

珠水诗心共悠悠

第二届珠江国际诗会暨学术研讨会论文集

区鉷 主编

中山大学出版社

Pearl River Meandering with Poetic Thought:
Proceedings of the Second Pearl River International Poetry Conference

Edited by OU Hong

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藏书章

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Poetic Thought

Keynote Speech at the Second Pearl River International Poetry Conference,
Guangzhou, P. R. China, 15th June 2008

J. H. Prynne

Abstract: This paper examines some of the features in poetry which may be recognised as ‘Poetic Thought’, and attempts to advance some analysis of these features. Distinctions are offered between thought and thinking and thoughtfulness, and connections with the functions of authorship and readership are also considered. Emphasis is placed on the role of language as the basis and material of poetic thought itself.

Key Words: poetry thought poetic language dialectic

Author: J. H. Prynne (Pu Ling-en) is a British Poet; Reader in English Poetry for the University of Cambridge, U. K. ; Librarian and Life Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Guest Professor of School of Foreign Languages, Sun Yat-sen University, P. R. China. E-mail: jhp13@cam.ac.uk

题目: 诗学思想 (第二届国际珠江诗会主题发言, 中国广州, 2008 年 6 月 15 日)

内容提要: 本论文审查了诗歌的一些特点并试图对这些特点做进一步的分析, 从这些特点之中可以辨认“诗学思想”。提出思想、思考和思想性之间的区别, 还考虑它们与作者和读者身份相关的功能。重点放在作为诗学思想本身之基础和实体的语言的作用。

关键词: 诗歌 思想 诗学语言 辩证

作者简介: 蒲龄恩 (J. H. Prynne), 英国诗人, 英国剑桥大学读审 (Reader)、甘维尔-基斯学院图书馆退休馆长, 剑桥大学终身资格学者, 中国中山大学外国语学院客座教授。

My topic is poetic thought, in its more or less modern aspect or at least from a modern point of view. It is not easy to approach this large and abstract idea, and to offer some comments in a short space of time. Furthermore, what might be meant by this phrase, “poetic thought”, must seem elusive in the context of different cultural and historical settings: old and new, east and west.

Both words will give us difficulty. By “thought” I do not mean the previously accomplished results or productions of a thinking process, still less a codified system or assemblage of ideas as might characterise a school or an era, such as in “late-Scholastic thought”, or “Mohist thought”. I mean something more like the active process of thinking, mental energy shaped to some purpose

or tendency; I think of it as poetic *work*. But I do not mean this as the personal history of someone thinking, the efforts of conscious mind-focus as pursued by an individual subject, or even by an individual poet. It is possible to speak of “the poetic thought of Wang Wei” or “the poetic thought of John Keats”, but such is not my interest here.

Nor in any way should I wish to restrict this sense of “thought” to exclusively or even principally intellectual procedures or their outcomes. The thought of a thinker who is more or less professional in that role may indeed possess this character, of speculative coherence within a territory of mental exertion according to rules and disciplines which are specific to the profession. It’s true that an experimental scientist may not initially generate thought in my large sense, whereas a scholar in (say) the field of the history of religion deals all the time with thought practice and its systematic developments. But here also these uses and concepts of *thought* are not my present theme. Thus we proceed by negative definition.

To turn now to the qualifying word “poetic”, again I need to set aside any notion that thoughts or ideas or mental conceptions can be described as “poetic” in an impressionistic sense, just because they seem rich in fancy, in colourful images and suggestive turns of expression, and because they deviate (perhaps playfully) from a more strict or impersonal system of rational argument. I do not mean this at all. Nor do I want to mean here, by “poetic”, something that bears the character of what poets do, or what an individual poet does. It is possible to say that John Keats led an intensely poetic life, but whatever that may mean it’s not part of my meaning on this occasion.

There is a slight discomfort in the next stage of my negative definition, because I want to say that “poetic” in this usage does not mean, merely, “expressed or set out in the forms characteristic of poetry” or “contained within a discourse belonging in a category of poetical composition”. The discomfort arises here because the meaning that I want to uncover for the phrase “poetic thought” does lie somewhat close to my last description.

So what then is this topic to signify? Not all activities of poetry and its composition can be found to work with and through poetic thought. Nor is an end-productive subject-thinker, an identified poet-in-charge, required. The activity of thought resides at the level of language practice and indeed is *in* the language and *is* the language; in this sense, language is how thinking gets done and how thinking coheres into thought, shedding its links with an originating sponsor or a process of individual consciousness.

