "Being there" of being. Derrida rewrites Heidegger's *Dasein* by noting this ontological void out of which the being of the entity manifests, requiring the individual to take that leap – what Heidegger calls "thrownness"[348] – a jump projecting the being-in-the-world of the individual – a leap necessitating a decisive cut across the gap that opens up owing to the disjunction of time, a decision arising from a khoral experience.

This why Derek Attridge insists, in *Acts of Literature*, that the difference between Derrida and the other poststructuralists has to do with *this coming to being* of the individual – an emptying out of the possibilities instead of the merely proliferating potentiality. The Subject is the subjectivity reflected by the predicate of the sentence – the s/he we know is what s/he does, the phenomenon as it occurs before our eyes. In other words, we can know a person only through her/his deeds and words. Thus, the individual's subjectivity as defined by the predicate makes her a grammatical subject. What s/he does or says is what s/he is, to put it very simply, and anything beyond cannot be known with certitude. This uncertainty, an effect of the economy (the differential relations) to which Derrida repeatedly refers, requires the economy in a different sense, an abridged version bridging the gap. Perhaps we do not take the time to know for an individual is not just what s/he does or has. And this is why Derrida's citation from Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* starts with "Let us note that the economy is perhaps indicated in the following the operation that substitutes writing for speech also replaces presence by value: to the who *I am* or to the *I am present* thus sacrificed, a *what* I am or a *what I am worth is preferred*". Derrida's noting of the economy does not allude to merely the condition of possibility in terms of time and

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[348] Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Mcquarie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1962. pp. 188.

space which itself has significance to *what we are*; a *subject* that relies on grammar already implies that she is affected by the ambiguity of words, indispensable for the transportation of the word to other situations, thus giving to an opportunity of unsettling the notion of the grammatical subject – a subjectivity which, by nature, wanders but grounded in the here and now with her/his attachment to the predicate.

Writing opens the differential relations of the text to the reader; the digressions may be read as false leads but the decision made in terms of a certain progression already presupposes the multiple possibilities of advancement. In order to get where we want to go, we need to take the detour so that what is forgotten, or *that which is repressed in writing*, can be retrieved. Derrida's above assertion has stirred up much critique, some negative, others expository. Let us take a look at the comments resulting from this statement. First, every time we think of something or allude to something in reality, we have to resort to discourse. Language, to Derrida, is not just a system of signs but also structures of writing we work with whenever there is linguistic use. When we interact, be it writing or speech, we use the linguistic configurations we have internalised so that communication is possible. Derrida may appear to privilege writing but the inversion is to demonstrate the speech is always already traced by the notion of writing – writing is the marginalised that speech, the valued term, is built upon, and the dichotomy, which is traditionally positioned as oppositional, is defined by the same structures supporting linguistic interaction. Derrida's focus on writing brings to the fore the problem within Western metaphysics whose emphasis on presence ignores the marginalised – the suppressed remainders or excesses – paradoxically the stump of the entire philosophical discourse as well as the stumbling block necessitating a detour, a turning back so that one can turn the discourse toward advancement. The return to the roots of the philosophical keywords exemplifies the detour

encouraged by deconstruction. This etymological return allows me to read alternatively these words.

The word "stump" refers to both the wreckage of metaphysics after its incessant deconstruction and the excluded elements, exiled by the philosophical framework. It also signals the possible return of these surpluses in readings destabilising the privileged discourse. The word *serves my intention* of demonstrating the equivocal play within words – the remainder, the maintenance of the metaphysical frame, the counterforce of the excesses, a step into the crack leading to the rendering at a loss (of words), and the interweaving of threads using a single motif – wordplays which are contained within the matrix of references. Thus, the structures of writing are exposed as intrinsically open to deconstruction, a configurative exposure revealing the non-sense at the core of sense (both in the senses of the sensible and the intelligible), permitting a counter-reading with the act of unravelling and reweaving the threads into a new text. Naas alludes to these meanings of "stump" in *Taking on the Tradition* to support his reading of deconstruction and tradition. However, he appears to have forgotten the Middle Dutch etymological variant of the word which means "stomp" used here as the stepping stone to the trace. The forgotten monstrosity rises with a huge step forward leaving a resoundingly deep imprint in the psyche of metaphysics. Although the marginalised may appear to be inconsequential to its discourse, the insistence on textual mastery provokes the return of the forsaken with a force such as "stomp" in order to subvert the structured discourse. The etymological reading of "stump" finds its Chinese associate in Laozi's comments on putting our best foot forward:

A terrace of nine layers arises from accumulating dirt,

A journey of thousands of leagues begins wit a footfall.[349]

Being in relation to time, Heidegger's massive project,[350] cannot be a linear progression. The gap between the past and the future is laid over with a present always already inflected by remembrance and anticipation: who we are at this instance is never a full indifferent presence; it is both the cause and effect (affect) of who we were and who we shall be. In quoting Mallarmé's remark about the present, Derrida is also paying tribute to him in the form of a remembrance: "The one who would call himself his own contemporary is misinformed, deserting, usurping, with equal impudence, when the past has ceased and a future is delayed or when the two are perplexingly mixed in order to mask the space between them".[351] The similarity between how speech as presence is valued and the preference to know people by what they are and what they have achieved instead of who they are is premised on the same economy Derrida mentions. The reserve behind the presence is sacrificed for one finds it easier to apprehend the environment we are in and the people around us with labels. Thus, the images we have of the world and the people around us are caricatures – reduced to our perceptions and value judgements. The quote reads like a caution from Derrida: we think we know the people or what goes on around us but what we have is never genuine contact; it is an interaction compromised by notions of utility and worth, because what *X really is* more than meets the eye, corresponding to Lacan's notion of the Real both at the radical boundary of the structure and the psychic heart of darkness within being. The obstacle to the envisioned destination is an intrinsic limitation within the discourse. However, the discourse here is writing lodged at the limits, the "Ends of Man", catachrestically

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[349] Coutinho, Steve. *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation and Paradox*. Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004. pp. 128.

[350] This, of course, refers to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, a mammoth ontological discourse which supports his use of the word "Dasein".

[351] Derrida, Jacques. "Mallarmé." *Acts of Literature*. Ed. Derek Attridge. New York and London: Routledge, 1992. pp.112.

mapped onto the edges of the world and beyond. It is a little reminder of what it means "to be", "to have" and "to do" – while these core verbs are distinct in grammatical exercises, in life, unfortunately, the substantive "to be" is "to have" and "to do" – the fundamental syntax of humanity distinguishable only with one's attached predicates.

The (In)Ethics of Translation: the Ins and Outs of the Task of Holding the Torch

Prague

A swarm of country moths attack the city
street lamps, ghostly faces
slender legs supporting the night sky

Where there are ghosts, there is history
underground lodes unmarked on the map
are Prague's stout nerves

Kafka's childhood passed through the square
the dream plays truant, the dream
is the stern father, enthroned above the clouds

Where there's a father, there's a right of succession
a rat strolls through the palace corridors
shadowy attendants cluster around

The calèche that set out from the century's gate
has turned into a tank along the road
truth is choosing its enemies

Where there's truth, there's forgetfulness
swaying like a stamen in the breeze, the drunk
has dropped a dusty curse

Crossing time's bridge over the Vltava
one enters the dazzling daylight
the ancient statues are full of hate

Where there's hate, there's glory
The pedlar mysteriously spreads out a piece of velvet
Please buy good weather where pears join together

Bei Dao

My first task is a very laborious one and occupies all my attention: that is, to get my spoils through the narrow and thin-walled passages of the labyrinth. I shove them ahead with all my might, and the work progresses, but far too slowly for me; to speed things up I drag past of the mass of flesh back again and push my way over the top of it, through the middle of it; now I have only a portion of my spoil before me, now it is easier to propel it onwards, but I am so deeply embedded in the profusion of flesh here in these narrow passages which I don't always find easy to negotiate even on my own, that I could well be stifled by my own supplies; sometimes their pressure is such that I can only preserve myself by eating and drinking.

<div style="text-align: right">

Franz Kafka
The Burrow

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The bent ears, Sollers's apparatus of the frame, aversely physiological pieces, serve to figure the necessary mediation of the Real. Thus, Chow's "listening otherwise" whose every "good" intention goes around a self-legitimating circuit, is explained by Derrida in *Tympan*: "Here, the lesson of the finite reader called a philosophical author is but one piece, occasionally and incidentally interesting, of the machine. *To insist* upon thinking *its other*: its proper other, the proper of its other, an other proper? In thinking it *as such*, in recognizing it, one misses it. One reappropriates it for oneself, one disposes of it, one misses it, or rather one misses (the) missing (of) it, which, as concerns the other, always amounts to the same. Between the proper of the other and the other of the proper".[352] Lacan's bent ears are the apparatus that frames the space between the proper of the other and the other of the proper. This *One-Way Street*, made up of an incessantly interrupted and dispersive passage, a broken line, makes the infiniteness of reading obvious. Derrida's vocabulary, in the last few lines, is uncannily similar to Lacan's explanation of what constitutes desire and *jouissance* quoted almost at the conclusion of this chapter. In the footnotes, we are told that "*Le Propre* is one of the key terms of this book. In French, *propre* can mean both "proper" and "own" a here with *son proper autre*, its own other, the other proper to itself. I have sometimes given simply "proper," and sometimes "own, proper" (e.g. "its own, proper other")". Zhuangzi acknowledges the necessity of inscriptive impropriety, unfaithful

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[352] Derrida, Jacques. "Tympan." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. xi-xii.

poetics in writing encouraging the creative to emerge. While Gu reads Zhuangzi's parables as examples of "wordless communication" since his philosophy is deemed to be almost nihilistic (in contradistinction, the thesis argues that Zhuangzi's poetics is affirmative in his emphasis on creative liberation), the latter's writings are interpreted here as a challenge to the hermeneutic closure of Confucian conceptual reading. The contradiction in Gu's reading of Zhuangzi can be found in the above proposal and his indication to the latter's view of language – mainly an instrumental role in communication. Zhuangzi suggests the impossibility of complete inscriptive mastery or complete remembrance (the Socratic "living memory" giving to a "living speech") in the following saying:

> The fish-trap is a tool to catch fish. Once the fish is caught, the fish-trap is forgotten. A rabbit-snare is a tool to catch rabbits. Once the rabbit is caught, the rabbit is forgotten. Language is a tool to hold ideas. Once ideas are conveyed, language is forgotten. Where on earth could I find a person who has forgotten words to have a word with him?

Thus, *contra* Gu, I argue that Zhuangzi's aesthetic suggestiveness has to do with both his recognition that the rift between thoughts and writing can never be permanently bridged and the breaching of philosophical grounds can occur again and again, owing to the semantic slides granted by the unrecognisable third, a gift mostly unacknowledged in West not until the poststructuralists.

It is not merely the traditional emphasis on propriety in Chinese metaphysics that led to the above commentary on the empty signifiers of language which requires a certain forgetting so that writing appears; Zhang informs us that "As Borges shows, the idea of a precise, artificial language built on a strictly logical system of numbers or symbols ultimately originates with Descartes, that is, from within the Western philosophical tradition and its desire to classify and

compartmentalize all phenomena of the world".[353] The dream of a world language to be found in China whose faithful relation between the signifier articulated and the signified intended is interrupted by the example of a "certain Chinese encyclopedia". The continuity between the image or word and the meaning breaks because of temporal disjunction and spatial dislocation but this breach allows the re-writing. It is hubris in the form of an absolute insistence on presence that Derrida urges the thinking of a writing that is alone, "By itself. Outside", the abandoned in Hegel's System which is doomed to failure precisely because the encyclopedic endeavour did not consider *the negative* which cannot be subsumed to selfsameness, the spillage left behind or leftover from the bracketing. The Hegelian enterprise can be said to be given an ironic twist with Borges's evocation of "a certain Chinese encyclopedia" which gives rise to Foucault's *The Order of Things*. Foucault, in his preface, alludes to the ambivalence he felt – it was a strange mixture of amusement and discomfort – when he first read Borges's allegory of the Chinese encyclopedia. What Zhang Longxi calls "a most curious way of classifying animals" made its appearance in the chapter, "The Myth of the other", which is worth reciting here:

> Animals are divide into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, *(j) innumerable*, (k) drawn with a very fine camel brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.[354]

Zhang insists that: "Such a strange taxonomy belongs rather to heterotopia, the inconceivable space that undermines the very possibility of description in language. It belongs, says Foucault,

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[353] Zhang, Longxi. *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998. pp. 21.

[354] Zhang, Longxi. *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998. pp. 19.

to both atopia and aphasia, the loss of correspondence between place and name".[355] What strikes me in the above list is Borges's attempt to call forth the radical Other, an Other that escapes categorisation. This indiscriminate listing is, then, used to draw out what he thinks is a missing thread in Foucault's text: "Significantly, Foucault does not give so much as a hint to suggest that the hilarious passage from that "Chinese encyclopedia" may have been made up to represent a Western fantasy of the Other, and that the illogical way of sorting out animals in that passage can be as alien to the Chinese mind as it is to the Western".[356] If Foucault specifically states that this passage on a unique "Chinese encyclopedia" has inspired him to write *The Order of Things*, one ought to think about the manner in which this "disorder" fits into his *scheme* of things. In my view, Foucault uses Borges's passage to demonstrate the premise for the order of things, the missing thread which the thesis shall expand here: the list can be read as a betrayal of Western metaphysics which privileges analytic principles and masterful readings of which Hegel's encyclopedic effort is an instance. In "Et Cetera", Derrida, when speaking of intentional juxtaposition giving to unintentional effects, alludes to Foucault's reading of Borges's random enumeration in his strange "Chinese Encyclopedia":

Did you notice the omission of (j)? Deliberate or not? On the following page Foucault reinscribes it where it belongs, between (i) and (k) in the alphabetical order of which he just said: 'What transgresses the boundaries of all possible imagination or thought, is simply the alphabetical series (a,b,c,d)which links each o these categories to all others.' Now the letter he had missed out… and it announces a single word in the classification: '(j) innumerable'. Which is the more abyssal and/or more comprehensive collection? That of the 'innumerable'? That of the *et cetera*? … This inclusion of the whole in the

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[355] Ibid. pp. 20.
[356] Ibid. pp. 21.

part, this series which inscribes itself entire in one of its terms, appears, perhaps, from a certain point of view 'absurd', and of an absurdity which 'ruins the *and* of enumeration'. But does it not also attest to other, much more powerful resources, which would make of the very ruin of the 'and' and all but an invincible force?[357]

The conjunctive "and" is an instance of the grammatical links projected to mask that which is missing – the invisible *khōra* – the textual gap and Borges's list of animals is constructed in such a way to illustrate what the "and" or the "et cetera" does grammatically – this ability to conjoin signifiers, which are lacking in themselves, reflecting the void within the signifiers "and" and "et cetera". Again, the estrangement effect is used to gesture to the "innumerable" Other – the Other of Chineseness. One can enumerate *ad infinitum* with the continuous use of the conjunction "and" not because the field is inexhaustible but that something is missing. Perhaps this is what Borges's attempts to depict with his absurd list of animals that the Chinese emperor possesses.

D. C. Lau's footnote to Book II of *Daodejing* has relevance to Borges's irreverence to order, albeit an order predicated on Western logic: "It may seem strange to say before and after follow each other, but this probably refers to a ring. Any point on a ring is both before and after any other point depending on the arbitrary choice of the starting-point".[358] Starting here with Bei Dao's poem on Kafka demonstrates the impact the Western modernists literature has on the Chinese litterateur, a poetic acknowledgement that can be seen also in the tales of unsurpassed quality from the above-mentioned Western writers whose imagination is similarly stirred by both the great wall and China. Bei Dao, the pioneer of a poetic group called the Misty Writers, mostly exiled after being blacklisted by the Communist party for their controversial poetics, is a prolific

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[357] Derrida, Jacques. "Et Cetera". *Deconstructions: A User's Guide*. Ed. Nicholas Royle. New York: Palgrave, 2000. pp. 285.
[358] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. Lau, D.C. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982. pp. 7.

poet who, like most mainland Chinese writers of the twentieth century, is a *carrier* of the Chinese albatross, a custodian of the right to the freedom of speech, a democratic right, according to Derrida, best represented by the Humanities. Bei Dao's haunting verse can be read as a translation of the image of the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989 to one implying the ubiquity of violence and the degree of aggression escalates when it is meted out by those in authority:

The calèche that set out from the century's gate
has turned into a tank along the road
truth is choosing its enemies

The Unknown Rebel

The juxtaposition of words and image here exemplifies the violence intrinsic to translation where the "virtual reality" given by the trope of the calèche transforms to a tank leading to a representation of a certain reality in a particular context with photography. Adding the visual dimension to Bei Dao's words on conflicts between state and individuals is to carry over the imagery used to an other representation of rebellion. On one hand, as a supplement, the photograph adds sensory qualities to the verse providing another imaginary facet to Bei Dao's poetics, an overlapping of word and image. On the other, the interweaving of image and word

evinces violence in the assemblage, contextualising Bei Dao's words to a specific instance of insurgency. *The Unknown Rebel* is also included to speak of (and to *demonstrate*) the solitude of the individual in her/his opposition against the instituted regime.

Edwin Gentzler's and Maria Tymoczko's introduction to *Translation and Power* provides a succinct account of the various turns of translation in the West with the latest being the "cultural turn" and, then, the attentive swerve to "power", a turn corresponding to the rise of postcolonial studies. With the postcolonial articulation of the "central importance of translation in establishing, maintaining, and resisting imperialist power structures" we have Homi Bhabha's neologism "translational culture"[359] that gestures to the cosmopolitan and migratory state of postmodernity, used to support the argument that the postmodern condition of China is a translated postmodernity. Gentzler and Tymoczko acknowledge that the definition of "power" is complex and their volume of essays addresses its complexity. But what is crucial to the reading here is *the power of translation*, the "[il?]legal ability, capacity, or authority to act", a modification which echoes the impropriety of a "deconstructive" reading (a double inversion always already implying the much-needed reconstruction) which subverts the proper name, and the technical and mechanical meanings: "the product obtained by multiplying a number … onto itself a number of times", "any form of energy or force available for application to work" and "the capacity for exerting mechanical force".[360] These technical and mechanical denotations tie in with the emphasis of form and style here as well as the rhetorical and linguistic machinations involved in translation, the linguistic "manipulation" mentioned by the above editors. Translation is a textual manipulation dependent on the flexibility of the weave of the fabric, not only the capacity to adapt which is necessitated by the two-way transferential movement from the

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[359] Tymoczko, Maria and Edwin Gentzler. (Eds.) *Translation and Power*. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002. pp. xv.
[360] Ibid. pp. xvii.

interpreted text to the interpreter and contrariwise but also the tear initiated and sutured by writing. Gentzler and Tymoczko are asserting essentially this double transference when they state: "Translation is associated with power in all senses in part because translation is a metonymic process as well as a metaphoric one. Translations are inevitably partial; meaning in a text is always overdetermined, and the information in a source text is therefore always more extensive than a translation can convey. Conversely, the receptor language and culture entail obligatory features that shape the possible interpretations of the translation, as well as extending the meanings of the translation in directions other than those inherent in the source text… As a result, translators must make choices, selecting aspects or parts of a text to transpose and emphasize. Such choices in turn serve to create representations of the source texts, representations that are also partial. This partiality is not to be considered a defect, a lack, or an absence in a translation; it is a necessary condition of the act. It is also an aspect that makes the act of translation partisan: engaged and committed, either implicitly or explicitly".[361] What they are saying, in effect, is: translation is reading and the "who" that read matters just as much as the "what" of translation, supported by the recent return to the notion of auteurism in filmmaking which emphasizes on the imaginative and creative contributions of the directors.