Separating from its origins in a life history (personal beliefs, memory, emotion, physiology of personhood) is an essential step in the generation of poetic thought; but once again by negative description it’s necessary to understand how this step does not mean that prior activity in consciousness transfers into something less active, more like a result of activity. The case is quite the reverse; the focus of poetic composition, as a text takes shape in the struggle of the poet to separate from it, projects into the textual arena an intense energy of conception and differentiation, pressed up against limits which are discovered and invented by composition itself.

To amplify these contrasts, we may recognise that some part of the constraints which give form to energy of conception are intrinsic to the specific character of poetic discourse, to the practice of poetry, which is always in some sense its own topic-focus; if only because it will be under intense pressure of innovation and experiment, not just wilfully crushing the natural grain and rhythm of language but discovering new reflex slants and ducts and cross-links that open inherent potentials previously unworked. Does this perhaps suggest that *thoughtfulness* can be an accompanying posture and glint to strong new working with poetic language? Well maybe so; but *thoughtfulness* is just a colour of discourse, one of its moods or habits, not to be held equivalent

to poetic thought in the sense being searched for here; indeed, thoughtfulness may be a kind of conscience-money paid for the tacit avoidance of ardent, directed thought.

To work with thought requires the poet to grasp at the strong and persistent ways in which understanding is put under test by imagination as a screen of poetic conscience, to coax and hurl at finesse and judgment, to set beliefs and principles on line, self-determining but nothing for its own sake merely; all under test of how things are. Nothing taken for granted, nothing merely forced, pressure of the composing will as varied by delicacy, because these energies are dialectical and not extruded from personality or point of view. Dialectics in this sense is the working encounter with contradiction in the very substance of object-reality and the obduracy of thought; irony not as an optional tone of voice but as marker for intrinsic anomaly.

So, the poet working with poetic thought requires to activate every part of the process, into strong question where the answer is obscure, or into what looks like strong answer where the question evades precise location. Language will have to keep up with this as best it can, must not be damaged unreasonably but equally must not be sheltered like a sick child; it can fight its own battles. There is also not too much cause to worry about the reader, since if these efforts produce composition of durable value the reader will catch up in due time. The notion of a reader unwilling to be conscripted by mere appearance brings also an astringent, sceptical aspect into view, and the width of reader-kinds and their motivations also splays out the notion of single-origin, single-issue poetic thought. "From China to Peru" was not just for Samuel Johnson a grandiose fancy; and nowadays, consider the international trade in copper pushing in reverse along that very same axis.

If then the poet in this kind is under pressure of conscience to be fully active within the disputed territory of poetic thought, at maximum energy and indeed vigilance, riding through the supple evasions and sudden blockages of language just prior to its emergent formation, how can the result be other than some testimonial to the power of the creating poet, an inscribed scriptural witness? I believe the answer to be that strong poetic thought does indeed demand the unreserved commitment of the poet, deep-down within the choices and judgments of dialectical composition; but before the work is completed the poet must self-remove from this location, sever the links not by a ruse but in order to test finally the integrity of the result. Indeed, until this removal is effected, the work cannot be truly complete, so that the new-discovered and extended limits of poetic thought form the language-boundaries of the new work. Some of the limit-rules here are already inherent in language as a system of social practice and grammatical construction; some of the limit-features have to do with a text's not breaking the bounds of poetry altogether. But these powerfully signifying limits are valorised by the internal energy of language under intense pressure of new work, new use, new hybrids of practice and reference and discovery.

Here some of the negative definitions already advanced need to be brought back into view. The fingertip energies of a language are not at all merely or mainly intellectual. Intense abstract visualisation, for example, or sonorous echo-function from auditory cross-talk and the history of embedded sound values in the philological development of a language system, all may carry and perform the pressures of new poetic thought. In addition, the formal constraints of structure are not restricted to tight local intensities of challenge to language use; large and extended structures generate tensions of thought-argument, both expressive of conceptual and opportune design and also as oppositional bracing, by demand upon logics of completion and straying against an end. Both Milton and Wordsworth are classical masters in apparent straying within the framework of extended form, and of eventual shifted return to the meaning of completion; the same is also true more recently of John Wilkinson, who indeed is here today.

One further negative definition is necessary. Poetic thought is empowered within and through energies of language under pressure, but is not definitively produced by this intrinsic agency, as if a language-machine could be set up in generational mode and then switched on, with a few corrective interventions from a poet-supervisor. It's all too clear that, in whatever stage of social evolution, a discourse practice defaults in a wink to facile acceptance of the commonplace, to bending compliantly under commercial or political distortions, to accommodate by self-corruption. All this is part of language reality within a cultural epoch and certainly may not be merely resisted, because vitality in language change and weakness in servile instrumentalism cannot easily be separated without parade of puritanical disdain.