Chow's introduction, "Leading Questions", to *Writing Diaspora* cites Stephen Owen's assault on "third world poets for pandering to the tastes of Western audience seeking "a cozy ethnicity" while reviewing Bei Dao's *The August Sleepwalker*. Owen claims that Chinese contemporary poets have relinquished their "national cultural heritage for a "translation" that commodifies experiences of victimization".[362] With the aid given by Freudian psychoanalysis and Yeh's defense, she targets the American reaction to the Westernisation of third world poetry,

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[361] Ibid. pp. xviii.
[362] Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993. pp. 1-2.

exposing the inherent contradictions of Owen's criticism that third world poetry has become "supremely translatable" and "there is always a particular danger of using one's victimization for self-interest: in this case, to sell oneself abroad by what an international audience, hungry for political virtue, which is always in short supply, find touching".[363] Chow responds by highlighting the absence in Owen's critique – a certain lack of self-awareness since "what is absent in Owen's musings is an account of the institutional investments that shape his own enunciation. This absence constitutes a definite form of power by not drawing attention to itself and thus not subjecting itself to the harsh judgment of "self-interest that is so useful in criticizing others".[364] Calling Owen a melancholic, "a person who cannot get over the loss of a precious, loved object and who ultimately introjects this loss into his ego",[365] Chow appears to have forgotten that her anecdotal contributions in *Writing Diaspora* and elsewhere as "tactical interventions" may and can be read in the same way. As Louis Althusser, in *Reading Capital*, asserts: "But as there is no such thing as an innocent reading, we must say what reading we are guilty of … It is a guilt reading, but not one that absolves its crime on confessing it. On the contrary, it takes responsibility for its crime as a 'justified crime' and defends it by proving its necessity. It is therefore a special reading which exculpates itself as a reading by posing every guilty reading the very question that unmasks its innocence, the mere question of its innocence: what it is to read?".[366] So what it is to read? Wolfreys draws our attention to the difference in readings as well as not reading by requesting us to read Althusser's phrase "reading as a philosopher" which to him "seems so straightforward that it is not read at all. Thinking we know what it means, we pass over it without question, without reading. Yet, Althusser confesses – *mea*

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[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid. pp. 2-3.
[365] Ibid. pp. 3.
[366] Wolfreys, Julian. *Readings: Acts of Close Reading in Literary Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. pp. 3.

culpa – to engaging in an interested act of reading, and proceeds to explain what exactly such an interest, such a responsibility entails".[367] If all readings are guilty of a certain fall from innocence because the readers are engaging in "acts of *interested* reading", what then can we say about Owen's and Chow's reading from a position in which she confesses – an institutional-intellectual situation – but does this acquit her?

First, I would like to address Owen's reading of third world poetry. His comment, also cited in Chow's introduction, is cucial to this thesis: "… We must wonder if such collections of poetry in translation become publishable only because the publisher and the readership have been assured that the poetry is lost in translation. But what if the poetry wasn't lost in translation? What if this is it? *This is* it".[368] One can only agree with Chow that Owen is nostalgic for the past – China's literary heritage which he perceives as lost – but the weakest link in Owen's "translation" of Bei Dao's poetry can be read in his questions. It is not the "what it is worth" in which we ought to be interested but the "who" and "whom" behind the reading: Bei Dao's translation of the reality he perceives into poetry, Owen's review of Bei Dao's poetry and Chow's reading of Owen's reading of third world poetry. Something is always lost in translation since language cannot recuperate all there is in reality. Owen's "it" is ironically the "it" of excess in *rhetorical economy* – the asyndeton in any translation – which, according to Gentzler and Tymoczko, gives access to someone's experiences and thoughts or something, the condition for the translational possibility. As to Chow's charge of the reviewer's self-interest, a response to Owen's accusation of the poet's interest leading to commodification, which also relates in a certain way to Chow's story of O discussed in the following chapter, Derrida's use of the word "usure" in the exergue of "White Mythology" is crucial to this particular circumstance: "*In sum,*

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[367] Ibid. pp. 4-5.
[368] Owen, Stephen. "The Anxiety of Global Influence What is World Poetry? *The New Republic*, November 19, 1990: pp.31. Also see Chow's *Writing Diaspora*, pp. 1.

the question demands a book: of philosophy, of the *usage* or of the good usage of philosophy. And it is in our interest that the involvement promises more than it gives. Thus we will content ourselves with a chapter, and for usage we will substitute – subtitle – *usure*".[369] The reserve within the image permits its circulation much like the currency, backed by gold, allows the circulation of goods and capital. Derrida, in sum, espouses Hegelianism without reserve.

Gentlzer's and Tymoczko's definition of "translation" resounds the process of reading, a reading that, *pace* Derrida, must first turn away from the sun so as to turn back to "the resource of logos" in order to reflect the illumination, thus, making the so-called source texts (conventionally speaking) the already spoken texts, spoken for and by the ghost readers of the future present, the present and the past present. These ghost readers must necessarily emerge from the textual gaps, unfortunately, much to the disappointment of Chow whose protest against the above reading of reading in *Writing Diaspora*[370] is both a symptom and presentiment of what is to come, for the inevitable inscriptive mastery is crucial to pedagogy, as noted in Naas's *Taking on the Tradition*. Yet, it is also noted by Gentzler and Tymoczko that "Indeed, partiality is what differentiates translation, enabling them to participate in the dialectic of power, the ongoing process of political discourse, and strategies for social change … in Canada, within a

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[369] Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. 209. Emphasis mine. In the footnotes to the word, Bass tells us that "*Usure* in French means both usury, the acquisition of too much interest, and using up, deterioration through usage. The *exergue* (already explained in the footnotes as derived from the Greek *ex-ergon* which literally means "outside the work"), then, is to explain why the subtitle of "White Mythology" is an economic term that inscribes an irreducible effect of both profit and loss. Thus, the preceding sentence noted that it is in our interest ("profitable") that involvement with metaphor *promises more than it gives*, i.e. is not profitable, leads to loss. For Derrida, the "general economy" is one based upon an irreducible *loss*, an "expenditure without reserve" without which there could be no idea of profit".

[370] Chow's protest can be found in the chapter "Where have all the Natives Gone?" where she critiques the various postcolonial viewpoints: "… Parry support of Homi Bhabha's argument that since a discursive system is inevitably split in enunciation the colonist's text itself already contains a native voice – ambivalently. The colonial text's "hybridity," to use Bhabha's word, means that the subaltern has spoken. But what kind of an argument is it to say that the subaltern's "voice" can be found in the ambivalence of the imperialist's speech? It is an argument which ultimately makes it unnecessary to come to terms with the subaltern since she has already "spoken," as it were, in the system's gaps. All we would need to do would be to continue to study – to deconstruct – the rich and ambivalent language of the imperialists!" pp. 34-35.

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perceived polarization of power, some women translators aggressively "womanhandled" translations in order to critique and challenge Western patriarchal discourse".[371] Much as I would like to agree with Gentzler and Tymoczko, the use of that power is not entirely dependent on the interpreter, who is subjected, in a way, to the power of the text, which is replete with textual cues, signalling where the crises are, the "programmatic" dimension of writing. Her own authorial power escapes her since the word "author", based on the theological authority of creation, displays its simulative dimension of God's inscriptive power that cannot by itself suffice as the ground, foundation, source or any other univocal measure. Does it mean, then, that "all we would need to do would be to continue to study – to deconstruct – the rich and ambivalent language of the imperialists?"[372] Chow's acidic rhetorical question indicates her disagreement to the proposition within her question. However, these gaps are the spaces giving to the economy of exchange. Bhabha's postcolonial terms, "textual ambivalence", "hybridity" and "mimicry", are useful not only in the postcolonial contexts; they are terms derived from Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis which also bear witness to the translational process.

The inscriptive crevices permit the regrounding with the appearance of the altered reading, an interpretation which is a hybrid between the author's text and the reader's writing. With the word "usure", Derrida demonstrates how the writer's intent can always escape the reader because of the surplus emitted with the movement of supplementarity: "And first we will be interested in a certain *usure* of metaphorical force in philosophical exchange. *Usure* does not overtake a tropic energy otherwise destined to remain intact; on the contrary, it constitutes the

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[371] Tymoczko, Maria and Edwin Gentzler. (Eds.) *Translation and Power*. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002. pp. xviii.
[372]Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993. pp. 34-35.

very history and structure of the philosophical metaphor".[373] The metaphor in its semantic ability to carry forth and over the required content embodies *ne plus ultra* the transferential movement of reading. When reading a text, the reader brings with her the epistemological schemas that have been inculcated and reading, like writing, is interpretative, a hermeneutic exercise that includes the possibility of change. The reader, in exercising her hermeneutic power, is constructing, in effect, a variant of the structure given by the writer, and this goes on interminably, perceived by those whose emphasis is on semantic domination as a lack, a textual crisis that simultaneously frustrates the intent of absolute control and incites the desire to keep reading, a continual detective work figured cinematically by *Memento* (2000), directed by Christopher Nolan – a filmic representation of an individual's faulty remembrance and, simultaneously, a profound critique of the metaphysics of Enlightenment, a decoding that seconds meaning which, in turn, says much about the act of encoding.

Perhaps Kafka's "The Imperial Message" points to the potentially infinite reconfiguring that is derived from the writer's own form.[374] The Kafkaesque references to the many palaces, courtyards and staircases, the sedimentation of configurative layers, indicate the palimpsest of writing. Derrida's take on Lévi-Strauss's quote on the myth of mythology applies to Kafka's fiction: "The absence of a center is here the absence of a subject and the absence of the author: 'Thus the myth and the musical work are like conductors of an orchestra, whose audience becomes the silent performers. If it is now asked where the real center of the work is to be found, the answer is that this is impossible to determine'".[375] We can never locate the actual centre, as

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[373] Derrida, Jacques. "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. pp. 209.

[374] Kafka, Franz. "An Imperial Message". *The Metamorphosis in the Penal Colony, and Other Stories*. Trans. Joachim Neugroschel. New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1993. pp. 264.

[375] Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 1978. pp. 363.

evident in "An Imperial Message", because the centre is, at once, both inside and outside the structure, at the margins between the writer and the reader – the centre that orientates the writer's structure of writing and the centre that aligns the reader's structure of reading. Thus, it is the collision between the forces of destruction and construction that propels writing into being. In Kafka's narrative, the actual message, the authorial truth, does not and may never reach the designated reader, whose wretchedness is probably due to the unfulfilled desire of receiving that message. If Fenollosa is considered delusional when he thinks that Chinese writing enriches the imagination with its ideographic dimension, then, the following questions are necessary to the rethinking of the ideographic, the connection between the idea and the image: How does the figurative facet of poetic writing affect the imagination? Do poetic figures not imply the ideographic quality of language? Does the term "ideograph" only signify transparency and directness in language? The focus is on the overlapping of dichotomies; *the divide between the ideographic and the phonetic collapses with deconstruction.* Whether one is predicated on the gaze and the other on the voice, they are both fetishised and raised as prostheses. With his latest essay in *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, Saussy's comparative study gives the lateral and associative field of poetic devices its due as the vehicle for linguistic and cultural transference, the analogous aspect that aids the carrying over of meaning from one distinct term to another, setting the conditions for the other to speak. Thus, Derrida's reticence is an elliptical gesture to the Chinese awareness of the poetic power of transference, the power of the horizontal breaking through and unveiling the weakness of the verticality of logic. This is made possible with the imaginative nourishment from poetry, a deciphering instead of a decoding that indicates the Lacanian imaginary inversion incited by the real of the Other, the Other emerging only as phantasmatic discourse, which destabilises the symbolic order of authenticity.

Zhang cites the Chinese philosophical convention of designating the classical texts with the names of the writers as a justification of the writers' authority. He states: "The convention in ancient China of naming a book after its author and the settled practice of ancient writers quoting earlier writings do not so much emphasize the origin of writing in its author, but rather make authors identifiable first in their writing and transform the writings of philosophers like Laozi and Zhuangzi into great sourcebooks, origins of authority, and the ultimate texts of reference in the intertextuality of Chinese writing".[376] Read in relation to Fu Zhengyuan's *China's Legalists*,[377] I can only agree with Zhang's notion of the name as the authoritative marker, correlating, of course, to the Derridean interpretation of the designative power of names. But I shall take up Zhang's mention of the intertextuality of Chinese writing in my iconoclastic shattering of the deceptively infallible icon upon which the idea of imperialism takes shape, which argues that the travelling signifier whose non-fixity makes it the perfect tool for the breaching of prosthetic projections. Derrida's supplement and Lacan's *objet petit a*, the weaponry of inscriptive violence, are keys to the unlocking of the sovereign gate, the gate between heaven and earth, the Tiananmen Gate.

Wen (writing) as arms against tyranny is evident in Saussy's exposition of the Five Colours recorded in *Kaogong ji* as the figures of *wen* (ornamentation): ""The combination of green and red is called *wen*. That of red and white is called *zhang* … [boundary]. That of white and black is called *fu* … [axe-head shape]; that of black and green is called *fu* … [double-bow shape]." The *Kaogong ji* gives a "grammar of ornament" (if I may reuse with new emphasis a fine nineteenth-century title) – a set of rules and forms appropriate to the adornment of a Zhou

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[376] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. 33.

[377] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and their Art of Ruling*. London: M. E. Sharp, 1996.

king … But it is the syntax, or combination, of the meaning of the different background colors and the different shapes chosen for the foreground that gives the artifact as a whole its character as an "inscriptional object" in the broadest sense or *wen wu*"[378] This citation, especially the description of *fu*, the double-bow shape metaphorised by the combination of black and green brings to mind Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's analogy of *Kairòs*, biopolitics as the democratic weapon against the global war of biopower. With the deconstructive question, Hardt and Negri elucidate the metaphor: "When does the moment of rupture come? Earlier we spoke of political decision-making in terms of networks of biopolitical determinations and an apparatus of cooperation of the singular wills, but here we have to recognise decision as an event – not the linear accumulation of Chronos and the monotonous tickling of its clocks but the sudden expression of Kairòs. Kairòs is the moment when the arrow is shot by the bowstring, the moment when a decision of action is made".[379] These figurative parallels will be read as analogous to the workings of deconstruction, a strategic interception of the totality and authority of the icon.

Returning to Zhang and his textual problematic, he may have devoted a paragraph to intertextuality but his reading of the name in terms of the authority of the classical texts contradicts the notion of writing as intertext, the Derridean trace which intervenes the control of the authoritative texts. The fact that he refers to these texts as the origins, "the fountain head of tradition, the great thinkers of Taoism and Confucianism"[380] and hence the authority accorded to them makes his understanding of the term "intertext" suspect. Intertextuality, in any writing, debunks the notion of beginnings and endings because one text is merely a repetition of another

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[378] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 68.

[379] Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004. pp. 357.

[380] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. 33.

in difference. Archaeological retrieval has to contend with the trace, which, in other words, means that the source is only the beginning because of the incisive move in the decision. The trace is suppressed so that the name appears in writing. As a consequence of the structural reduction of the name, the signifying excesses create textual fissures out of which deconstructive possibilities emerge. The poststructuralist reading of the name interrupts and inflects the inscriptive path, an extrication that sends the signifier to a new direction, a disruption finding its fulcrum in D.C. Lau's commentary of the speculative base of the scholastic connection between text and author.[381] *Laozi*, the text, is named after Laozi, the author, in order to highlight the supplementary purposes of both text and writer. They are nothing if not signifiers, Lacan's *objet petit a*, leading to other signifiers. This citation from *Zhuangzi* where the wheelwright tells Duke Huan that "what you are reading, my lord, is nothing but the *dregs* of the ancients"[382] is used to demonstrate the pleonastic characteristic of the "word" as a signifier. Countering Zhang's argument is my instigation against the primacy of the name, a disruption of the totalitarian transcendental signified privileged by the imperial rule as recorded in the five thousand year-old Chinese history. Meaning is significant in poststructuralism or classical poetic writing only because it rests on the gliding signifier, evoking the lateral dimension of poetic signification, figured in my dissertation as the exilic flight of the persecuted poets and writers, the diasporas emancipated from the repressive violence of communist totalitarianism. Their poetic writings, the Dionysian revolt against the imperial aspirations of Legalism, are recyclable wastes of the ancients, traces returning as ironic forms to haunt the analytic, a trait similar to the postmodern

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[381] Lau, D.C. (trans.) "The Problem of Authorship" (Appendix 1). *Tao Te Jing*. Laozi. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001. pp. 121-132.
[382] Zhang, Longxi. *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1992. pp. 30. Emphasis mine.

parody which relies on an inscriptive reuse. These counterforces, assets recovery, use the defective cornerstone of Eastern metaphysics to unveil the ideological mask of Communism.

Chapter 4

Politics as the Last Transcendence?: The Politics of Representation

…

When will you come with me?

The ground is moving under your feet
The waters of life are flowing free
But all you do is laugh at me, 'cause
I've got *nothing* to my name.

Why do you always laugh at the pack on my back?
Why do I always keep on going?
The old horse stands before you; *here I am*
With nothing to my name.

When will you come with me?

Tell you this – I've been waiting a long time.
Tell you this – my final plea:
I want to grab you by the hands
And have you go away with me.

Your hands they are a-shaking
Your eyes awash with tears
Do you really mean to tell me
You love me as I am?

…

Cui Jian
Nothing to My Name

As soon as you're born they make you feel small
By giving you no time instead of it all
Till the pain is so big you feel nothing at all
A working class hero is something to be
 …

There's room at the top they are still telling you
But first you must learn to smile as you kill
If you want to be like the fool on the hill
A working class hero is something to be
…

If you want to be a hero, well just follow me.

Green Day
Working Class Hero

Green Day's "A Working Class Hero" depicts a society predicated on social stratification. The English class struggle is energised by the pulsation of the non-lyrical reiteration, "A working class hero is something to be". It may have been the aim of the English to eradicate class division but that goal has yet to be realised because social stratification is part and parcel of the organisation of a society. There will always be a class, a nation, a religion or a race self-legitimated as the exception. The exceptional status is the basis of its power within a society, nation or the international arena. Both songs in the epigraph give voice to the oppressed by foregrounding their dispossession. What does it mean to be something? How does having nothing to my name affect my ontological status? Does it mean that having nothing to her name, the oppressed cannot speak? This chapter examines the possibility of translating the Law in its universality – for it to be legitimated and functioning as law – to particularity where the individual supposedly embraced by the Law is addressed. According to Samuel Weber in "In The Name of the Law", the law self-legitimates so that it gains its significance through the use of a generic term, an operation similar to terms such as "man", "right", et cetera. Using the American constitution as an example, Weber informs us that "Indeed, deconstruction turns out to share at least *two* of the three traits through which de Tocqueville defines the judiciary: it comes only when called, and its concern , or occasion, is always tied to the particulars of that call: particular texts, questions, conflicts. In its manner of intervention, however, it distinguishes itself from that of the courts, and in particular from the Anglo-American legal tradition described by de Tocqueville. For if deconstruction responds to conflictual appeals, it is not with a view to arriving at a definitive verdict. In this sense, deconstruction does not arbitrate, nor set precedents. To a society whose "constitution" depends in no small measure upon the rereading of a written text, in order for its authority to be reaffirmed in face of ever-changing conditions,

deconstruction cannot but be both familiar and uncanny… In its peculiar way, deconstruction is called upon to address precisely the *power* to give 'body to a shadow,' (cited from de Tocqueville) and in so doing it raises the question of whether the two – body and shadow – can always be told apart".[383] Weber's writing of law is cited to corroborate my thesis of *khōra* as "One" and fused with the "One" of *dao*. The fact that the signifier is legitimated only if it can be repeated has implications to the act of naming here. Earlier, he tells us that, in modernity, the state as lawgiver can only attain its legitimacy by procuring consensual agreement through the appellation, "people", which endows the individual a fabricated identification. However, the signifier, in actuality, is an empty term paradoxically providing the state its sovereign power, an incompatibility made evident with the fact that the legal machinery is the legislative exception, both beyond and above the Law since it is the "'origin of all power' without which there would be neither society nor state".[384]

As Derrida has shown us with his discussion of *Before the Law*, the impenetrability of the Law means that it cannot be responsible for every specific member, even though the justification for the Law is *the body politic* made up of *every* individual. Although the Law is the ground for the constitution of "the people", it can account merely numerically its relation to "the people" as a collective but not in qualitative terms this relation to the singular. The disjunction appears when the qualitative dimension is questioned and this is detectable in what are considered obverse: the American constitution, a liberal democratic legislation, and the Communist regime. Using Derrida's reading of de Man's reading of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, Weber suggests that the question of law "runs through [de Man's] entire work", and this, too, applies to Derrida's *oeuvre* confirming Wolfreys's definition of deconstruction in *Literary*

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[383] Weber, Samuel. "In the Name of the Law". *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Ed. Drucilla Cornel, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 238.
[384] Ibid. pp. 236.

Theories: A Reader: "As with its French predecessor, it has legal connotations: 'A reform the beginnings of which must be a work of deconstruction'. Deconstruction presages *re*form".[385] What is deemed deviant, the Derridean *trace*, repressed so that writing in its proper form can materialise, reemerges to disturb these structures of writing. That which is included depends on what is excluded. The equivalential *dimension* of signification, when read in conjunction to the differential *plane*, demonstrates the premise of this thesis as one grounded on "the one and the multiple", the emerging of Ernesto Laclau's empty signifier out of an interweaving of Derrida's deconstruction of speech and writing and Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of signification, a twisted knitting preempting the future anterior of the Saussurean structuralist discourse on the differential relations within the alphabetic system. Walls, metaphoric or real, may be erected and were built in the past as defenses against invaders but these boundaries, no matter how indestructible they appear to be, have proven to be preys of time. As an allegory of inscription and reception, performance and being, Kafka's "An Ancient Manuscript", which has a curious connection to *Laojing* (*Old Well*), is salient to my reading here.

The narrator of "An Ancent Manuscript", who is a cobbler, tells us that "a great deal had been neglected in the defense of our fatherland" and the imperial guards who used to "march in and out ceremonially" on the square fronting the imperial palace have retreated into the palace. Chaos reigns as a result of this lack of defense. The imperial palace, which has "lured the nomads", is barred and locked but the barbarians camp outside, waiting presumably for the opportunity to pounce. The nomads are described as antithetical to the rightful inhabitants of the square; the latter are civilised, leading an orderly existence and speaking a communicable language while the nomads are barbaric, noisome and linguistically deficient. Although the

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[385]Wolfreys, Julian. (ed.) "Introduction: What remains Unread" *Literary Theories: A Reader and Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999. pp. 268.

armed nomads have yet to be violent, "they keep busy honing swords, sharpening arrows, practicing horsemanship".[386] The narrator tells us that the "peaceful square, which was always kept scrupulously clean, has been turned into an absolute stable".[387] If "An Ancient Manuscript" is read as a metaphor of writing and symbolic of the insurgencies occurring at Tiananmen Square, then the external intrusion, contrary to what is perceived as rightful, is an assault aimed at unsettling the organised properties of signification or, in the socio-poitical circumstances of twentieth-century China, the organised institution of the imperial order, evident historically in the Boxer Rebellion from November 1899 to September 1901 when the Han peasants rebelled against the *Qing* dynasty whose ineffective rule allowed foreign influence to spread economically, politically and culturally causing increased poverty and social alienation. They held the foreign quarters near the Forbidden City under siege for fifty–five days before the foreign legions retaliated resulting in huge losses for China. The successful nomadic invasion of the square in "An Ancient Manuscript", a figure of the horizontal plane mentioned by Deleuze and Gauttari in *What is Philosophy?*, can be read as a counterpart to the walling of Shih Huang Ti's empire, the first dynasty to be structured in accordance to the legalistic tradition.

In de Man's interpretation of *The Social Contract*, he brings to the fore the contradiction inherent to Rousseau's thesis, the use of organic and natural metaphors to describe an unnatural and inorganic relation between the specific and the general in society. Weber indicates the problematic: "Each time that Rousseau describes the utility and even necessity of a social pact and association through which the individual would subordinate their immediate, private interests to society in return for the protection and security furnished by the collective, he shortly thereafter acknowledges, explicitly or implicitly, that this necessity already presupposes what it

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[386] Ibid. pp. 246.
[387] Ibid.

is supposed to explain: the subsumption of the particular under the general will",[388] an issue arising because of the lack of contact between the two parties, the legal machinery and the individual within society. Weber continues to pursue this in an ironic vein: "Given such noncommunication of individual and general, of private and public, it is difficult to conceive of how any contract or contact between them could ever arise, much less endure, except through what might be called synecdochal sleight-of-hand: the secret substitution of one individual or another, of 'one' for 'all'".[389] With the same sleight-of-hand, Weber's argument is used here as a stringer to redirect the course to the Chinese situation with the use of the linking parks of *khōra* and *dao*. It is precisely a veil of ignorance covering the individual's eyes which permits the possibility of the Law, a dexterous veil crafted for its ideological functioning. The Maoist regime eventually failed because its veil was slashed with the quotidian knife – the common arising as a challenge to the "one", an inversion that sees people from all walks of Chinese society rebelling against the regime. Cui Jian, a political activist in the form of a rock singer, ironises the Communist long march to Yunan with "Rock and Roll on the Road of the New Long March", with the last few lines translated by Chow as:

> What should I say, what should I do, in order to be the real me
>
> How should I play, how should I sing, in order to feel great
>
> I walk and think of snowy mountains and grasslands
>
> I walk and sing of our Chairman Mao
>
> Oh! one, two, three, four and five, six and seven.[390]

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[388] Weber, Samuel. "In the Name of the Law". *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 240

[389] Ibid.

[390] Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993. pp. 150.

Chow further informs us that what is promoted in China is the remembrance of "the successful collectivization of the people for the establishment of a national community".[391] Referring to Váelav Havel's words on rock music in Czechoslovakia, Chow explains the revolutionary role of rock music: "Under a totalitarian regime, politics as such are eliminated and the resistance as to find substitute outlets for expression. One of these substitute channels was rock music. That's why its role here is more significant than it is where it's part of general consumption".[392] In her view, the incompatibility of the "grave" subject matter and the "decadence" of rock music incensed the regime. Vital to this overturning of the logos/pathos binary is the hack humour making the song revolutionary. The parody involved angered the authorities since the bravery associated with the long march is subverted providing an insight into what drives this heroic venture, patriotism as the appellation of the individual – the sublation of the "real" me to the cause/course of nationalism. The saviour, Mao, was supposed to relieve the soldiers from abjection and suffering and the promise of salvation, national or individual, clearly rendered to us with the ironic overtones of the song, is merely a promise as Cui Jian poses the question, "How should I play, how should I sing, in order to feel great", indirectly signalling the dissatisfaction of the citizens even though the long march did overthrow Guomindang's rule and unite the country. The advent of the media has given alternative channels to political resistance and these channels provide a new twist to political resistance but it can also be argued that mediatisation has given the regime other options to make its ideology work.

Cui Jian continues to perform for the university students even though his song, *Nothing to My Name*,[393] was banned by the Chinese government for its seditious inclinations. During the

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[391] Ibid.
[392] Ibid.
[393] Cui, Jian. "Nothing to My Name". *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*. Ed. Barmé, Geremie and John Minford. New York: Hill and Wang, 1988. pp. 400-401.

1989 Tiananmen Square Incident, he was one of the supporters, singing to encourage the students in their passive-active insurgence against the regime. The lyrics render the existential angst of the Chinese evident, indicating the tremours felt on the square, a translation of the discursive terrain of textual contestations, a stage with the invisible fourth square of conflictual relations, to the physical square in front of Tiananmen Gate where an actual conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed was played out as the students went on a hunger strike, shouting slogans and smashing bottles, a symbol of their dissidence against Deng Xiaoping's governance (Xiaoping means "little bottle" in a homonymous fashion), an instance of how the *pragma* (meaning "event" or "thing") within a signifier is actualised. According to Andrew Benjamin, "The *pragma* is the specific instant. It is a translation, an interpretation, a determinate meaning. The *pragma* therefore involves the ontology and the temporality of the instant… In place of the instant the term actual has been used. Actual presence is the *pragma* when the *pragma* is understood not as an end in itself but as a presentation where that which inheres is acknowledged as present but as not presented. Allowing for this distinction demand that there be an ontological-temporal difference between determinations which are actualized and those determinations which while present are not actualized. It must be acknowledged of course that the mark of these other determinations can never be absolutely excluded. It is rather that they are not present as the *pragma* itself. Their potential actualisation as the *pragma* – their becoming the pragmatic – is that which allows for the capacity for reinterpretation and the possibility of a conflict of interpretations".[394] In other words, the staged event is presented as determinate because of its emergence from the many possibilities within the signifier which also gives space to an intervention of another possibility, thus its non-teleological dimension. The open-endedness is

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[394] Benjamin, Andrew. *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: A New Theory of Words*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989. pp. 178.

precisely the reason for the potential "failure" of the structure of signification and, by extension, the actual revolt or the institutional counterforce. Derrida, in "Structure, Sign and Play", expounds on the futility of the totalising act. Besides, the infiniteness of existence cannot be captured by a finite discourse. What defers this act is "in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being in an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center that arrests and grounds the play of substitutions. One could say – rigorously using that word whose scandalous signification is always obliterated in French – that this movement of play, permitted by the lack or absence of a center or origin, is the movement of *supplementarity*".[395]

The image of the flowing water in Cui Jian's lyrics signals the threat implicit to the movement of supplementarity: the tumultuous opposition against the repressive state is akin to the unleashing of the psychically repressed, and, with retrospection, it can be liken to the *kan* trigramme of *Yijing*, indicating that the initially subdued violence of the protestors was like the stillness of the Lake with No Name running deep with undercurrents of smouldering and whirling passion. The reactionary momentum accelerated in response to the suppressive aggression of the regime. The founding violence inherent in the 1989 revolution was released during a political climate ripe for insurrection when Deng's modernisation reforms were exposed as benefitting his bureaucracy and its followers, an institutional system running on bribery and corruption, while the masses suffered economic deprivation. The surface text may appear to speak about romantic love but its revolutionary leanings can be detected when the song is read as a portrayal of a dissident's yearning to have his desire for the social and economic improvement

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[395] Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". *Writing and Difference*. Trans Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 1978. pp 356. author's emphasis.

of the peasantry and the Chinese intellectuals fulfilled. Economic reforms such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution had left China not only economically disadvantaged but also existentially depleted. Carrying a cultural baggage deemed subversive by the regime, many Chinese intellectuals who had to go through political rehabilitation found themselves nothing more than a beast of burden. The intellectuals were not the only ones persecuted by Mao and Deng, the Chinese youths, for example, the Red Guards, were (ab)used by Mao as means for his own ends and then exiled to the outlying areas of rural China for forced labour. Coerced into intensive labour, a tool of political correction and after rounds of political purges, both the young and the educated became thoroughly disillusioned with the Communist Party but their love for the country never fades, an emotion made obvious in songs, wall posters, petitions and poetics written in the hope that their passionate voices could be heard. Cui Jian's assertive existential proclamation, "The old horse stands before you; *here I am / With nothing to my name*" is, perhaps, an attempt to give voice to the sufferings of the Chinese people – their economic and cultural impoverishment because of thoughtless party policies, the multiple tortures the intellectuals who were branded "Monsters and Demons" underwent during the Cultural Revolution and the people's anxieties and fears of persecution – a suffering which he empathises because of his own experience of rubbing the party wrongly and becoming a non-person as far as the regime is concerned.

China has always maltreated its best, which is made manifest by the incessant political persecutions suffered by the intellectuals, while the Communist party reigns. Those who resist political rehabilitation are considered "non-persons". China, then, is a nation where the subaltern can speak and act but whose speech and action mean torture or death or exile to the speaker and her/his family members. As a consequence, irony that is instrumental to *avant-garde* writing can

be found in songs. "Without the Chinese Communist Party There Would Be No New China" is an excellent example. In the footnotes to *The Tiananmen Papers*, the editors included a little commentary on the song which was sung during a minor demonstration that occurred on 27th April 1989: "The song was a favorite of the students, even after the June 4th killings, because of its ambiguity. It said only that the Communist Party was responsible for China as it currently existed, and whether one took this as praise or blame was up to the listener. But because it was an officially approved song, no one could object to their singing it".[396] The shift to politics here can be justified by alluding to Geremie Barme's and John Minford's introduction to *Seeds of Fire*, a compilation of dissident literature: "In China more than anywhere else in the world, literature and politics have always gone hand in hand; the same can be said with philosophy and literature as the Chinese sees binaries as intertwined instead of separated. Literature has always had a strong didactic function. Statesmen have tended to be litterateurs, and most writers have been socially and politically engaged. Even seemingly esoteric and apolitical poetry often has a hidden political significance. At a time when disillusionment is so widespread, when the old socialist ethos is a little more than a thing of the past and a spiritual vacuum has taken its place, many have looked to the writers and artists, not to the discredited Party and its hired hacks, for enlightenment and fresh hope".[397] This chapter explores the literature of those who, in their own ways, willingly shouldered the weight of "Chineseness" and resisted state's sanctions because of their love for China and its people. Most of them are also the very people conscripted as Red Guards whose youth was wasted not only as Mao's instruments of violence and suffered the subsequent neglect when they were sent away as the regime changed strategy.

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[396] Nathan, Andrew J. and Perry Link. *The Tiananmen Papers*. Comp. Zhang Liang. London: Abacus, 2002. pp. 108.
[397] Barme, Geremie and John Minford. (Eds.) *Seed of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*. Newcastle [U. K.]: Bloodaxe Books, 1989. pp. xxiv-xxv.

The Return of the Native as the Dissenter?

I know that I am alone; I know that in the whole world I am the only keeper of the secret event – the Congress – whose memory I can no longer share, I am now the last member of that Congress. It is undeniable that all men are members of the Congress – that there is not a single being on earth who is not – but I know I am a member in a very different way. I *know* that I am, and that's what sets me apart from my numberless colleagues, present and past. It is undeniable that on the seventh of February, 1904, we swore by what is most holy (is there anything holy on earth, or anything that is not?) never to reveal the history of the Congress, but it is no less undeniable that my now committing perjury is also part of the Congress. This last statement is sufficiently dim, but it may whet the curiosity of my eventual readers.

<div style="text-align:right">

Jorge Luis Borges
The Congress

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Borges' "The Congress" begins this section for two reasons. First, the word "congress" brings to mind the organisational fracture within the American Congress due to its multiple failures to deal with the issues of terrorism; second, the Congress in Borges' short story also figures the special theme of the *New Directions in the Humanities*:[398] the unveiling and re-veiling with the act of reading – the double movements of deconstruction, and the role of the New Humanities. The congress[399] is not just a legislative body but also a platform where people meet for discussion, which is specifically emphasised in his assertion: "It is undeniable that all men are members of the Congress – that there is not a single being on earth who is not",[400] an ambivalent gesture to the democratic aspiration underscoring the word because of the possibility of congressional exclusion, a potential that paradoxically applies to all, even though all men are supposedly members of the Congress. What does the narrator mean by the puzzling commentary "but I know I am a member in a very different way? I *know* that I am, and that's what sets me apart from my numberless colleagues, present and past"? This is an enigma I shall attempt to unravel with an

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[398] It is a conference organised by Commongrounds in conjunction with the American University of Pars from 17th to 21st July 2007.

[399] In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, "congress" means "1.a formal meeting of delegates for discussion 2. (Congress) a national legislative body, esp. that of the US 3. a society or organization 4. coming together or meeting". Etymologically, according to *Dictionary.com*, "congress" comes from the Latin word *congressus,* a derivative of *congred(i)* "to approach; meet" "con + -gredi. comb. form of *gradi* "to step" + *tus* suffix of v. action".

[400] Borges, Jorge Luis. *The Book of Sand*; *The Gold of the Tiger*. Trans. Norman Thomas de Giovanni and Alastair Reid. Harmondsworth, Middx: Penguin Books, 1979. pp. 15-34.

exposé of the politics of representation with the scandalous unmasking of the "who is (not)" behind the "that is" by scrutinising the knot of translation in political representation.

Perhaps Borges's "The Congress" indicates that all members of society have the right to speak, to take that *step* in voicing our critical assessment of the political, social and economic problems of the society in which we live regardless of one's social status. The epigraphic citation represents an endeavour to retrieve the forsaken with reference to "the secret event", which the narrator does share eventually albeit in a cryptic manner, a commitment that necessitates the committing of a perjury, an infidelity inherent to the performative dimension of reading, a double act of betrayal that re-covers the event, a revelation that also conceals. Perhaps, "the secret event" has to do with the laying down of the law in literature, a dangerous supplement that lays upon and de-lays the full accomplishment of the goal because that which institutes the law of literature, the impiety within poetics, is blissfully ignored. What gives a person the right to speak? As long as s/he is human and belongs to a certain community, she has that right. This right to speak, a right forgotten either because it has been surrendered to the privileged from time immemorial or abducted by the elite must be returned to the individual if we are to move toward the Derridean democracy-to-come. This chapter commemorates those who had the courage to speak even when their rights to speak were seized by the authorities. And the ones who cannot speak for various reasons: the lack of education, poverty or incarceration – the sacrificed remainders who must be suppressed so that the legislative body appears One – we must aid in creating the conditions, that space, for the oppressed and the marginalised to speak. Lyotard's "The Other's Right" confirms the above proposal: "This picture of the republic is idyllic, but the

idyll conceals something far from idyllic. The threat of being deprived of speech is not contingent; it weighs constantly on the interlocutory right".[401]

Lyotard speaks of the threatening weight of extermination with an example of those who managed to escape the death camps: "But how can they communicate the abjection to which they were reduced? *It was first and foremost the severing of communication*. How can one communicate by means of interlocution the terror of what it means no longer to be destined to anyone or anything? They were not spoken to, they were treated. They were not the enemies. The SS or Kapos who called them dogs, pigs, or vermin did not treat them as animals but as refuse. It is the destiny of refuse to be incinerated. The ordeal of being forgotten is unforgettable. It reveals a truth about our relationship to language that is stifled and repressed by the serene belief in dialogue… Excluded from the speech community, the camp victims were rejected into poverty, the misery of this secret. In that misery resides the true dignity of speech".[402] This is, perhaps, the answer to the question posed earlier in the discussion of Green Day's *The Working Class Hero*. Dialogue implies a reciprocity that gestures to respect and empathy for the other but those external to language use, the excess, becomes the rejected wastes. If writing emerges from textual gaps, then these are the spaces where the silenced – the subaltern instance – can be given expression, thus the necessity for more writing. It is noteworthy that Derrida does not use the word "subaltern" to signify the silenced and this can be read both as a gesture to the fact that the oppressed can speak and act under certain conditions of possibility, an implication, perhaps, of the pervasiveness of oppression and the altered readings that give voice to the silenced other. The word "subaltern" is used only in *Of Grammatology* when he directs our attention to the threat of

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[401] Lyotard, Jean François. "The Other's Right". *The Politics of Human Rights*. Ed. Obrad Savić. London and New York: Verso, 1999. pp. 186.
[402] Ibid.

perversion posed by writing.[403] Derrida's commentary is cited here as it is crucial to the deconstruction of both Spivak's and Chow's critique on representation:

For the concept of the supplement – which here determines that of the representative image – harbors within itself two significations whose cohabitation is as strange as it is necessary. The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, techne, image, representation, convention, etc., come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function. This kind of supplementarity determines in a certain way all the conceptual oppositions within which Rousseau inscribes the notion of Nature to the extent that it *should* be self-sufficient.

But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in the place of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory [*suppléant*] and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes (the) place* [*tient-lieu*]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself.[404]

Part of the citation is also quoted in Rey Chow's "Love Me, Master, Love Me, Son", a literary critique of Bai Xianyong's *Yuqing Sao*, a tale of a young servant-cum-nanny whose charge, a young boy, Rong Ge, is the narrator. The child experiences an inexplicable attraction

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[403] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1974. pp 144-145. Author's emphasis.
[404] Ibid.

when he first sees Yuqing Sao who "took [his] breathe away" and, for some reason, "[he] could not say why, but [he] felt [he] wanted to be close to her the moment [he] saw her".[405] Chow uses Yuqing Sao in her critique on subaltern representation in which she accuses Bai of fetishising the subaltern through a voyeuristic novella. Yuqing Sao is a multiple transgressor in the story: having an incestuous relationship with her younger brother means that she goes against Chinese social norms on, a least, three levels. First, she is not supposed to be involved with a younger man; second, the relationship is taboo as it is incestuous; and, last, as a nanny, she is supposed to refrain from any sexual relations. Chow also speaks of the appeal persons of lower classes has for the bourgeois, a symptom she exemplifies with Bai's portrayal of Yuqing Sao, what she calls "the pornographic use of such cases for forms of intellectual pleasure and closure – conceptual or practical – that actually reproduces rather than challenges existing social injustice".[406]

Seeing Yuqing Sao as an other, a dangerous supplement who eventually resorts to murder and self-annihilation, she quotes Derrida to prop her argument that "such radicalism also contains the option of conservation and recontainment: what substitutes anarchically can be treated, retrospectively and deliberately, as *mere* addition, as mere ethnic detail to be bounded and incorporated".[407] She also questions the frame of the fable, "Do we say that Rong Ge understands everything? No, he is too young (and too much of a 'blank'). But do we say that everything escapes him? No, precisely also because he is 'blank' and 'transparent': he sees and records everything".[408] In accordance to the thetic argument, Rong Ge is the white upon which the black appears. Chow interrogates the "privileged" position of the narrator who is the

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[405] Chow, Rey. "'Love Me, Master, Love Me, Son': A Cultural Other Pornographically Constructed in Time". *Boundaries in China*. Ed. John Hay. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1994, pp. 248. The citation is taken from Chow's essay on *Youqing Sao*.
[406] Ibid. pp. 244.
[407] Ibid. pp. 249.
[408] Ibid. pp. 252.