Thus, poetic thought is brought into being by recognition and contest with the whole cultural system of a language, by argument that will not let go but which may not self-admire or promote the idea of the poet as arbiter of rightness. Whatever the users of language claim as their rights to effects of meaning, language is produced by meaning habits but resists definitive assignments of motive and desire. This is a root counterforce of energy in language itself as a scheme of activity in social practice: it is the placement-station of the poet whose argument here will generate poetic thought.

How does poetic thought achieve recognisable form, how is it shaped? The language of poetry is its modality and material base, but whatever its relation with common human speech the word-arguments in use are characteristically disputed territory, where prosody and verse-form press against unresolved structure and repeatedly transgress expectation. This is a kind of dialectical unsettling because line-endings and verse divisions work into and against semantic overload, in contest with the precursors to unresolved meaning. The extreme density of the unresolved, which maintains the high energy-levels of language in poetic movement, its surreptitious buzz, may resemble unclarity which it partly is; but strong poetic thought frequently originates here, in the tension about and across line-endings, even in functional self-damage or sacrifice as the predicament of an emerging poem determined not to weaken or give way. Thought in this matrix is not unitary (unlike ideas) but is self-disputing and intrinsically dialectical.

What thereby vibrates on the page and in the mind of the reader, in knowledge and memory and moral understanding, thus does not belong to the poet, not any more; it does not belong in the domain of the language system, not any more; it does not reside in the fabric of dispute about values or competing models of state control, or visions of a future life. Even the conception of a public domain or an interpretative community cannot claim to be its necessary housing, any more than a conjured posterity and its compact storage in face of the unknown. These are the outer shells, of a dialectic energy working through the methods of poetic composition which cannot be defined or contained by its shells but must break them to become altogether new: new poetic thought.

Pu Ling-en
(J. H. Prynne)

Gonville and Caius College,
Cambridge University, U. K.
(jhp13@cam.ac.uk)

Foreign Studies College,
Hunan Normal University,
Changsha, P. R. China.

诗 思

(在第二届珠江国际诗会上的主题发言)

2008年6月15日

蒲龄恩

(英国剑桥大学甘维尔-基斯学院)

龙靖遥* 译

我的话题是“诗思”，它或多或少涉及这一概念的当代性，或者，我至少从当代的角度来谈。在如此短的时间里讨论这么一个大而抽象的话题并对之作出评价很难。此外，在不同的文化与历史语境里（如过去与现在、东方与西方），这一术语的含义肯定会显得很模糊。

这两个字都给我们带来理解的难度。“思”指的不是某一思维过程已经产生了的结果，更不是某时代或某流派（如“新经院派”或“墨家”）罗列出的典型的思想体系或思想总汇。它的意思更接近思维进行着的过程，即脑力所形成的某一目的或趋向：我把它当成“诗歌作品”。但它指的不是某思维个体的个人历史以及某一个体或某一诗人有意识地将思绪集中起来所付出的努力。人们会这么说，“王维的诗思”或“约翰·济慈的诗思”，但我的兴趣不在此。

我也不想把“思”的意思仅仅或主要限制到某些智力过程或它们的结果上。一名多少有些专业的思想家可能具有这种特性，即根据这一职业所特有的规则与原理在脑力活动范畴之内体现出来的思维的一致性。从这个意思的广义上说，从事实证研究的科学家一开始可能产生不了“思”，而一位学者（比如宗教史领域里的）每时每刻都在进行着“思”的活动并致力于发展它的系统性。但“思”在这里的应用和概念不是我今天的主题。因此，我们从它不是什么的角度（逆向定义）来入手。

现在谈修饰词“诗”。我又得把这样的观点搁置一边：思想或观念或脑海里的概念可以从印象主义的角度描述为“诗意的”，仅仅因为它们看起来富于想象、意象缤纷多姿且含义丰富，而且因为它们偏离（可能是戏谑地）理性观念中更为严格客观的体系。这不是我的意思。“诗”所指的也不是概括诗人行为特征的东西。我们可以这么说，约翰·济慈过着非常诗性的生活，但不管这意味着什么，都不是我现在所说的意思。

我接下来所给出的逆向定义让人稍微有点别扭，因为我想说“诗”在这里不仅仅指的是“以诗歌典型的形式来表达”或者“包含于诗歌创作范畴里的话语”。别扭是因为我要表述的“诗思”的含义和上面的描述有点接近。