"master" of the tale and the surrogate "son/lover" which, in a way, implicates the writer. What is at stake, in the above account, is the way Chow uses Derrida's "dangerous supplement"? First, when Derrida alludes to "the subaltern instance", he is gesturing indirectly to an Other so radical that it is unrepresentable and the "instance" becomes the Thing itself as he unequivocally states that it is the cohabitation of two significations. Thus, "Compensatory [*suppléant*] and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes (the) place* [*tient-lieu*]".[409] The subaltern "instance" is the supplement, the replacement and the addition of the silenced. This makes the representation the presentation – the presencing of the object in question is bound to the subject – which explains the delayed and deferred effects of the object's truth in representation. Contrary to Chow, Bai's depiction of Yuqing Sao is read as a multifaceted character whose clean and white facade lacerates with an accidental penetration into her passionate Dionysian interior. The child narrator takes a peek through a pricked hole at Yuqing Sao who is in the grip of sexual throes with her lover/adopted younger brother, *a metaphoric penne (penis?) which is tantamount to a narrative rape*, described by Chow as "not simply a picture of a woman having sex but a picture of feminine sexuality-as-insanity-and-animality".[410] Whether Yuqing Sao is imaged as a whore/beast or an angel *at different temporal points*, these double-takes of her are an agglomeration – a ball of varied elements – reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's *Moon Woman* and *Number 7* giving the *fullest measure of presence* to Yuqing Sao, the impervious IT which haunts the fiction as well as the narrator. This strange sameness is an effect of a double vision given by the synonymy of the signifiers, Yuqing Sao to Rong Ge and Rong Ge to Bai, making the identities ambiguous and functional only as differences.

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[409] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1974. pp. 145.
[410] Ibid. pp. 248.

The improprieties that tarnish Yuqing Sao's moral standing as a nanny and sister is "the secret" of the "Law", which, according to Chow, is represented by Rong Ge, who punishes her. The fictional execution executes the entity in its objectification, a death paradoxically bringing life to the agent-(narrator)-writer, the representatives, signifiers stuffed with the *jouissance* of the Other. As Chow asserts: "Where the 'content' of Yuqing Sao stands out as a kind of corrupt 'signified', the child's narrative, as signifier, blurs its intricacy and emotional complexity; but where Yuqing Sao's story is subordinated to the more 'innocent' eyes of the child, those eyes have also captured and remembered all the 'pornographic' details vividly",[411] thus, in a way, verifying Derrida's words: "Somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself",[412] which, when rephrased, means that Yuqing Sao is the supplement of Rong Ge, and Rong Ge the supplement of Bai and Bai the supplement of Chow herself. The thesis takes a different view to the issue of identification by suggesting that the homoerotic undercurrents occur with Bai's identification with Yuqing Sao through the mirror mask of the male child, Rong Ge, and appropriating her with an attempt at a circular return to selfsameness, perhaps, an always interrupted conceptual homosexuality. The issue at play in Chow's essay has to do with the attribution of the relation which gives the child his identity as a child solely to the father/son relation when it is the mother or the *surrogate mother*, Yuqing Sao, who *matters* more crucially to the child's development at that moment, an identity constituted as the desire to be the desire of the Other, which is also not *simply a matter of* sexual desire. It is, instead, an all too familiar familial problematic. Psychoanalytically, the proxy, in this case, Rong Ge, figures Lacan's discussion of Melanie Klein's intricate link between child and mother, the

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[411] Ibid.

[412] Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1974. pp. 145.

fort/da pendulum that drives the enjoyment of the mother of whom he wants to possess exclusively, which the Law of the Father ruptures. If he enjoys his surrogate mother, he does so vicariously through the peephole with Yuqing Sao as a proxy to his homosexual fantasies, the Kleinian "projected identification". In semiotic terms, Rong Ge's relation to Yuqing Sao is not just a metaphoric but also a metonymic one, which, in turn, becomes linked to Bai, the writer, whose homosexuality can explain the connective dimension of the indemnificatory attraction *and* repulsion, the *kettle logic* of language.

Hence, what makes the presentation of Yuqing Sao possible is the narrator whose visitation to the past allows Bai his reading leading to Chow's reading and, later, mine. These readings of readings are merely mirror reflections whereby light on the Sublime object (or, perhaps, subject may be a better word to use here) is cast in ways that produces a residue, an *eXtra*, that slips the interpretative grip. To Lacan, it is "the effects determined by the double play of combination and substitution in the signifier, along the two axes of metaphor and metonymy which generate the signified; effects which are determinant in the institution of the subject… It speaks in the Other, I say, designating by this Other the very place called upon by a recourse to speech in any relation where it intervenes… *For the phallus* is a signifier, a signifier whose *function* in the intrasubjective economy of analysis might lift the veil from that which it served in the mysteries. For it is to this signifier that it is given to designate as a whole the effect of there being a signified, inasmuch as it conditions any such effect by its presence as signifier".[413] This means that the presenter finds her/his subjectivity *in* and *through* the Other whose indeterminacy makes the representation an example of the subaltern – the taking on of the issue of the silenced mis-takes the subaltern. When read in relation to what Lacan says earlier about the signifier, this

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[413] Lacan, Jacques. "The Meaning of the Phallus". *Psychoanalytic Criticism*. Ed. Sue Vice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. pp. 124. emphasis mine.

clarifies the conundrum of the unthinkable and unsayable subaltern: "It is on the basis of such a wager… Freud's discovery gives to the opposition of signifier to signified the full weight that it should imply: namely, that the signifier has an active function in determining the effects which the signifiable appears as submitting to its mark becoming through the passion the signified. This passion then becomes a new dimension of the human condition, in that it is not only man who speaks, but in man and through man it (*ça*) speaks, that his nature is woven by effects in which we can find the structure of language, whose material he becomes, and that consequently there resounds in him, beyond anything ever conceived of by the psychology of ideas, the relation of speech".[414] If I read Lacan correctly, it is the tropic dimension of language ingrained psycho-linguistically that speaks us, according us the illusion of subjectivity; it is through her/his desire that the human signifier locates her/his signified. Thus, the presenter as a signifier plays an active role in providing meaning to the represented.

We may think that we know what we are saying but there is always more to what we say since the message is emitted through and from the Other. Like Rong Ge, we strive to plug ourselves into the Real of the Other, becoming the materiality of writing – the purveyors of language. Rong Ge *collapses*[415] when he sees the corpses of the lovers as he, suddenly, discovers rather belatedly that he has lost that which drives the narration, a trauma he suffers because of what Lacan calls the alienation of the signifier from the signified, the signifier missing the signified which is similar to lovesickness. Just as Yuqing Sao suffers radical desublimation in her failure to hold Qingsheng with her love, Rong Ge, too, countenances the same when he discovers the death of the couple. In a circuitous way, Rong Ge destroys himself unwittingly

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[414] Ibid.

[415] The gift of language confers, to give to; surrenders, to give in; to convey or emit, to give off; collapses, to give up; and to reciprocate, to give and take. Thus, what confers or offers itself is paradoxically that which causes the rift in discourse. If Rong Ge is read as embodying the signifier, the moment of his collapse symbolises the point when discourse "fails" to accomplish its purpose in conveying meaning since the signified cannot be found.

through the annihilation of Yuqing Sao because of his friendship with Qingsheng. It is only with the passion giving to "the force of the word" which makes the signification work, a temporary reunion of the signifier and the signified. We can translate the above through the Chinese graph "*gong*" signifying "success" which has as its radical "*gong*" denoting work joined to the graph "*li*" meaning strength, "happy" homonyms granting us the drive to work the representation in such a way that it succeeds. The question, "who is the speaking subject?", finds a problematic answer since the speaking subject is not just the emancipated consciousness of the silenced but also the narrative that speaks her, an (*par*)*ergon* of remembrance bestowing an apparent structural unity but structurally offering gaps which are clues leading to "the secret event".

Yuqing Sao, according to Chow, obeys a double jurisdiction, the imposition of an external law and an internal injunction to be genuine to her selfhood, a double accountability that is an existential deadlock. Her suicide is a "way out"[416] because there is just no way in for her. Here, Yuqing Sao, read as the Sublime, is not the weakest link but the embattled question of being, Freud's *other scene*, "the signifier for the phallus" of Rong Ge and, by extension, Bai Xianyong. The question of power and the politics of writing are posed here with the performativity of the other scene, the trace of the other. Her desire for the Other, who, in this case, is her younger brother, Qingsheng, will find no fulfillment because, as Lacan suggests, "But for the woman the result is still a convergence onto the same object of an experience of love which as such … ideally deprives her of that which it gives, and a desire which finds in that same experience its signifier" exacerbated by the psychoanalytic view that "In men, on the other hand, the dialectic of demand and desire gives rise to effects, whose exact point of connection, Freud situated with a sureness which we must once again admire, under the rubric of a specific

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[416] Chow, Rey. "'Love Me, Master, Love Me, Son': A Cultural Other Pornographically Constructed in Time". *Boundaries in China*. Ed. John Hay. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1994, pp. 248.

depreciation (*Erniedrigung*) of love".[417] Yuqing Sao, the phallic mother, has her phallus stolen by Rong Ge, the surrogate son, when the latter develops a close friendship with Qingsheng and frequently invites him out to restaurants and operas, thus providing opportunities for Qingsheng to fall for another woman. The more Yuqing Sao tries to hold on to Qingsheng, the more he slips away. *Yuqing Sao*, then, can be read as an allegory of the limits of love and knowledge for the same can be said about the pursuit of knowledge. The more we think we know, the less we know: the acceleration of the pursuit inversely corresponds to the recession of the object.

Peter Osborne's "Philosophy, and the Role of the Intellectual" alludes to the issue of power in institutional representation and the various responses from intellectuals to their complicit roles as institutional representatives. Osborne provides a succinct account of Foucault's approach to the problem which rethinks power and representation, a counter-discourse on the representative function of the intellectuals with a different strategy to the issues of representation in the academia, a place which ought to provide specific knowledge to particular groups: "Moreover, in order to arrive at 'a new disposition of the same power with, at best, a change of masters', such analytics must refuse the totalizing drive characteristic of the dominant will to truth, in favour of a notion of theory as both irreducibly local and regional' – not directional".[418]

While Edward Said comments on the actual or metaphorical conditions of the intellectual's exile, which, according to Osborne is "characteristic of the self-reflection of

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[417] Lacan, Jacques. "The Meaning of the Phallus". *Psychoanalytic Criticism*. Ed. Sue Vice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. pp. 128.

[418] Osborne, Peter. *A Critical Sense: Interview with Intellectuals*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. pp xvi. Osborne is also quick to point out that, according to Said, the institution and oppositional organisations endanger the intellectual's independence which explains the inclusion of Derrida's proposal of "the university without condition" in Tom Cohen's *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) . The politics implied by an intellectual's claim to marginality shows up when the claim is used as a tool in academic competition. Osborne's view will be discussed later with Rey Chow's "the story of O" in *Ethics after Idealism*.

intellectuals to exaggerate their marginality and emphasize their lack of power",[419] Foucault endorses this position of marginality as a possibility for institutional contestation. Lodged at the edge of the system, the intellectual as an outsider sees and renders clearer the operations of power within the institution enabling the rending apart of its imperatives, a deconstructive double performance demonstrating that the beginning of any political discourse is induced from dissenting relations.

The crisis in the above citation on power, knowledge and representation manifests with Foucault's definition of the new analytics which runs contrary to the will to truth – an epistemological problem still faced by many in the academia – the totalising drive of dogmatic philosophers who think that they are (or ought to be) masters of their subjects. What is "this theory that is both irreducibly local and regional – not directional"?[420] Osborne tells us that it is Foucault's way of promoting the "specificity" of the function of the intellectual as instrumental to a counter-discourse. Does this not constitute a return to being a well-heeled cog in a different wheel? The focus given to the local and regional can be seen as a way of resisting the domination of the universal but it is impossible to think the local without thinking the global since the global and the local are intricately entangled in the postmodern world. Instead of eliminating the notion of direction altogether, it may be necessary to think of the local or the regional in view of the global which involves movement, a bearing permitting the critical traversal to build a bridge across the gulf between the specific and the universal. Perhaps Foucault's[421] "irreducibly

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[419] Ibid. pp. xv.

[420] Ibid. pp. xvi.

[421] In Michael Naas's *Taking on the Tradition*, he dedicates a chapter to the Derrida/Foucault debate where the latter accuses Derrida of reducing discursive practices to textual traces without examining the modes of subjectivity and power in representation whereas Derrida responds that what escapes Foucault is the Freudian fort/da relation present throughout his discourses on madness and sexuality to which he has not given due attention. Foucault, despite his efforts to counter totalitarian discourse, submits to the double effects of power and pleasure, constituting the drive to totalisation. Derrida's response to Foucault is given the space here because Chow is subjected to the same lack of awareness, the fear and anxiety of losing the object of desire is what grants the representer the drive in her pursuit.

specific" is the radical alterity of which Derrida and Levinas speak, an alterity that cannot be recuperated in its entirety. Levinas, in *Time and the Other*, read in relation to Foucault's thesis reveals the implicit "failure" in Foucault's project: "In this going back to the ontological root of solitude, I hope to glimpse wherein this solitude can be exceeded. Let me say at once what this exceeding will not be. It will not be knowledge, because through knowledge, whether one wants it or not, the object is absorbed by the subject and duality disappears. It will not be an ecstasis, because in ecstasis the subject is absorbed in the object and recovers itself in its unity. All these relationships result in the disappearance of the other".[422] Yang Lian and Jiang He, two other Misty poets also published in the controversial literary magazine *Today*, whose "The Burden" poetically depicts the isolation of the alienated exemplifying Levinas's words on the other; it has filiations to Cui Jian's "Nothing to My Name". Yang and Jiang speak of seeking shelter under the aerial umbrella of patriarchal monuments only to express affectively the inability to find solace in the ruins of tradition. The alienation from their surrounding dealt the *coup de grace* to the personae:

I often strain to catch voices wafted from afar

Faint snatches, dead leaves, white snow

Drifting down from a remote dreamworld.

Often in the rainbow wandering in after the rain

I seek the shadow of the Great Wall, proud and comforting;

But the roaring wind only tells me new tales of ruin

–Mud and rubble have silted

The canal, my arteries no longer pulse,

My throat no longer sings.

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[422] Levinas, Emmanuel. *Time and the Other*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen. pp. 41.

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<div style="text-align:center">

The Burden

Yang Lian

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I am continually rejected y the world

The sun travels westward, I am rejected

The shadow forever lengthens

Like a long road

Winding

      Twists me

Huge dragon

      Ornament

On the ghostly palace wall

      Railing at the sky

I am rejected

Flaunted

The Great Wall stumbles in the mountain ranges

      The canal flows sadly through the plain[423]

<div style="text-align:center">

The Burden
Jiang He

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One can read Daoist rhetorical influence into the poem and, like the Derridean *parergon*, both see and privilege the ornamental in writing, thus, *wen* (ornamentation) is *wen* (writing). Repressive tradition leaves no footprints on the whiteness of the snow because it is borne by the

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[423] Yang, Lian and Jiang He. "The Burden". *Seed of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*. Eds. Barme, Geremie and John Minford. Newcastle [U. K.]: Bloodaxe Books, 1989. pp. 36-37.

two poets, "The aged century cheats its children"[424] and provides no hints to the "riddles" everywhere; the two are walking on shattered glass, disfigured simulacra of truths bearing testimony to "a lost voice transmitted across time".[425] The blinding force of the white light that conceals its depths of darkness lends mystery to the radical Other. Derrida's little note on the Other gives credence to this thesis: the separation or marriage of the "One" of *khōra* and the "One" of *dao* depends on the (dis)cord between the two emerging from the evanescence of the trace. Even as we name the other, the utterance itself recoils to selfsameness making evident the appropriation and reduction. Wei, in the section on "Chou I – The Meaning of its Name", writes that the name *Zhou* has five meanings, one of which means "universality": the book relates the Ultimate Reality, "which is infinite and eternal, and of which the universe is a phenomenal manifestation. Furthermore, it signifies that the transformation of things is a universal, never-ending, never-resting process… In other words, the Principle of Change pervades the spiritual as well as the material world".[426] Chinese thinking, from the beginning of history, has always attempted a depiction of the impossible and has found absolute denomination problematic. *Zhou*, as a component part of another Chinese phrase, also signifies "minuteness" suggesting that the "profoundest truths of Spirit and Earth"[427] are given to us in minute details. The alternative Chinese way of representation can be considered as *trivial pursuit* – a playful rendering in minimalist styles – a manner of presenting the thing in question with as little reductive violence as possible. In my view, this is the cosmic conspiracy with which one has to grapple whenever the other is represented, the lack of finality or closure to the speaking of the Other, the quagmire into which Chow has fallen.

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[424] Ibid. pp. 36.
[425] Ibid.
[426] Wei, Tat. *An Exposition of the I-Ching*. Taipei: Institute of Cultural Studies, 1970. pp.19.
[427] Ibid.

Chow's "Where have all the Natives Gone?" begins a lengthy discussion that spans an *oeuvre* on the other as native premised upon Spivak's postcolonial critique of Julia Kristeva's experience of alienation at Huxian Square in *About Chinese Women*. Chow poses her argument in such a way that exposes the "problematic of *the image as the bad thing to be replaced*".[428] Her argument for theory elsewhere serves the intention of the thesis which is premised upon the immediacy given by the image since, etymologically, theory comes from the Greek word "*theōria*" meaning "viewing or contemplating", a derivative of *theōr* signifying "view". In her nuanced reading of Spivak's criticism and Kristeva's account, she interrogates the notion of an "authentic" (re)presentation of the native by investigating the possibility of subjectivity in the other-as-oppressed-victim:

> What we see in the accounts by Kristeva and Spivak is a battle for demonstrating the *unspeaking* truth of the native. While Spivak shows how the articulation of the Western critic is itself already a sign of her privileged identity, for Kristeva it is the limits of Western articulation and articulation itself that have to be recognized in the presence of the silent Chinese women.[429]

As a *supplement* to what she states about Kristeva's treatment of the native as a silent object, the subject's colonising gaze can always be countered by the violence of the object's returned gaze, Kant's violence of the Sublime that invades the individual's imagination, and Kristeva's reaction toward the stare from the Chinese women corresponds to the Hegelian notion of the other as outside one's limit whose indifference to one's selfhood troubles the very subjectivity of the observer, a defamiliarisation that says much about the effectiveness of the Freudian ego as the individual's shelter. This process of estrangement, similar to the retrospective kind, is, according

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[428] Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993. pp. 29.
[429] Ibid. pp. 33.

to Jameson, the closest we get to objectivity, an objectivity which Lacan calls "the objective subjective", a reader response arising from the non-representational quality of the postmodern image and conditioned by the cultural milieu to which the reader belongs. Characterising Kristeva's discourse, like the other European intellectuals, as "self accusatory" and "making this other an utterly incomprehensible, terrifying, and fascinating spectacle",[430] Chow refers to Spivak's bold statement "The subaltern cannot speak" as giving rise to "pious defenses" on the subalterns' behalf. Spivak's argument that the subaltern is either cast in object formation or subject constitution is then extended to Chow's interrogation: "Between the critical desire to subjectivise them with envy and a "humble" gesture to revere them as silent objects. Is there any alternative for these "natives"?" *Pace* Žižek, Chow explores the possibility given by "symbolic identification", an identification differentiated from "image identification".[431] Image identification allows a positive designation, a verification based on likeness which insidiously hides the ideological undergrowth – allowing the phallic *jouissance* of apparent subjectivity – whereas "symbolic identification" is predicated on a certain negativity, an identification that exposes the lack constituting subjectivity. In Žižek's discussion of the spectral character of ideology, his "demystification" of an authentic location of address, one which permits a complete presentation of the oppressed, is of relevance here because of the frame of the address, a four-sided figure instead of a three-sided one, is an exclusionary force required for a cogent argument – the recoup necessary *to keep the subject alive* – which, in turn, limits the discourse: "*To the extent that it is our own limit that we encounter when we encounter another*".[432] What may be needed here, then, is a stage with the invisible fourth side – the side constituted by a reader/viewer – a frame that has a side opening to the Other.

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[430] Ibid.
[431] Ibid. pp. 34-36.
[432] Ibid. pp. 34. Emphasis mine.

While Chow's question: "Is there a way of conceiving the native beyond imagistic resemblance?"[433] finds its answer in "symbolic identification", my questions would be: at the level of discourse, can the object of investigation be conceived otherwise? How does one present an argument without performing the *representative* (representation as substitution, simulation and innovation) function, a function which involves repetition with difference – Derrida's iterability? The silence of the other does *"become the occasion for our speech"*,[434] giving us an inlet into an almost impenetrable terrain which also sets the conditions for the other to speak through our empathetic understanding. These literary representatives: Lu Xun, Yu Hua, Can Xue, Bei Dao, Yang Lian, Jang He and Cui Jian are all "threat[s] of perversion" to Maoist discourse. As an interpretative gesture, the speaking then becomes another version of the Heideggerean "letting be" where the clearing of space prepares us for the call of the other. Furthermore, like non-representational art, the image's reticence perpetuates the desire to know leading to an "ad-dress" – a critical approach and involvement between the object and the subject such that the traditional hierarchy implicit in the Cartesian discourse is overturned with an ironic shift. The passive *subject-agent relation* makes possible the voice of the other coming through the text. What is required of the speaker, consequently, is the willingness to let the other speak through one's representation without any thought of assimilating the other to selfsameness, a Herculean endeavour since it is, more likely than not, that the other eludes our grasp even as we speak.

Thus, the observed exists as interpreted, gaining a perceptible contour only with a simultaneous withdrawal of its substance; crucial, then, to the discourse is the awareness of the shifting ground within the signifying silhouette which is really the multiple "One" in Zhuangzi's

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[433] Ibid.
[434] Ibid.

notion of signifying play, a "One" with the consideration of the one subtracted. Gao has a painting that portrays this "One" – read here as a gesture to the "One" of the Other, not the Lacanian Symbolic but the Other of the Daoist One, the Lacanian "not whole and more", the structural problematic or aporia, the shaky bedrock alone on the side of the lake, which is found within and which founds all centres. In contradistinction to the critical commentary on Gao's paintings that they are a series (from 2002-2006) embodying the humanistic dimension of his thinking, the word "infinity" within title signals otherwise and reflects his experience of the impossible closure to thought. Instead, the image of the non-recognisable Other of Chinese tradition is (re)presented. Gao's paintings are also visual depictions of *The Story of the Stone* – the one stone which has failed in its mission to heal heaven, *butian*. Its solitude, as the one forgotten, is reflected in the painting with stylistic simplicity.
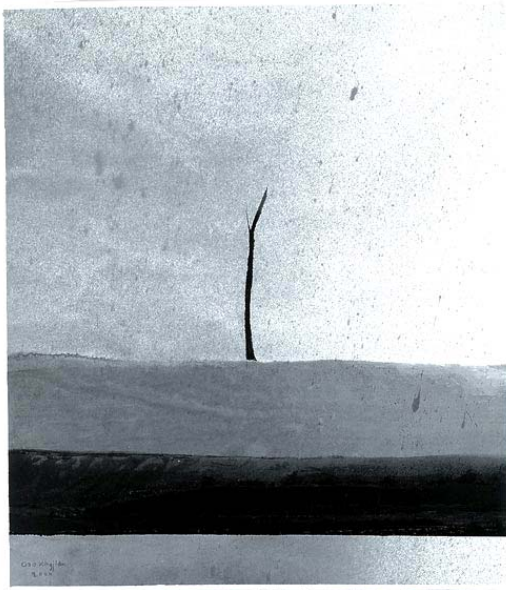
Gao Xingjian
In the Rain

Gao Xingjian
Oblivion

The aporetic space, *khōra* and/or *dao*, figured as the entwined strand of *Oblivion* or *In The Rain* the interwoven strands and blotches of Pollock's *Number 7*, undergoes

transubstantiation, a discourse constitution with an eye on the other without and within selfhood – a movement beyond the violence of the Hegelian *aufhebung* – with the non-concept of *différance*. Instead of the agent of representation in the subject position, s/he becomes the bearer of the subject that gives directions to the speaker. Grammatographically, this means that the speaker is no longer an agent; she becomes a witness to/of the other, instrumental to the transmission of the message, the trace appearing and disappearing with the speaker's signature waiting for its return with a countersignature. Where have all the natives gone? They have all become the presentation of the representation, the flowers of rhetoric, signalling the bifurcation of truth – truth as the represented (*aletheia*: nature revealing itself) and truth as the presented (*adaequatio*: a precise simulacrum) – making the threshold between self and other a territory that humanism in its various forms has yet to think.

Chow's reading of deconstruction: "… the affinity between deconstruction and Subaltern historiography is clear once we understand that *the practice of deconstruction itself is potentially humanistic*. The writing of an alternative history from the perspective of the subalterns does not detract from the basic view of humans as the primary creators/producers of values",[435]makes her fall into the logocentric/ethnocentric trap, a return to the paternal legacy, since, according to Derrida in *Dissemination*: "The figure of the father is also of the good (*agathon*). Logos represents what it is indebted to: the father who is also chief, capital, and good(s). Or rather *the* chief, *the* capital, *the* goods(s). *Patēr* in Greek means all that at once".[436] Her stance becomes questionable even after her description of the "positive function" of deconstruction, citing Spivak's reference to "Derrida's more recent "affirmative deconstruction": it is a deconstruction

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[435] Chow, Rey. *Ethics after Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998. pp. 49.
[436] Derrida, Jacques. "The Father of Logos". *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1981. pp. 81.

that obliges you to "say yes to that which interrupts your project," to the "political" that interrupts theory … More importantly, affirmative deconstruction enables the continual practice of "history".[437] Deconstruction cannot be just potentially humanistic (it is always *more than* humanism) as it exposes the insufficiencies of humanism, be it "an outlook or system of thought concerned with the human rather than divine or supernatural matters" or "a belief or outlook emphasising common human needs and seeking solely rational ways of solving human problems, and concerned with humankind as responsible and progressive intellectual beings".[438] The etymological root of "humanism" indicates the reason. The Latin *humanus* is derived from *homo* meaning "same" as well as "man". Derrida is concerned with that which is beyond the "properly" human – an unethical ethical signal to alterity which Derrida persistently upholds despite controversies – and any humanistic act is already lacking in some way owing to its auto-affective path and its emphasis on rationality; it is, in short, a parenthetical discourse. The auto-affective circularity is not the spherical *dao* which gestures to the beyond of humanism – a *hinter-land* that can be *suggested* but cannot be *presented*, an issue intuited by the *avant-gardes* of high Modernism, itself a "transitional" phase between modernity and postmodernity, whose artworks provide us intimations of this invisible space.

The word "suggested" is italicised because we may never be able to render the khoral or daoist spaces as they are since any visualisation is always an intuitive one. The rift between the idea and its materiality evinces a contingency underlying the very operation of writing, a diasporic dissemination that, in turn, allows the possibility of more writing. When Chow edited and published *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*, she acknowledges the intractability of Chineseness. It is "the essential

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[437] Ibid.
[438] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*

untranslatability"[439] of Chineseness which prompts translations, interpretations transforming our perceptions of Chineseness. *And* the translation occurs only with the silence as the required space, the pause prompted by *dao* and *khōra*, for *the working of the spaces* so that writing as the mark can appear, the reimagining of a field is also a re-imaging of the native with the parallax view, a faulty view as the native's presence is endowed only through her/his absence. Even as Chow speaks about the image as the site of possible change in *Writing Diaspora* and in her introduction to *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies* asks if one can say no to Chineseness, there is underlying her discourse an urgency and a commitment as to how Chineseness or China ought to be (re)presented. The knowledge that the image is merely a veneer unsettles which, perhaps, explains the above-mentioned necessity but this lack of epistemological satisfaction is also fundamental to the search for meaning which leads the explorer to unmapped territories. The above paintings are instances that can be read as taking to task (which is always the task of a translator) all that is related to Man: humanism, humanities and the Inhuman.

Chow's *Primitive Passions*, published in 1995, defends one of the fifth generation film directors, Zhang Yimou, whose filmic representations of China have been criticised for its lack of depth and impropriety.[440] This is after she has provided the etymological links of "translation" to "tradition" and "betrayal". Translation, whether the conventional notion of rendering a text from one language to another or intercultural transferences or a conversion of the written text to a visual one, manifests a "failure" not only because of the comparative aspect of translation since all readings are comparative to some extent but also the issue of reception bringing to the fore

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[439] Ibid. pp. 35. The emphasis must be noted as shared by both the author and me but my emphasis is more of a parody, ironising the emphasis so as to achieve a different effect.

[440] Chow, Rey. "Film as Ethnography; or Translation between Cultures in the Postcolonial World." *Literary Theories: A Reader and Guide*. Ed. Julian Wolfreys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999. pp. 502.

the gap between the subject and the object of translation and the surpluses to which Chow alludes interrogatively in "Listening Otherwise" – the Derridean remainder, the repressed, in representation. The knot of translation is not just a problem of origins as entitled in Chow's essay for we, now, know that the origin is the prosthesis; it is a crisis that accompanies the reception of the legacy, a postal circuit threatened by the possibility of interceptions and missing letters, the metaphysical legacy must be problematically received, an issue that goes unnoticed in Hegel's ambitious philosophical system which can only (a)bridge the ancients and the moderns.

If Zhang's critics are dissatisfied with the want of semantic profundity in his films, perhaps, they have not read Zhang's creation as a resistance to the metaphysical emphasis on meaning and a *reflection* of the slippage between appearance and reality, fiction and fact. More crucial to the thesis is Chow's gesture to Derrida's reading of Benjamin's arcade as a "letting-light-through", a passageway that permits as apprehension of the relations between the 'original' and 'translation', citing Derrida stating: "The appeal to the criteria of clarity and obscurity, would suffice to confirm … [that the] entire philosophical delimitation of metaphor already lends itself to being constructed and worked by "metaphors." How could a piece of knowledge or a language be properly clear or obscure? … We may borrow Derrida's passage to critique the way translation is often evaluated (even by himself) in terms of clarity and obscurity, light and blockage. 'Light' in this common philosophical tradition is assumed to be transparent in the sense of a *nonexisting* medium – and the arcade, which is equated with light, implicitly becomes a *mere* passageway. Since the arcade also corresponds in this context to translation, we are back once again in the classical situation in which 'translation; is a mere vehicle, disposable once it completes its task".[441] The issue that Chow appears to have elided is this: Derrida is not speaking of the arcade as a metaphor working in order for 'translation' to be understood; in fact, his ironic

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[441] Ibid. pp. 514.

tone when alluding to light and obscurity suggests that the vehicle has become the tenor in this case – that translation functions like a metaphor (translation is comparable to a metaphor just as a metaphor is comparable to translation) and a passageway which allows the half-light of representation through so that one can find its semantic equivalent. Derrida is not proposing, in any way, an original that is transparent and a derivative that is obscure; instead, he is suggesting that there is no original since all language use is derivative because of the *trace*.

Zhang's filmic translation of Yu Hua's *To Live*, entitled *Lifetimes* (1994), softens the latter's incisive and brutally frank fictional account of a man's journey through life from his rich and flagrantly spendthrift youth to the turmoil encountered in fighting the Japanese during the 1930s and the multiple losses he faces in his later life. The major difference between *Lifetimes* and *To Live* is the playful political undercurrents of the former's filmic representation. The protagonist of *To Live*, Fugui, loses his son literally through the draining of the latter's blood used to save a high-ranking comrade's life, the filmic version has Mantou, the protagonist's son, dying in an accident. Zhang's version may be said to soften Yu Hua's harsh depiction of the circumstances during the Cultural Revolution but the underlying ideological critique is undeniable, a critique masked by the carnivelesque stylistics which echo somewhat the absurdity of life in China during Mao's reign. The haunting scene of shadow puppetry suggests, perhaps, that the Chinese are puppets stringed by the regime which, to a great extent, is true with the peasantry since this group which constitutes the majority of China's population requires leadership and when amassed provides a mammoth support for one's political interests. More importantly, the scene also indicates Lacan's other *jouissance* – a satisfaction tied closely to the satisfaction of the Other, a satisfaction we strive to provide making us instrumental to the Other's satisfaction, a reiteration of the Abrahamic sacrifice, the giving up of one's lifeblood. One's

subjectivity is not one's own but motivated by a wanting to be the desire of the Other, the *objet petit a* raised to the capitalised Thing, so that Self is consequently elevated to the worth of a Thing as well, a psychoanalytic understanding of what the artwork means to the artist, which describes the relationship between Yu Hua and his fictions: "I understand now better than ever why I write – all my efforts are directed as close as possible to reality".[442] Thus, his fictions are translations, interpretations emerging from his perceptions of reality, perceptions intrinsically connected to his experiences.

Similar to Gao's series of paintings, entitled *Experience*, which imaged his writing, Yu Hua's "1986" can be said to be a revolutionary allegory of Mao's legacy of violence where the literary space stages the founding violence of literature, the trailblazing of ink comparable to the bleeding that makes the law, which attests to the ultimate incapacity of legitimate violence in suppressing the deviant forces. The irrepressible dislocating force of *différance* recurs again and again, which explains the law's desire for the monopoly of violence. But the displacement in inscriptive violence cannot prevent its eventual recuperation to identity. *Différance*, as the support of the economic circularity, is the condition that provides the possibility of the opening of signifying structures. The possibility of *revolutionary* violence succumbing to entropy is great if the law, in its monopoly of violence, has absolute control and becomes the Law. This differential collision between revolutionary violence and repressive violence on the inscriptive level describes the *différance* at the legislative level. The latest confrontation between the Law, the Communist government, and the people, which resulted in bloodshed, demonstrates its dominating hold on violence. However, the violence of the Communist regime as the Law not

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[442] Yu, Hua. "A Work of Hypocrisy" (*Xuwei de zuopin*). *The Collected Works of Yu Ha Volume II* (*Yu Hua zuopin ji* 2). Beijing: *Zhongguo shehui keshue chubanshe*, 1994. pp. 277. The above is also the epigraph to Michael Berry's afterword to Yu Hua's *To Live* where he is also described in words as the adopted son of Lu Xun whose Other the latter had to satisfy was China, the land perceived as wasted and abused by the decadent Qing dynasty and power-hungry warlords.

only reveals the fracture between the government and the people; it also uncovers the illegitimacy behind its enactment of radical violence. The Tiananmen Square Incident of 1989 is a revolutionary protest staged by university students and supported by China's intelligentsia. By concluding with a massacre, the Chinese government may be victorious but the victory is marred by the injustice behind its excessive use of force, an injustice brought to the fore with international media coverage. This unfortunate incident works against the Communist government as it unmasks the divinity it adopts as dissimulation. Thus, the Tiananmen Massacre, an unethical decision from the people's perspective, equivocally exposes the mythical foundation of the Communist regime. Stathis Gourgouris states clearly the relation between ethics and law: "No ethical decision, no matter how warranted on a personal level, can achieve the status of ethics, if it does not submit to the regime of figurative pretence (*hypokrisis*) of being universal law".[443] The Communist government's decision to use radical violence as a repressive measure is justifiable only if it impinges on universality. But, the decision, in its actualisation, uncovers the regime's pretence to universal law. It is, perhaps, ironic that the current architectural design surrounding Tiananmen Square includes the Department of Justice. The regime, having been exposed as dissimulating God, is stripped simultaneously of its disguise as the upholder of Justice.

Derrida, in "Force of Law", asserts: "And being "before the law" that Kafka talks about resembles this situation, both ordinary and terrible, of the man who cannot manage to see or above all to touch, to catch up to the law: because it is transcendent in the very measure that it is he who must found it, as yet to come, in violence".[444] Derrida's founding violence is an

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[443] Gourgouris, Stathis. "Enlightenment and *Paranomia*." Ed. Hent De Vries and Samuel Weber. *Violence, Identity and Self-Determination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1997. pp. 144

[444] Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law." *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 36.

appropriation of Benjamin's "pure divine violence", a mythologising of messianism. In order for change to be actualised, the man must overcome the self-interdiction[445] that law in its universality expects. If the tale is an allegorical portrayal of writing, then we must respond to the call of the other in and through representation since writing simultaneously safeguards the individual from the radical otherness of the Other and allows the interaction with the other. Writing is the event, the staging that Gourgouris mentions earlier, which allows the other to manifest. The event is a dislocating performance, a performance that entails an inversion of selfsameness. Derrida affirms the revolutionary violence in transgression, a consequence of the structural play in signification. Play, as revelry and theatricality, the configurative play and the dramatisation, provides the conditions for the response to alterity. Displacement is only possible with configurative play and the staging of this displacement is the occasion to address the other.

This remark from Derrida in "Force of Law" elaborates the notion of a responsible address with representation: "To address the other in the language of the other is, it seems, the condition of all possible justice, but apparently, in all rigor, it is not only impossible (since I cannot speak the language of the other except to the extent that I appropriate it and assimilate it according to the law of the implicit third) but even excluded by justice as law (*droit*), inasmuch as justice as right seems to imply an element of universality, the appeal to a third party who

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[445] Kafka's tales, in his fictional emphasis of the ordinary – the gatekeeper, the messenger and the cobbler – are predicated on the displacement of truth and fiction since these characters can be read as figures endowed with phallocentric power. The fact that these people, as representatives of the Law, imperial or otherwise, are given the fictional privilege indicates the prevalence of revolutionary violence. As the privileged presence in these fictions, they provide an insight into the logocentric emphasis of metaphysics, an emphasis predicated on presence. These representatives, in their concealment of the textual absences, in turn, signal the Kafkaesque revolutionary, the inscriptive figuration. The citizen's impotence, in view of the omnipotence of the law, is the result of what Gourgouris calls self-interdiction. His inability to act effectively erases his right to self-determination. And so he sits there year after year, pestering the doorkeeper but to no avail. The glow he sees bursting forth through the gateway is the light cast by the Law as Justice, an always deferred absolute state of justness in violence, a light that ultimately does not shine on him because of his lack of agency. What Gourgouris defines as "a monstrous realization" at the end of the citizen's life is monstrous only because the citizen's self-imposed paralysis results in a state of stasis, an extreme negativity, that is ultimately detrimental to the achievement of his goal.

suspends the unilaterality or singularity of the idioms".[446] For epistemological purposes, the contradictions found in writing are repressed by the form it takes so that order is imposed provisionally. However, the indeterminancy at the hard kernel of the text bears testimony to the teleological impossibility of absolute knowledge. Form is what dictates content. By its delimitation of what is legitimate to identity, representation temporarily arrests the structural play. Representation as provisional arrest gestures to the many reconfiguring possibilities. The appropriation of the language of the other is possible because of the translational dimension of representation, denoted by the transformative force behind interpretation. Giving the other its due attention occurs only when we subject ourselves to what Derrida calls "the law of the implicit third", which is displacement in writing. Trespassing the representational limits in the reading is the rigorous response required in the address. It is only in the reading, both as a sacrifice and an assimilation, that one can be responsible to the other. The rigour entails the consideration of the otherness of alterity in one's *attentiveness* to the appropriation, a paradoxical responsibility in irresponsibility that allows the other as the reader the opportunity for her/his signature, making the multiple stamps of ownership on Chinese calligraphic painting that confers value to the artwork an appropriate figure of writing, a figure of candour. The justice owed to the other is found in the signifying liberation implied by deconstruction, which displaces the self and the other, a displacement that is infinitely iterable because of the movement of supplementarity.

Can literature be considered the laying down of a law?, a self-conscious question posed by J. Hillis Miller elaborated as "How could I be justified in drawing general conclusions about whether literature lays down the law on the basis of a single, perhaps, eccentric, example?" predicated on and going beyond the three assumptions drawn – the three relations of law and

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[446] Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law." *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice.* Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 17.

literature, "the reflection by literature of law, the influence of literary theory on legal theory, and vice versa; and the presentation within literature of insights into the law that do more than reflect the legal situation of the time".[447] These are questions not just about the law and literature but are those upon which the entire enterprise of translation rests. Can the written or "unwritten" regulations and sanctions from two supposedly different disciplines be made equivalent, an equivalence allowing the crossing of instituted borders? The exploration exposes the various conflicts encountered: the particular versus the universal, the immanent (human) versus the transcendental (divine) and the traditional versus the modern. The interrogation can be rephrased as one concerning the rewriting of history, which Miller asserts: "This compulsion to retell suggests an answer to the question posed earlier about how a work of literature might not only be original, invent something unheard of before, but also proliferate itself as a universal law. The story tends to disseminate itself and to compel its readers to do again what it does, just as Kohlhaas's demand for justice turns into widespread injustice, if that is the right word for it".[448] The injustice which results from Michael Kohlhaas' demand for justice is not something exceptional as indicated by Bai's tale, *Yuqing Sao*. If Chow focuses on time as the author's/narrator's mastery over the other, it is also time conditioned by space that implodes the potency of the narrative. The laying down of the law in literature gestures inversely to the problematic within the law – the unlawful violence of narration – the cutting of the cube's corners – that will have the tale recounted again and again in multi-directional flows. Kleist's story of Kohlhaas supplements history as Miller adds: "The story of the improbable fulfillment of the gypsy woman's prediction about a roebuck is borrowed and modified by Kleist from an almost forgotten novel… The main part of her story, however, seems to have been Kleist's

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[447] Miller, J. Hillis. "Laying the Law in Literature: The Example of Kleist". *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 307.
[448] Ibid. pp. 314.

addition to history. It is a fabulous element that intervenes decisively into the life-story of the historical Kohlhaas as Kleist tells it. As several motifs characteristic of Kleist's storytelling come together in this episode: the ironic hint of signs indicating God's inscrutable judgment; the working exceedingly improbable coincidence in human life; the performative function in human history of messages, letters, notes, papers, decrees, manifestoes, court judgments – writing of all kinds. For Kleist, such writing do not simply describe, they make something happen".[449]

Perhaps it is the third kind, remembrance as poetic writing, which is most conducive to the making of the "event" of being. This performative facet does not ensure the attaining of justice. In fact, Kleist's story demonstrates its impossibility with a judiciary claiming to be the Law. Kohlhaas regains all that he has lost only at the moment when they no longer mean anything to him, a fate he suffers for taking justice into his own hands, exemplary of how the Other may not be the friend one hopes in a face-to-face encounter. Miller's exposition, then, becomes incidental, or, perhaps, accidental to the particular posited as the universal because the irreducible is something for which no one can account and with which everyone has to grapple, delaying the realisation of the envisioned justice but, *in spite of* the inherent "failure" and *because of* it, drives and launches the enterprise of ethics. Robert Eaglestone, in "Critical Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge and the Truth of Literature" examines the two conceptions of truth: "One (as Putnam calls it 'metaphysical realism'), is the belief that truth 'involves some sort of correspondence relation between words and thought-signs and external things and sets of things': the agreement or correspondence of a judgment, assertion or proposition with its object. This is the 'common or garden' scene of truth, often identified with scientific understanding of the world … However, this model of truth – by far the most widely accepted and dominant model – seems to exclude much that people find of great value: visions of how the world was, is

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[449] Ibid. pp. 320.

and ought to be, things that are core for people's personal and communal identity, feelings and judgements. These are illuminated by another conception: another sense of truth which involves or invokes 'who we are and how things are in the world'… he argues that, in the hermeneutic philosophical tradition at least, this understanding of truth is intrinsically involved with art".[450] The advent of string and superstring theories implies the possibility of a unified theory although, at the moment, its problematic calculations have to do with the variability of space-time measurements. These dimensions contract in accordance to Albert Einstein's special relativity but its significance lies with the perspectivism inherent to special relativity which correlates to Žižek's parallax view. As Brian Greene asserts in *The Elegant Universe*: "Not only are space and time influenced by one's state of motion, but they can warp and curve in response to the presence of matter and energy".[451] Space is perceived as three-dimensional "But this is not so according to string theory, which claims that our universe has many *more* dimensions than meet the eye – dimensions that are tightly curled into the folded fabric of the cosmos. Therefore, string theory, in a real sense, is the story of space and time since Einstein".[452] Greene uses the analogy of music to describe the workings of strings; their elegance is so mesmerizing that he calls the strings "nothing but music", the "music of the sphere",[453] indicating the creative faces, the *worldsheets* of these wondrous elements

The signifier, "Chinese", glides to and fro over the East-West gap, unfolding and refolding transforming substantially as it disseminates with the impact of the Real in the Other whose signifying elements are reassembled byway of this interpreter's inscriptive moves. These

[450] Eaglestone, Robert. "Critical Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge and the Truth of Literature". *The New Aestheticism*. Ed. John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003. pp. 152.
[451] Greene, Brian. *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1999. pp. 5.
[452] Ibid. pp. 16.
[453] Ibid. pp. 135.

intercultural transferences, enabled by the structural play of writing, allow the signifier to adapt to the space-time conditions of the hermeneutic exercises. Chow objects to the overdetermination of the word "Chinese" since it has become a sort of cultural capital which allows theory its excessive mobility: "As speculative labor, theory, too, seems to have acquired in the field of China studies something of the aura of a managerial economy that works, an economy that can transform the substantial accumulation of labor – in the form of knowledge – into a new type of force: cultural capital, the chief characteristic of which is its fluidity; its capacity for bypassing the cumbersome gravity of ironclad boundaries".[454] She indicates the similarity between economic capital and cultural currency whose circulation can be manipulated in order to serve the *telos* of progress. In contradistinction to Foucault's description of the new intellectual as one providing specific knowledge, her onslaught is targeted at the incessant addition of the word "Chinese" to political and critical terms to indicate specificity. She considers the bracketing a "recurrent symptom"[455] often resulting in what is considered merely a Chinese response to the above issues. *Contra* Chow, I shall argue that the historical and cultural characteristics *particular* to China can be used as agitprop to masticate and outmode the *domination* of Western liberal democracy. This response, which is only a halfway house of happiness (identity: racial, national, familial et cetera as shelters against the terrifying Real), operates "by hook or by crook",[456] a

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[454] Chow, Rey. *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000. pp. 2.
[455] Ibid.
[456] The phrase is taken from Chow's "story of O" in *Ethics after Idealism*, a tale projected in order to support her emphatic claims of New Fascism, a reverse totalitarianism, used in her discourse to target a "fictive" fraud. While she appears to champion the defiled image of the native in *Writing and Diaspora* and *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies*, in *Ethics after Idealism*, she seems to be echoing Idealism, a retrenchment in the form of hunting down the substance of the "real" native/intellectual. *The story of O, the knot of subjectivity, is comparable to the history of Man* – whatever substance we *have* is given by our desire for and of the Other. More precisely, the climbing of the rungs, the step taken upward, enables the hoisting of the *objet petit a* to the value of a Thing, something she substantiates when she refers to humans as the creators/producers of values. There are no "real" natives just as there are no "real" intellectuals since all are *dependent* on a throw of a dice and the conditions of possibility. The academic discourse succeeds only by covering up the inherent "failure", the worm hole of nonzero ground, read and raised here as the "One" of Zhuangzi and Laozi, with the textual re-laying of writing. In other

theft of the letter using the hitch in her discourse as a clasp holding fast the elusive other for a while. Moreover, the mobility of cultural capital – the reaffirmation of Derridean deconstruction – allows the other response.

Chow's remarkable reading of Chinese Studies and its situation in *academia* says something about an institutional structure which sees the need for categorising. But if she insists on the escha-teleolological dimension of theory as one encompassing poststructuralism, and, more precisely, deconstruction, it is crucial to restate that deconstruction undermines the *telos* privileged by metaphysics, a remembrance of the impossible as that which gives to the conditions of possibility. Thus, the "Chineseness" used in this particular discourse is put under *sous rature*, the Derridean *erasure* such that the "Chinese" response is a tainted kind of Chineseness, a name contaminated by Otherness. The comparative endeavour here *depends* on the remainder – the surplus abandoned by modernisation – in order to construct a virtual linkage in place of the missing link and the connection is only provisionally guaranteed with the destiny unveiled as the point of singularity at the bottom of a vortex which recoils, re-spinning upward bestowing the double period motion of nonlinear dynamic systems mentioned in chapter two. The signifier "Chineseness" is stuffed with phallic *jouissance*, a satisfaction that keeps us plugged to the matrix and a burden we (un)consciously take up for without a property to one's name, as Hegel informs us, one is considered inhuman – the ones without rights.[457]

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words, we are all so-called "poseurs" in the hope of accomplishing that we have set out *to do* and are still striving *to get there*. What appears nonpartisan can always conceal the ideology of the party in power, the one standing before the institution whose rhetorical machinations obscure the "real" O, the auto-affective circularity that will never meet without a virtual connection.

[457] In *The Hegel Reader*, under "Ethical Life", Hegel defines specifically what he means by "human" (pp 369): *Addition*: (H) "When we say that a human being must be somebody [*etwas*], we mean that he must belong to a particular estate; for being *somebody* means that he has substantial being. A human with no estate is merely a private person and does not pose actual universality". Houlgate, Stephen. (ed.) *The Hegel Reader*. Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1998. pp. 369.

Who are the subalterns in China? As the ark of the following translation of the transcendental to the immanent, a challenge undertaken to demonstrate that its possibility is premised upon an experience of the impossible, the metaphysical traditions of the East and the West will be brought in to read Chinese realpoltik. Tiananmen Square concreticises the cosmological view of earth as a plane, a stage where the trials and errors of humanity are enacted. As the space before the Heavenly Peace Gate, which opens to the divine realm of the imperial, the square has been the site of multiple collisions between the sovereign and the oppressed. Its physicality is maintained both by the sovereignty of the state and the (dis)loyalty of the people, a space alternatively used to honour the emperor/dictator or stage a coup. The 1989 Tiananmen Incident is the focus here for two reasons. First, according to Zhang Liang, the compiler of *The Tiananmen Papers*, "June Fourth was not merely a student protest or a patriotic democracy movement. It is the culmination of the biggest, broadest, longest-lasting, and most influential pro-democracy demonstrations anywhere in the world",[458] a reminder that the significance of the year 1989 owes much to the fall of socialism, the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dismemberment of the previous Soviet Union. Second, the difference between the Chinese notion of democracy and Western liberal democracy can be found in the Chinese emphasis on national identity – the individual's selfhood constituted *in and through* the nation. The incident was incited and led by women/men of letters who saw themselves as heirs to the May Fourth Movement whose key figure, Lu Xun, is the father of modern Chinese literature. The protestors were fighting for their vision of a new China and not just their individual rights. Zhang Liang, the compiler of *The Tiananmen Papers*, accounts the failure of the revolution to multiple effects/causes: "But it failed because of the weakness of the reform faction at highest

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[458] Zhang, Liang. "Reflections on June Fourth". *The Tiananmen Papers*. Ed. Andrew J. Nathan and Perry Link. London: Abacus, 2002. pp. xi.

levels of Party leadership, because of divisions among demonstrators and their lack of a tight organization or program, and because of the gulf that separated the intellectuals from the workers and farmers. The movement's very failure constitutes one proof that it was not – as the enemies charge – an organized, plotted 'counterrevolutionary riot' or outbreak of 'turmoil'".[459] The compiled papers expose the inadequate communication between the state's representatives and the populace, the catalyst to the violent outbreak. Political rhetoric did not help the situation as the students and intellectuals were agitated by the fact that they were tagged "counterrevolutionaries" and the passive resistance "political turmoil" which has derogatory connotations since it was used to implicate the bourgeois resistance to Communist rule. Instead of placating the students with the dialogue they wanted, the party's policy, at that point, was to react to any signs of uprising, a reaction that eventually ended in bloodshed. It is recorded that Deng Xiaopeng played a major role in the use of military force against the demonstrators. John Rawl's "The Law of the Peoples" is a discursive attempt to extend the notion of human rights to non-liberal societies. He states: "True, in our sketch we supposed that traditional societies would affirm the law of peoples that would hold among just liberal societies. That law is therefore universal in its reach: it asks of the other societies only what they can accept once they are prepared to stand in relation of equality with all the other societies and *once their regimes accept the criterion of legitimacy in the eyes of their own people*. In what other relations can a society and its regime reasonably expect to stand?[460] The Communist regime does not have a place for the criterion mentioned by Rawls above even though the republic is known as the People's Republic of China.

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[459] Ibid. pp. xii
[460] Rawls, John. "The Law of the Peoples". *The Politics of Human Rights*. Ed Obrad Savić. London and New York: Verso, 1999. pp. 39.

What is heartbreaking about the massacre is not just the failure of the resistance but also the unnecessary loss of lives. The failure of the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 can be explained by Lacan's take on the politics of desire: the individual is driven to the cusp of being due to her/his subjection to the desire of the Other which becomes pivotal to the loss of the object of love, a paradoxical situation where the subject has to give up the object of love as a gesture of her/his love. The politics of desire applies to the realm of epistemology as well as political activities. According to Zhang: "Some of these officials were cited by name as stating that the April 26 editorial had exaggerated the danger of the demonstrations, widened the gap between the students and the government and removed the basis for dialogue that might have led to a smooth resolution of the student's grievances. One official revealed that on his campus, two-thirds of faculty members were refusing to attend meetings to study the editorial. Others pointed out that the blame for the demonstrations ultimately lay in the failings of the Party itself, without which the students would have no need to protest".[461] Just when the students and intellectuals thought they had the regime's attention, the movement was ruthlessly suppressed, the shape-shifting face of the Other turned monstrous.

Embedding the Deleuzean "function" of the scholar into Zhuangzi's dream of a butterfly gives us a interpellative transference founded upon the ability of the signifier to carry over from one existent to another, a transfiguration likened to Heraclitus' "nothing endures but change"; thus, an act of creation is an act of translation, the making anew of something and its sending off as a message in a communicative circuit, a *doubling* circular movement making it possible for critical interceptions, subverting the merely dialectical going back and forth. This oscillation can go on forever as demonstrated by the transposition of the Platonic dialectics to that of the Hegelian (the synthesis of the thesis and the antithesis leading to a new thesis) and then to that of

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[461] Ibid. pp. 107.

the Marxian (the base and superstructure synthesised with the Marxist take on capitalist economy) and then to that of Saussurean (the signified as the mediator of the signifier and the referent) *ad infinitum*. Deconstruction is the breathing space, a stepping aside from the spinning of the Spirit with a corresponding twirl downward – a dialectical suspension in order to gain an insight into the ideological undergrowth of national (de)nomination which is at the moment being threatened by the obscene undersides of liberal democracy and its communist counterpart, the Lacanian semblances – an attempt made by Žižek himself despite his denial of a third way coming to being as a fourth. According to him, the notion of an "authentic" location of address, one which permits a complete presentation of the oppressed, has nothing to do with demystification as ideology's spectral omnipresence means that any critique is already ideological:

> There are two reasons for this limitation of state sovereignty, each of which is in itself compelling enough to justify it: the transnational character of ecological crisis and of the nuclear threat. The eroding of state authority from both sides is mirrored in the fact that today the basic political antagonism is that between the universalist 'cosmopolitical' liberal democracy (standing for the force corroding the state from above) and the new 'organic' populism communitarianism (standing for the force corroding the state from below) … this antagonism is to be conceived neither as an external opposition nor as the complementary relationship of the two poles in which one pole balances the excess of its opposition (in the sense that, when we have too much universalism, a little ethnic roots gives people the feeling of belonging and thus stabilizes the situation), but in a genuinely Hegelian sense – each pole of the antagonism is inherent in its opposite so that we stumble upon it at the moment when we endeavour to grasp the opposite pole for itself, to

posit it 'as such' …The paradox in all these cases (socialism or fascism as an alterative to capitalism or the supposed difference between early and late capitalist logic of social organisation) is that *the stepping out of* (*what we experience as*) *is the very form of our enslavement to it* … The theoretical lesson to be drawn from this is that the concept of ideology must be disengaged from the representationalist problematic: 'ideology' has nothing to do with 'illusion', with a mistaken, distorted representation of its social content.[462]

Žižek's two reasons for the limitation of state sovereignty exemplify what I have stated about the contesting polarities, in conflict for they re-semble each other. The Lacanian non-existent[463] middle position *ek-sists* because of Derrida's purportedly equivocal comment on the structural locus: "The center is at the center of totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center *elsewhere*" which implies that the reality perceived is always already a parallax view because the totality "has its centre elsewhere". The third path – a curvaceous figure – is Zhuangzi's penumbra brought to the fore. If the dissertation appears to be evidence of an "inauthentic" understanding of China, it owes much to the use of China and Chineseness as tropes; between the East and the West is a synecdochal relation where the part is taken for the whole and, inversely, the whole for the part, chains allowing the crossing over of Chineseness from a mainlander's point of view to that of mine, a disaporic Chinese writing in a Western language. The identity of a Straits Chinese allows me the advantage of seeing China from an off-centre location and testifying to Derrida's thought of the centre: "The concept of a centered structure – although it represents coherence itself, the

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[462] Žižek, Slavoj. "The Spectre of Ideology". *The Žižek Reader*. Ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 199. pp. 60.

[463] I owe this paragraph on the non-existent middle position to some colleagues, disciples of Lacan, who informed me during one seminar that there is no middle position for Lacan because it comes at great cost. This umbra becomes a penumbra whose Latin etymology defines *pe-* as "head" and *umbra* as the "shadow".

condition of the *epistēmē* as philosophy or science – is contradictorily coherent. And as always, coherence in contradiction expresses *the force of a desire*".[464] The non-existence of a "privileged" position is a consequence of the fact that critique which is etymologically linked to censure is the very epitome of privilege. In other words, the situating which depends on one's interest means that the political discourse, in rhetorical terms, is tantamount to making a personal pitch, one driven by the "force of a desire". The step taken here, *contra* Žižek, *is* a stepping out of the binary logic of communism and capitalism and into the *terra incognito* of *différance*, the deferred and differential trace, effaced even as it is thought. This out-of-the-box move is made possible by the politically disinterested discourse of deconstruction invoking that moment of hesitation that may avoid the disaster provoked by totalitarianism. It must be stated that the above description cannot be equated to word "apolitical" because deconstruction is attentive to the political within politics. To Derrida, a discursive position is not a beginning because it merely repeats the dialectical manoeuvre with its inability to accommodate the radically contingent. The thesis focuses rather on the Sublime that eludes Roland Barthes's allusion to the "undevelopable Haiku and the Photograph" in *Camera Lucida*, images just being difficult, making it difficult to "dream".

In "Et Cetera", a response to Edmund Husserl's take on grammar, Derrida describes the doubling of the human bondage, a result of self-division: "If one follows here the logic of this demonstration, the <u>and</u> thus *used* to speak the *mentioned and* would give rise to a meaning intention fulfilled by intuition only to the extent that the context provided by the sentence or sentences surrounding and linking with it is sufficiently comprehensive and determining. But is it ever totally so? And if it never is so to the point of intuitive saturation, will there not remain in

[464] Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 1978. pp. 352.

every discourse, in every text, an irreducible portion of this 'dependency', this non-dependence, this non-fulfillment for which the syncategoreme *and* figures at least as the example?"[465] Thus, the figure of the "and" with its multiple meanings in different contexts is in a way a reflection of the crisis within subjectivity. What is performed byway of speech in service of the Other may be received in a manner contrary to intention and expectation – a problem of economy. Thus, the problematic of representation *is an issue of relation*. Derrida's description of the circular *grammé* which unites the infinite line of temporality and the spatial points of the successive "nows" (acting as the pivots which are then extended to the forking paths of a labyrinth) (r)evolutionises the Hegelian *relevé* with the *grammé* doubling back giving to the interface the double helix of *dao* and *khōra*, horizontal planes becoming temporary "parking spaces" linked by the materiality of the signifier. The "third way" is figured by the heliotrope in its clash with the heliocentric. *Helios* is Greek for "sun" and the heliotrope, both a plant with leaves that turn toward sunlight and a land survey instrument, is an analogous play allowing the emergence of the above figure whose mirror surfaces deflect in their reflection of the sun, the Platonic Good, in our philosophical survey in order to mark and re-mark the varied critical positions of thinkers whose writings resist the totalitarianism implied by the heliocentric with the third definition of heliotrope, "the blood stone", a "definity", coined with the play on the "divinity" given to the thought of infinity and the lapse always within the definite. Thus, the infinite imaged by Gao's ink and wash paintings are indications of the merely finite, the immanent in us turned transcendental at the extremity where the name inscribed on blood stone is not just transcribed by the chariots of fire but also of the gods. Derrida's thought on the future of the Humanities conclude this section: "This principle of unconditional resistance is a right that the university

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[465] Derrida, Jacques. "Et Cetera". *Deconstructions: A User's Guide*. Ed. Nicholas Royle. New York: Palgrave, 2000. pp. 293.

itself should at the same time reflect, invent and pose, whether it does so through its law or in the new Humanities capable of working on these questions of right and law – in other words, and again why not say it without detour – the Humanities capable of taking on the tasks of deconstruction, beginning with the deconstruction of their history and their own axioms".[466]

The Long Road to Heaven: The Possibility of Justice and Right

> The sounds of mothers calling their children home began to subside as a man carrying a load of manure walked past me. The bamboo pole he used to support the load squeaked as he went by. Gradually, the fields surrendered to silence. All around there appeared kinds of haze as the glow of dusk slowly dissolve.
> As the back night descended from the heavens, I knew that in the blink of an eye I would witness the death of the sunset. I saw the exposed and firm chest of the vast earth; its pose was of calling, of beckoning. And just as a mother beckons her children, so the earth beckoned the coming of night.
>
> <div align="right">Yu Hua
To Live</div>

In *The Troubles with Postmodernism*, Stephan Morawski engages with the controversial debate on postmodernity with commentaries on postmodern writers. Significant to this section here is his take on Wolfgang Welsh's perceptions of postmodern aesthetics which he claims to be "the sensorium of philosophy and art … which corresponds most lucidly (via paradoxes and paralogisms) to the incongruity of the surrounding 'reality'. Such a position is analogous to Derrida's idea in *Parages* (1986). There he used the example of Blanchots's *Récit*, which with premeditation blurs the borderlines between literature and philosophy, leaving no room for any sensible aesthetics. Both literature and philosophy are fictions stimulating thought over what is reality. There are no competences capable of outlining the classification of aesthetic theory on the one side and art on the other. Derrida speaks of constant wandering near the waterfront which

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[466] Derrida, Jacques. "*The future of the profession or the university without condition* (*thanks to the "Humanities," what* could take place tomorrow". *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Tom Cohen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. pp. 26.

remains always misty and he states that our thoughts when philosophizing on or within literature are born *paysage sans pays, espace sans territoires*. Deleuze's case is not different. Schizo-analysis mocks any systematic exposition of theses and ridicules any methodological consistency. Aesthetics, he stresses (Deleuze 1991), is an equivocal term of no use. Art requires no explaining and, being unpredictable, it cancels any theory".[467] The mistiness of which Derrida speaks that blurs boundaries is comparable to the haze that covers the fields in Yu Hua's *To Live*. This may be seen as too much of a stretch but the coincidence can be found in the word "field", part of the two Chinese graphs, *guang chang*, denoting "square", which supports the thesis that the so-called points of the radical boundaries can be magnified to squares, the worldsheets of string theories, where contesting texts are played out, the textual fields of discourse translated to concrete squares, always located between monuments of authority and the common, upon which power relations are enacted.

Morawski opens this section because, first, his critique on Derrida's comment on the overlapping of disciplines, extended to that of reality and fiction, means "leaving no room for any sensible aesthetics",[468] requires response and, second, despite Morawski's objection to Welsch's take on postmodermism, the latter's thoughts about the contemporaneous issues on aesthetics ought to be reconsidered in a different light. In Derrida's case, he has never said that "both literature and philosophy are fictions stimulating thought over what is reality". What literature is to fiction/reality is what philosophy is to fiction/reality – essentially, that "what reality is" is made more evident through fictions. Derrida has never claimed to be a postmodernist since his engagement with Western metaphysics has as one of its aims an ethical address that adds to that tradition. Although he is occupied with the issues of essence and

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[467] Morawski, Stephan. *The Troubles with Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. pp. 56.
[468] Ibid.

identity, his philosophical endeavour touches on the problems within these subject matters in order to demonstrate the groundless grounds of essence, identity, history and morality, and, contrary to all detractions, he does not expound the doing away of these concepts simply because as worldly existents, we need these *extant texts* for further readings which prompts a kind of progression, not least the support for being-in-the-world, whose extinction would mean that, first, we, as *homo sapiens*, will have difficulty standing since the root for "extant" comes from the Latin word *stare* meaning "to stand" and, second, the failure of the enterprise here even before it starts, because *ex-* in Latin signifies "out", a momentary standing out of traditional metaphysics for the projection. The above etymological examination is apodictic to the critical approach of the thesis here, a taking on the metaphysical traditions of the East and West, both enamoured with the question of "what is …?"

Steve Coutinho's elaboration of the place Zhuangzi's philosophy occupies in Chinese metaphysics clarifies the notion of essence: "One of the most central and fundamental concepts at the heart of western philosophy has been the concept of essence. The essence of a thing is *what it is*: not just what it happens to be, but what it is to be in order to be the thing it is, or the kind of thing it is. This idea has its origin in the awareness that there are limits to how much something can change and still be the same thing, or the same kind of thing. The essence of a thing (or kind) is what cannot change without the thing turning into something else: it is what is necessary for it to be what it is".[469] He analyses the various approaches to the problem of anomalies and irregularities by, first, looking at analytic philosophy which simply puts aside the eccentric as an oddity but he asserts: "the problem since the time of Socrates has always been the actual production and acquisition of these perfect foolproof understanding… The reason that

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[469] Coutinho, Steve. *Zhuangzi and Earl Chinese Philosophy: Vagueness, Transformation and Paradox*. Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004. pp. 132.

such Ideal essences are not attainable by us is that we are creatures of becoming in a world of becoming… Things are always changing, understandings are always developing; the ultimate perfection in its infinitude cannot be revealed through the finite".[470] Then, the concept of fallibilism follows which "challenges our claim to know things with finality and certainty",[471] and then, the notion of "intensional vagueness" which directs our attention to "what remains in the middle". The liminary space with its numerous potentials for creativity is deemed to be vast and "perhaps, even vaster than the clear ranges of admissibility and inadmissibility put together".[472] Last, he calls attention to Friedrich Waismann's term, "*porosität*", translated as "open texture" which is somewhat similar to Wittgenstein's concept of language games with the latter's use of the analogy of weaving: "We examine each case in its individuality and try to understand how and why we think of it as the same as the others, and how we think of it as different. Then what we discover, rather than a coherent well defined essence running through all instances, is a complex network of characteristics intertwining like the fibers of a thread. The unity of the concept or meaning is like the unity of the thread, held together by 'crisscrossing and overlapping fibers', but there is no single fiber continuing the whole length of the thread",[473] calling to question the idea of essence since none of the fibers are especially needed for the "strength and coherence of the thread".[474] His analogy for language has an affinity to mine for writing. It is the same but not quite: the argument here foregrounds the crisscrossing of these fibers for their tropic characteristics, thus giving strength to the textual fabric, the flexibility that the stone lacks.

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[470] Ibid. pp. 139.
[471] Ibid. pp. 140.
[472] Ibid. pp. 142.
[473] Ibid. pp. 148.
[474] Ibid.

These fibers are all interconnected in a way still imperceptible to us just as Heidegger explains: "As saying, speech belongs to the rift-design in the essence of language. Various modes of saying and the said permeate the rift-design, modes in which what is present or absent says something about itself, affirms itself or denies itself – shows itself or withdraws. What pervades the rift-design in the essence of language is a richly configured saying, from various provenances. With a view to the concatenations of saying, we shall call the essence as a whole *the saying* [die Sage]. Even so, *we have to admit that the unifying element in these concatenations is not yet in sight*".[475] What Heidegger calling "the essence [of language] as a whole *the saying*", which he later elucidates as "waying" – "this transitive verb suggests creating a way, giving shape to it and keeping it in shape … Propriation propriates human beings or itself, propriates them into usage. Propriating showing as owning, propriation is thus the saying's way-making movement to language. Such way-making brings language the essence of language) as language (the saying) to language (to the resounding word)".[476] Crucial to the understanding of *logos* and, by extension, logocentrism, is the emphasis on the "word". This is, perhaps, the reason why Derrida argues that Heidegger is still caught within the metaphysical web despite his attempt to depart from it. Although there is the accession to the notion that these fibers are linked in manners which abscond understanding, what gives to this "weft of relations" are the multifarious relations themselves, the way-making is multiplied by the sending of the letter, the possibilities of it arriving somewhere. However, the destiny of the word may not be where it is predicted to arrive. Chow may have to heed Heidegger's description of the saying as the waying: "Let us at the end remember as we did at the outset these words of Novalis: "precisely that is

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[476] Heidegger, Martin. "The Way of Language". *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. Ed. David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. pp. 418.

peculiar to language – that it concerns itself purely with itself alone – no one knows." Novalis understands the word peculiar in the sense of particularity that makes language exceptional. Through the experience of the essence of language as the saying, a saying whose showing rests on propriation, what is peculiar [*das Eigentümlich*] comes into the proximity of owning [*Eignen*] and *propriating* [*Ereignen*]"[477] – the taking to oneself and owning as one more principle.

The Chinese Legalists, philosophers of realpolitik from "the Period of the Hundred Contending Schools (551-233 B.C.) in Chinese history [that] ran parallel with the Hellenic Age in the West",[478] were the advocators of the analytic principles of legalism, serving as the prison "bar" mentioned earlier in the Lacanian discourse of the Other, and only policed by a law-conserving violence for its awareness of the lawless violence upon which it is based. According to Fu, the scholastic misinterpretations of China owe much to the neglect of the Legalist tradition, the backbone of more than two thousand-year-old imperial system, leaving an ineradicable trace revived with a vengeance by the Communist regime: "The Legalist influence on China proved to be everlasting. Its importance in Chinese politics far exceeds that of Machiavelli's influence on Western political discourse. In fact, many of the institutions and political practices of the contemporary People's Republic of China (PRC) can trace their intellectual roots to this school of political philosophy. In late 1973 the Chinese Communist Party, with the endorsement of Mao Zedong, launched a nationwide campaign to *popularize* the teaching of the Legalists and to criticize the Confucians. This nationwide ideological movement was conducted on a gigantic scale, reaching all corners of society, and lasted more than three years. It only ended with the official termination of the so-called Great Proletarian Cultural

[477] Ibid. pp. 409.
[478] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and their Art of Ruling*. London: M. E. Sharp, 1996. pp. 3.

Revolution in 1976. This campaign was an official acknowledgement that Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party considered themselves to be the true successors of the Legalist heritage".[479] "Popularize", in italics, is crucial to my exploration of legitimate/illegitimate violence in Chinese contemporary politics. Moving with the global emphasis on capitalism and consumerism, the legalist underpinnings in Communist China takes on a trendy twist in its adaptation to postmodern global culture. In fact, there has been a recent return to Confucian teachings so the political climate is one governed by a system that is known as inner Legalist and outer Confucian, the pillar of the imperial system previously. By incorporating the postmodern, the Communist regime effectively blinds the *population* to its hegemonic governance using the phallic satisfaction of *popular* culture and consumerism.

The issue of globalisation in China is not something one can pin down easily, not that it is totally graspable internationally, according to Jameson. It is my assertion that Communism in China has permutated in order to fit into global capitalism without losing its dominance over the political and social aspects of the republic. The postmodern culture of China can be read as an inversion of Western postmodernity. Sheldon Lu's discussion of the affinities between poststructuralism and Chinese postmodernity in *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity* gestures to the "time lag" mentioned by two Chinese contemporary scholars on Chinese modernisation and postmodernity, Li Zehou and Liu Zaifu: "In their dialogues, Li and Liu write about a fundamental "time lag" (*shijian cha*), a temporal difference and an epochal difference (*shidai cha*) between China and the West".[480] The postmodern cultural characteristics or poststructuralist philosophical leanings of the West have always been those of Chinese thought and culture. Thus, the temporal slide makes it difficult to label Chinese culture as

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[479] Ibid. pp. 8. Emphasis mine.
[480] Lu, Sheldon H. *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001. pp. 58.

postmodern. Outwardly, urban China looks like any other metropolis in the world, with an eclectic mix of the old and new, but it has not absorbed wholesale American mass culture, defined by Jameson as the pivotal facet of globalisation. In fact, the mimicry may result in a viable cultural tool contesting the neocolonialism of the West in their global control. What we have in China is the postmodern silhouette with a substantial variation. Recalling Confucian ideology, the Communist regime refashions a cultural climate outlined as "Confucian capitalism" but, politically and militarily, the regime still governs legalistically.

Commodity fetishism in mass consumerism is used by the regime to distract the people from its political repressiveness. China's desire to be included in the WTO was also to ensure economic growth since the economic prosperity of the nation, satisfying the population's need for financial security, deflects any large-scale insurrection. But this intense focus on economic growth has ramifications in the social sphere with the gap between the rich and the poor widening at an immense rate resulting in a corresponding increase in crime. Calling China postcolonial or postmodern may not be accurate since China has never been colonised and one cannot simply map Western postmodernity onto China without considering the local conditions. According to Lu, the Chinese intellectuals' attempts to read China with the post – isms have only served the regime's interests as these theories became the catalyst for the return to tradition and nationalism: "In advocating an academic discourse of resistance to the cultural and discursive hegemony of the West rather than to the internal power of the state, postcolonial critics in China may have misidentified the source of oppression. Thus, sensitive domestic issues are elided. The Chinese style of third world criticism may very well play into the hands of conservative politics and cater to the sentiments of Chinese nationalism".[481] Lu asks several important questions that have yet been answered and some of them refer to the "multicultural" or "hybrid" space of so-

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[481] Ibid. pp. 79.

called postmodern China, a space that has yet to bring about the democratisation of the country: "Asian modernity is not a pale replica of Western modernity. More important, the question of agency in Asian modernity is not merely an issue of "enunciation," "utterance," "signification," and "discourse," as sometimes suggested in postcolonial criticism, however critically important those concepts are, but a matter of social praxis, the possibility of changing the material, economic, and cultural condition of living third world subjects".[482] Agency is a question of the conditions in which the third world subject is lodged. In order to act, one has first to consider one's positionality within the political realm. Second, in order to act, one may be required to seize power in a revolutionary attempt to unsettle the oppressive regime with the creative will to power.

To address the issue of agency, Foucault's proposal in "The Subject and Power" should be considered in the reading of resistance against the repressive violence of the Communist regime: "To use another metaphor, it consists in using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies"[483] echoing the Daoist master Sun Zi's *The Art of War* which relies on an analysis of power relations and the strategic use of force after the failure of the initial phase of negotiations between opposing sides in order to avoid a catastrophic loss of lives. Foucault's much noted ambiguous discourse on power, a result of the permeation of this desire for domination, a malaise suffered by both the East and the West, demonstrates the interrelations between the state and the individual and how one requires

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[482] Lu, Sheldon H. *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001. pp. 63.
[483] Foucault Michel. *Power*. Ed. James D. Faubion. Trans. Robert Hurley and others. Vol.3. New York: The New Press, 2000. pp. 329.

the other in the systemic formation. Agency per se does not exist except in power relations and the subject has to act within the dialectical oscillations between the state and individual. What is beyond the state crisis? The beyond of the state's crisis is the issue of singularity. Material change can follow only after a mental emancipation, a transformation of thought activated by a discursive problematisation. Both reflection and action are crucial for the revolutionary; it is a matter of performing one or the other with a certain untimeliness, a temporal deferment and spatial displacement, by an incomplete subject. This lack in the subject constitution is affirmed as part of my thesis argument. Derrida's "erasure" and "supplement" endorse my assertion that the route to "agency", which has a synonymous relation to "support" or "holder", is through prostheses, supplements of lack, giving the subject the shape-shifting adaptability to the changing conditions or the ability to take flight as the gliding signifier.

Riding the waves of turbulent waters, the thesis demonstrates, on the one hand, how the Marxian socialist aspiration results in the totalitarian terror and violence of the Lenin-Marxist orthodox practiced in Communist China, and, on the other hand, which is also the hand of the Other, counters autocracy with Derrida's unfaithful rendering of the democratic promise in *Spectres of Marx*. The people's passive violence against the totalitarian government, the Tiananmen Square Incidents of 1976 and 1989, is called into being by the extreme violence of the regime, the Lacanian rivals, the repressed fighting the regime, in the political power game. The latest massacre was nothing exceptional when interpreted against the history of state terror practiced by the Marxist-Leninist party leaders, the rule of man as the rule by law:

> Like the ancient Legalists, Lenin and Mao Zedong believed that political authority rests on power and power ultimately derives from naked force. As Lenin so emphatically stressed regarding the essence of the Marxist-Leninist dictatorship of the proletariat,

"dictatorship means unlimited power based on force, and not on law" (Lenin 1963-70, vol. 10, 244). Likewise, as Mao's famous quotation so aptly summarizes it: "Political power grows from the barrel of a gun" (Mao Zedong 1965, vol. 2, 224). Similar to the ancient Legalists, the ruling Marxist-Leninist party leaders (such as Lenin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il-sung, and others) always stressed the priority of building up power in the form of armed forces, intelligence, and the mutual informer networks, and the defense industry.[484]

By positioning themselves above the law, these tyrannical leaders are able to impose their will absolutely on their subordinates. In *China's Legalists*, Fu tells us that political authority backed by a strong military and an intelligence force amasses such power that the leader plays god in his governance of the people. I shall take up Fu's reference to Mao's proposal in 1949 to analyse the way the latter managed to consolidate himself as an imperial ruler in the global era: "'Our present task is to strengthen the people's state apparatus – mainly the people's army, the people's police and the people's court' (Mao Zedong 1965, vol. 4, 418). Of course, one must realize that in the modern Marxist-Leninist 'newspeak' the paramount leader is equated with the 'people'".[485] The term "people" can be read as Laclau's "empty signifier" in which Mao hid in order to gain absolute dominance. It is an instance of the synecdochal relation mentioned earlier where the part is taken for the whole and the whole for the part.

Laclau exposes its function in politics: the hegemonic power that it accords the manipulator and its effectiveness as a political instrument. Using the empty signifier to erase the political heterogeneity in the Republic with the logic of equivalence, Mao created a hollow column around which he and his regime dance as the sole representation of the people. As the political icon, representation as substitution and simulation, Mao manipulates the various

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[484] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and their Art of Ruling*. London: M. E. Sharp, 1996. pp. 135.
[485] Ibid. pp. 141.

sections of people, pitching not only one group against another but also one member of the family against another with his intelligence network, so that the lack of social cohesion prevents any effective revolutionary attempt. Lacan's "logic of the signifier", a variant of Nietzsche's *mobile* army, illustrates Mao's use of "the people" as the third party bridging the regime to the individuals, giving him both the immense political *mobility* in his representation of the heterogeneous groups and the power and charisma to *mobilise* his subordinates to radical violence. Hardt and Negri analyse Mao's *revolutionary* strategy: "The modern people's army as an industrial worker army, whereas the guerilla forces were primarily peasant bands. The path of modernisation thus seemed to many revolutionaries in peasant societies the only possible strategy. What was necessary in such instances to form a people's army was a great project of articulation and communication. Mao Zedong's long march in the mid-1930s, for example, put two relationships in play: the centripetal one brings together the dispersed bands of rebels to form something like a national army, and the centrifugal one, through the pilgrimage among the various regions of China, from the south to the north, deposits groups of revolutionaries all along to propagate revolution. Hardt and Negri allude to Mao's strategies because they were successful in driving out the Nationalist party and uniting the people in a revolutionary effort, horizontal strategies that have proven to be effective.

Mao's persecution and execution of the so-called deviant elements resulted in the dispersal of these revolutionaries, a situation collocating with Hardt and Negri's proposal of the passive violence of democracy: "The democratic project of the multitude is thus necessarily exposed to both military violence and police repression: war follows the multitude in exodus, forcing it to defend itself, imposing on the project of absolute democracy the paradox of defining itself as resistance... Not only the *multitude configures its exodus as resistance*, it must

transform that resistance into a form of constituent power, creating the social relations and institutions of a new society".[486] The italicised above reinforces the attention given to the exilic literature as the insurrectionary possibility, an escape permitting the relocation of the subjectivity of the persecuted and the oppressed. It is an inscriptive networking opposing and exposing the disguise of the regime and its party leader with mimicry, an ironic rendering in the form of "the multitude" here, functioning as the empty signifier driving the dissidents to action. Thus, the empty signifier can be a practicable[487] means of accomplishing a goal, empowering the individual in her performance of insurrectionary violence.

In their fight against the dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek and later the despotic Mao and Deng, the scholars and students protested the bloody wield of power. Their face-to-face encounter with the bloodthirsty leaders reiterated historically the multiple rebellions against the imperial dictators. Fu concludes his discussion of China's legalists with the warning from the Daoist master, Laozi: "Probably the single most important flaw of the Legalists was their failure to recognize the natural limits of the effectiveness of coercion and terror. They seemed to have ignored the warning of Laozi, who cautioned the rulers, "When the people are not afraid to die, what is the use of threatening them with death".[488] The power of non-being, a passion invoked by the unfulfilled desire was instrumentalised in their resistance against Communist despotism. The protests that constituted the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident were a passive coup of hunger strikes and inscriptive objections pasted on the Xidan Democracy Wall, a symbolic manifestation of the idea of democracy from *khōra* and *dao*, inhabited by both the messianic and the

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[486] Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004. pp. 348. Emphasis mine.
[487] According to Dictionary.com, practicable derives from Late Latin *practicare*, "to act; to practice," from *practicus*, from Greek *praktikos*, "able in; fit for; doing; active," from *prassein*, "to do; to do habitually."
[488] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and their Art of Ruling*. London: M. E. Sharp, 1996. pp. 155.

monstrous. Documenting the revolutionary violence that responded to the law-preserving violence of the regime, an illegitimate violence since it was above and beyond the law. Geremie Barmé and John Minford provide a figurative description of the disintegration of the democratic hope, revolutionary violence turning into an advertising campaign with cultural mediatisation:

> Thousands of posters went up on a wall near Xidan on Chang'an Avenue in central Peking, containing poems and stories (which were often recited to the crowds before the wall), as well as political manifestos and pleas for justice from victims of the Cultural Revolution. This "Democracy Wall" soon became the most visible emblem of what was popularly known as the Democracy Movement, though in fact it was more a spontaneous outpouring than a concerted "movement." … Deng Xiaopeng, having successfully used the "movement" to prove to his opponents that the Cultural Revolution and its policies had no popular support, *threw these young people aside again*, just as Mao *had used and discarded them more than ten years earlier*. In April and May 1979, the Party clamped down on the "Peking Spring," banning most of the unofficial publications and arresting many of the leading pamphleteers (in fact, arrests continued as late as 1985). Posters and gatherings were forbidden, commercial advertisements began to cover the wall, and in the end it was converted into a series of display cases illustrating the latest achievements of socialist modernization.[489]

The degenerative possibility of democracy is obvious; the messianic promise remains always a promise yet to be actualised.

In their callous manipulation of the young, Mao and Deng achieved notoriety with their "use and discard" political methods, shattering the phantasmatic support of the idea of

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[489] Barmé, Geremie and Minford, John. (Ed.) *Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1988. pp. xxii –xxiii. Emphasis mine.

democracy. Fu, in his discussion of state control of the economy, states: "It is intolerable for a totalitarian state to have subjects who enjoy economic independence. Therefore, the Legalists were consistently oriented toward anti-mercantilism and anti-capitalism. The Legalists were the earliest proponents of a socialist economy. In their insistence on state control of the economy, the difference between the legalists and their modern counterparts is that the ancients were less hypocritical and openly justified state monopoly on the grounds of ensuring supremacy of the ruler, whereas modern Marxist-Leninist ideologues use the rhetoric of public good to camouflage their quest for absolute totalitarian power".[490] The Marxist notion of equal distribution in practice became a stifling leveling leading not only to economic stagnation but also increased hardship and starvation during Mao's reign. The disastrous Great Leap Forward ended with the deaths of thirty million people. Fu tells us that "The core members of the modern PRC power elite will never tolerate the people's attempts to become citizens rather than remain subjects of the state. Any sign that suggests the aspiration of the people to basic human rights such as freedom of speech and assembly must be ruthlessly eradicated, as was shown by the well-known 1989 Tiananmen Massacre".[491] The greatest weakness of the Communist regime, which is also that of legalism in China, is the way the leaders perceive the people. As human chattels, they are completely objectified and exploited, becoming the "excremental excess, the refuse, the remainder"[492] of which Žižek speaks, excrescence upon which the regime depends for its proper functioning. However, the feculence returns as the monstrous challenging the Communist authority.

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[490] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and their Art of Ruling*. London: M. E. Sharp, 1996. pp. 147.
[491] Ibid. pp. 143.
[492] Žižek, Slavoj. "Against Human Rights". *New Left Review 34*. (July August 2005). pp. 122.

Haun Saussy's discussion of the notion of rights alludes to David Hall and Roger Ames's *Thinking from the Han*. The distinction between Western societies and that of the Chinese in terms of rights, according to them, has an ontological dimension: in a society that is circumscribed by rites and not rights, one's socio-political identity is related to the role one plays in this arena of protocols, a situation where rite is might. Thus, according to them, China should not be read in accordance to the conventions of liberal democracy. Saussy's critical assault rests on the limitations that these protocols pose to the individual's personal freedom in self-creation: "What exactly is a "social syntax that generates meaning through coordinating patterns of deference"? What is "coordinated diversity"? What is entailed by the impossibility of "transcending the consensual order"? "Ritual" is after all a large category, containing both dances round the Maypole and human sacrifice… A self-legitimating order does not necessarily provide avenues for antisystematic protest; it might be perfectly "harmonious" to jail or execute people, in the accepted ritual way of course, for presuming to break with the pattern. My failure to fulfill my "constitutive role" may entail the ending of my "ongoing event," and I would be hard-pressed to name a reason within the "social syntax" for delaying my extinction".[493] He is right in arguing that a society privileging the community has very little space for the creative expansion of the individual since a failure to conform means possible persecution or annihilation. Laozi's commentary gives us the implication of rites and rights: "Hence, when the way was lost there was virtue; when virtue was lost there was benevolence; when benevolence was lost there was rectitude; when rectitude was lost there was the rites. The rites are the wearing thin of loyalty and good faith/ And the beginning of disorder".[494]

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[493] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 173.
[494] Laozi. *Tao Te Jing*. Trans. D.C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001. pp. 57.

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A system, self-legitimated or otherwise, always provides avenues for anti-systematic protests if we read the system in the Derridean sense but these openings are utilised by the anti-authoritarian at a price. In fact, the phrase "social syntax" is appropriated in this thesis which insists on a society where rite is might is no different from one where right is might. What is perceived as conventional in the West may not be the norm in the East but, with the pun, it demonstrates the repressive characteristic implicit in both rites and rights that rely on a universality that has no place for the singular. Although there were five major attempts to modernise China, democratic rights such as freedom of speech are still not tolerated. While it has been said that many educated Chinese have championed the Western liberal notion of democracy, it is my contention that the Chinese conception of democracy is different from liberal democracy. This difference is, perhaps, fundamental to Wei Jingsheng's rejection of the democratic concept. Wei was a well-known scholar/counterrevolutionary who spoke against Deng's regime, protesting that the many efforts at modernisation under Deng were fraudulent and ineffective. He was incarcerated and no one knows if he is still alive but, according to Amnesty International, he was physically and psychologically tortured for over a decade.

As justification for the necessity of the democratic idea, Saussy continues: "Although its metaphysical background is dodgy, the concept of universal, natural, or inborn rights has the practical, the argumentative, advantage of favoring the subject claiming a right at the moment of justification. Would you rather have your liberties as an assumption, whose limitation is an exception needing to be justified, or a privilege to be sought on every occasion of their use? To say this is not to put the idea of rights beyond discussion, only to make the suggestions that the idea does a good job of justifying itself pragmatically, quite apart from a transcendental claim

about its origin, and that nobody has a monopoly on pragmatism".[495] While Saussy's justification for rights is commendable, the idea when transposed onto Chinese society, predicated on the Legalist/Confucian tradition, necessitates a more forceful address, which this thesis performs by roping in Žižek's argument "Against Human Rights". Žižek, in his questioning of the human rights movements, paraphrases Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, "it is precisely when a human being is deprived of the particular socio-political identity that accounts for his determinate citizenship that – in one and the same move – he ceases to be recognized or treated as human... What happens to human rights when they are the rights of *homo sacer*, the sacred and the profane, those excluded from the political community; that is, when they are of no use, since they are the rights of those who, precisely, have no rights, and are treated as inhuman?"[496] Žižek delves on the contradiction within the idea of rights by referring to Jacques Ranciere's claim that the rights of the subject are recognised only when her agency is curbed, reducing her to a non-subject. If Saussy thinks that "liberties [can be seen] as an assumption, whose limitation is an exception needing to be justified", we have Žižek, Agamben and Ranciere extrapolating on the exceptional, the humans whose rights are recalled precisely because of their exclusion from any rights. But their state of inhumanity also means the rights bypassing them and returning to the senders, becoming the "rights to the humanitarian interference". The human rights issue, according to the three thinkers, is never simply an issue that can be resolved with an intervention from those who can give or those who can speak. The rights travelling back to the interveners means the continuous disempowerment of the very people who need empowering.

The paradox of rights is unearthed when we look at the politics of China in relation to Ranciere's concept of political subjectivity, which is the "capacity for staging such scenes of

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[495] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 176 -177.
[496] Zizek, Slavoj. "Against Human Rights". *New Left Review 34*. (July August 2005). pp. 127.

dissensus".[497] The people of "The People's Republic of China" are denied the rights of political subjectivity since they have no power to speak their minds in the face of political and economic suppression. In order for the Chinese people to reclaim their rights to political subjectivity, they must lodge themselves within the signifying rift of the political name, exposed by Ranciere's interrogative analysis. Ranciére states the right to democratic participation in the following:

> The generic name of the subjects who stage such cases of verification is the name of the demos, the name of the people. At the end of *Homo Sacer*, Agamben emphasizes what he calls the "constant ambiguity" of the people that is at once the name of the political body and the name of the lower classes. He sees in this ambiguity the mark of the correlation between bare life and sovereignty. But the demos—or *the people*—does not mean the lower classes. Nor does it mean bare life. Democracy is not the power of the poor. It is the power of those who have no qualification for exercising power.[498]

Without the rights of man or civil rights, the Chinese people will have to resort to humanitarian rights. If the issue of human rights is considered only when the individuals are reduced to the level of inhumanity, then the power to address this issue goes to those who are in a position to speak about rights. The Chinese situation exemplifies Ranciére's analysis of how the "right to humanitarian interference"[499] travels back to the sender in an inverted form. Without the right to free speech in China, we see the West appropriating the right to address the human rights issue in China. The United States has been using this right of humanitarian interference as a mask for its political agenda in its conflictual relations with China, pressurising the Chinese government to conform to its liberal democratic conventions with sanctions detrimental to the other's economy. Power is the key to understanding the United States's approach to international relations; the

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[497] http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/south_atlantic_quarterly/v103/103.2ranciere.html (accessed on June 13, 2005).
[498] Ibid.
[499] Ibid.

antagonism between the West and China is the result of imperial power-play, one fighting to maintain global control and the other to preserve its sovereignty and the colonial control of its neighbouring countries. Saussy's *Great Walls of Discourse* explores the ideological contradictions inherent to the tense relations between the United States and China. Instead of proposing that China succumbs to the demands of the liberal democratic nations, he poses these questions: "The question about democracy comes down, in any case, not to a matter of concepts or culture but to a matter of speech in the most pragmatic sense. Who has the floor? Can the floor be shared? Can it be yielded?"[500] In order to explore the possibilities of the right of the citizen in political participation: "What people need, if modernity – and postmodernity, for that matter – is to make good on its promises, is more narratives, more debate about what goes on and why; which is to say that unlicensed citizens need to speak and be heard".[501] Žižek's conception of excremental excesses, transgressive excesses mobilised by the logic of the signifier is, perhaps, an indication to how an unlicensed citizen can speak.

The Tiananmen Incident of 1989 demonstrates once again the fall from innocence. National heroism is depicted pessimistically; the truth of crowd as the untruth of the individual, a tension between the individual and the community overruling the singular. The death of thousands is deemed an injustice to the individual and an example how the rights of the individual is subsumed to national concerns. Most of the *avant-garde* literature presents the incident as a lost cause and the solitude of the individual but the desire of the Other wanes exactly at the point when the rebels were willing to risk all, resulting in disillusion because of the lack of osculation with the Other, the affective background to the tableau; these literary texts also dramatise the elusive Other slipping through the party's hands, an allegory of the dispersal of the

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[500] Saussy, Haun. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001. pp. 143.
[501] Ibid.

excessive remains of national identity, the exodus of writing figured by the disaporic writers themselves. Thus, the Tiananmen Square Incident demonstrates the "people" as a signifier used to encourage national unity or incite insurgencies and the individuals are portrayed as signifiers who were so stuffed with the passion for political change and the human rights issue that they were driven to "heroic suicide" – an instance of deferred satisfaction. The insurrectionists have gone underground and are still waiting for the regime to rectify the derogatory term, "political turmoil", used to define the incident.

Communist China illustrates Agamben's notion of the "constant ambiguity" of the term *demos* or the people since "the people" is used to galvanise the dictatorship of the communist leaders. If democracy is "*the power* of those who have no qualification for exercising power", then the protests enacted by the students, teachers, office personnel, factory workers, small merchants, casual labourers on Tiananmen Square after the repressive Cultural Revolution are democratic performances against the totalitarian excesses of the regime's autocratic rule. By seizing the power to act, the people of China were staging their right to political subjectivisation. "The violence of the letter", Derrida's note on writing, lends itself to my assertion that the revolutionary violence of inscription gestures to the way an insurrection can be carried out, what Hardt and Negri calls "the democracy of the multitude", elaborated as:

> Perhaps we can understand the decision making of the multitude as a form of expression. Indeed the multitude is organized something like a language. All of the elements of a language are defined by their differences one from the other, and yet they all function together. A language is a flexible web of meanings that combine according to the accepted rules in an infinite number of possible ways. A specific expression, then, is not only the combination of linguistic elements but the production of real meaning:

expression gives a name to an event. Just as expression emerges from language, then, a decision emerges from the multitude in such a way as to give meaning to the whole and name an event. For linguistic expression, however, there must be a separate subject employs the language in expression. This is the limit of our analogy because unlike language the multitude is itself an active subject – something like a language that can express itself.[502]

The above citation endorses the Derridean suggestion of how being is structured like language, the processes of signification arising to the name. The fluid manifestation of the multitude corresponds to the metonymic flexibility of language, a grammatographic fluidity that makes naming possible in the first place. Self-determining, it can be likened to a linguistic process that describes a becoming as an occurrence that incises and shapes itself out of the polyvalent possibilities of existence. Like the force of the name, being as a subject gains power with a dislocating act, which precedes her location eventually in the chain of being, an actor of the universality to which she is supposedly entitled, an operation that calls forth the "right to universality as such – the right of a political agent to assert its radical non-coincidence with itself (in its particular identity), to posit itself as the 'supernumerary'",[503] the page as the floor, forging out of the gap between the particular and the universal her revolutionary advantage. This is corroborated by what Levinas asserts as the rights of man: "The rights of man manifest the uniqueness or the absolute of the person, despite his or her subsumption under the category of the human species, or because of that subsumption. This is the paradox, or mystery, or novelty of

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[502] Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004. pp. 339. Authors' emphasis.

[503] Zizek, Slavoj. "Against Human Rights". *New Left Review* 34. (July August 2005). pp 131.

the human in being, which I have just stressed".[504] Thus, the particular gains access to the general because of this originary right, the right to appeal to the universal as jurisprudence and the legitimacy of the name that emerges out of the conditions of possibility is founded on the unfounded violence of sovereignty, a lawless violence that can only be countered by another lawless violence. Deconstruction is justice precisely because it addresses the legal constitution as a construction based on lawlessness requiring constant vigilance.

Law, in its move toward totality, becomes repressive and, deconstruction, as a dislocation of that totality, makes possible the democratic progress. To give the originary violence of the legal institution deconstructive attention is to meet hubris with a contesting violence in the attempt to found a new constitution, exemplified by the Tiananmen Square Incidents, manifestations of the clash between the legal monopoly of the Communist regime and the founding violence of the student protestors. They are, to quote Derrida from the "Force of Law", "understanding the contract and the conditions of the law, that is of at least minimally *adopting*, *appropriating*, your language"[505] in their desire to speak. Bringing to the fore the 1989 Incident is my way of addressing the "equivocal slippages between law (*droit*) and justice".[506] The radical programme of deconstruction rests on the critical attention given to the shifts between law as justice and law as injustice:

> … deconstruction takes place in the interval that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of *droit* (authority, legitimacy, and so on). It is possible as an experience of the impossible, there where, even if it does not exist (or does not yet

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[504] Levinas, Emmanuel. "The Rights of Man and the Rights of the Other". *Outside the Subject*. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994. pp. 117-118.

[505] Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"". *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 5. Emphasis mine.

[506] Ibid. pp. 6.

exist, or never does exist), *there is* justice. Wherever one can replace, translate, determine the x of justice, one should say: deconstruction is possible, as impossible, to the extent (there) where *there is* (undeconstructible) x, thus to the extent (there) where *there is* (the undeconstructible).[507]

Deconstruction, as a radical programme that acknowledges the impossibility of true democracy, is a critical approach that Hardt and Negri should consider in their proposal of a new science of democracy, what they refer to as the "democratic will to power"[508]. Although I agree with their proposal of a counterforce organised in a horizontal, associative manner much like the lateral transitions of rhetorical devices, their understanding of Benjamin's notion of divine violence and Nietzsche's will to power is inadequate. Derrida's "Force of Law" and *Spectres of Marx* demonstrate that the proposal of a "principle of defensive violence", a violence that is more preservative than creative, goes against Benjamin's divine violence, which gives to the Derridean reading of a bloodless revolutionary violence that is both destructive and creative, deconstructive and reconstructive, a violence likened to the founding violence of inscription. Hardt's and Negri's new science of democracy although praiseworthy may succumb to idealism; its successful realisation will mean the totalitarian repetition of communism because of the inherent contradiction in trying to bridge the universal and the particular with representation. The problem can be located in the section on the political standpoint of this new science, a biopolitical approach to biopower which necessitates what they call "constituent power", describing it as "a *decision* that emerges out of the ontological and social process of productive labor; it is an institutional form that develops a common content; it is a deployment of force that defends the

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[507] Ibid. pp. 15. Author's emphasis.
[508] Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004. pp. 344.

historical progression of emancipation and liberation; it is, in short, an act of love".[509] If constituent power is an "institutional form", it is representation established with the founding violence of a decision, which necessitates an incision, a certain wounding of the space-time conditions. This is the contradiction within the preserving violence proposed, which can be countered with the Derridean disruptive approach to the law-preserving violence described by Benjamin in "Critique of Violence".

Activating Lyotard's "The Other's Rights", the restoration of the human right to speak in our fight against totalitarianism, this thesis heightens the need to incessantly reinscribe the idea of democracy. The only way to address totalitarianism is the continuous performance of deconstruction. Democracy is but a measure for adjudication in our existential journey, a journey having no fixed arrival. Derrida's democracy is the democracy-to-come, a messianic promise which, by definition, must remain unfulfilled. What is crucial in the above citation from Hardt and Negri is the love accompanying the act. If there is an inescapable structural problematic to all democratic solutions owing to the excluded, resolutions prompting again and again the historical trauma, then we must respond to the call of the Other with love, a symptomatic driving that generates revolutionary power. Derrida's short treatise on the love of the ruins is the consummate figure for this love of the Other:

> What else is there to love, anyway? One cannot love a monument, a work of architecture, an institution as such except in an experience itself precarious in its fragility: it hasn't always been there, it will not always be there, it is finite. And for this reason I love it as mortal, through its birth and its death, through the ghost or the silhouette of its ruin, of

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[509] Ibid. pp. 351.

my own – which it already is or already prefigures. How can we love except in this finitude? Where else would the right to love, indeed the love of right, come from?[510]

Concluding with Derrida's question is a gesture to the answer to the question posed by Ranciére in "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" It is only with the compelling letter which gives to the force of the word, inscriptive violence as founding violence, that totalitarianism can be prevented. The compulsion to satisfy the desire of the Other ends the night. From Nietzsche's subterranean passages to Derrida's aurora and to the half-light of the crack of dawn here signals the nascence of Aphrodite; *when* we get there, *wherever* that is, *it just is, for that moment*, made evident by the homonymous relation of *dao* as the passage and *dao* as the point of arrival in Chinese writing, merely a partial description of that wondrous and monstrous sphere within Sollers's *Numbers*: "A suspended, free-floating sphere is constituted in silence, half-visible if one looks through him… The word he can pronounce here is also the thing that is furthest away, and the thing that is nearest at hand will be an existing but absent word… 'Each substance, moreover, is like an entire world, a mirror of the whole universe, which is expressed by each substance in its own way, somewhat as the selfsame city is variously represented according to the different positions occupied by the person observing it…".[511]

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[510] Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"". *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. pp. 44.
[511] Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. pp. 318-319.

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