* 译者简介：龙靖遥，男，浙江师范大学外国语学院副教授，博士。

那么这个话题意味着什么？并非所有的诗歌活动及其创作都通过诗思来进行。也没人要求一位就某题材进行苦思冥想并最终产生作品的人，亦即负责此题材的某具体的诗人，这么做。“思”产生于语言活动的层面，实际上它就在语言中，而且它就是语言。在这个意义上说，语言就是思维如何完成以及思维如何凝结成“思”的东西，它摆脱了与思维的发起人或者与某具体意识过程的联系。

将诗思与其生活阅历（个人信仰、记忆、情感以及个人生理状况）的起源割裂开来，这是产生诗思的必要的一步；但是，通过逆向定义我们必须明白，这个步骤为什么不意味着意识里原先的活动转化成某种没那么活跃的东西，就像是思维活动的结果。情况刚好相反。诗歌的文本在诗人竭力与其诗歌作品割裂开来时成形，它将概念与界定巨大的能量投入到文本的竞技场中，创作自身所发现并创造出来的限度压迫着它。这就是创作的核心。

为了加深这种比较，我们应该认识到，诗歌处于巨大的创新和实验的压力之下，它不是存心去破坏语言自然的质地与节奏，而是为了发现新的表现渠道以及横向联系，这些渠道和联系提供了此前尚未设定的固有的潜能；如果是这样，让概念张力成形的限度的某部分是诗歌话语以及诗歌创作（从某种意义上说它就是它自己的话题核心）独特特征所固有的东西。这是否意味着“若有所思”是某种姿态或某束亮光，伴随着诗歌语言进行剧烈而新颖的活动？噢，可能吧。但是“若有所思”只是话语的色彩，它的基调或习性之一，不能与我们所寻求的诗思的意义混为一谈。实际上“若有所思”只是我们心照不宣地免除热切明晰的思想后支付的某种悔罪金。

要与“思”周旋，诗人得坚定执著地采取这样的措施：将想象作为诗歌意识的屏幕，以之考验人们的理解，让它与人们的理解策略与判断斗智斗勇，把信仰与规则处于同一层面上，它们自主却不只是为了自身；一切都处于客体结构的考验之下。没什么能想当然，没什么只是逼出来，创作自身的压力会因微妙精细而变化，因为张力是辩证的，它不来自个性或立场。辩证在这里指的是产生意义的东西和客体现实的本体与思的非个人化之间的矛盾相遇；反讽不是任选的语调，而是内在的不规范的标志物。

因此，进行诗思的诗人要把这一程序的每部分都调动起来，形成一个迫切需要回答的问题，但是答案却模糊不清，或者形成很急切的答案，而问题却是云山雾罩。语言必须与这一目的保持一致，我们不必毫无理由地打破语言常规，但也不必像保护一个生病的孩子般看护着它：它自己能打好这一仗。我们也不必过多地为读者担心，如果上述的努力产生了持久的价值，读者迟早会领悟的。读者是不愿意仅仅为表面现象所引导的，这使得诗歌呈现出尖刻可疑的一面，同时，读者群之泛、动机之杂就排除了诗思独源、独份的观点。“从中国到秘鲁”不光对塞缪尔·约翰逊而言是沾沾自喜的幻想；想一想今天国际铜矿贸易沿着这条轴线呈现出来的逆向现象吧。

那么，这类诗人假如处于诗思意识压力之下在诗思争议不休的领域里充分地活跃起来，他的注意力，实际上是警惕性，调整到最高，就在诗歌猝然成形之前，他在巧妙的引而不发以及突发的语言障碍中游弋，其结果除了以书写的形式见证并证明创作着的诗人的创作力外又能是什么呢？我相信答案应该是这样：强烈的诗思要求诗人不遗余力地投入到辩证性创作所涉及的选择及判断中去；但是在作品完成之前，诗人必须使自己从

作品中消失。把作者与作品之间的联系割断不是出于策略上的考虑，而是为了检验作品的完整性。事实上，只有当作者将自己从作品中除去，作品才能完整，这么一来，诗思新发现并延展了的限度就构成了新作品的语言界限。作为社会实践以及语法结构的体系，语言本身已拥有某些限度原则；一些限度的特点是不完全打破诗歌的界限。但是，新作品、新用法还有诗歌的实践与指向及发现的新糅合所产生的巨大压力形成的语言内部的张力保证了这种具有强大指向功能的限度。

我们在这儿得再次回顾此前已给出的逆向定义。语言的直接张力绝不仅仅是或主要是智识上的东西。诸如抽象意向的高度集中，或者是相声能发出响亮声音的回声功能以及某语言系统在语文学发展过程中语音的附加值的历史等，都会承载并产生新的诗思的压力。此外，结构在形式上的限度不限于对语言应用所构成的直接而剧烈的挑战：宽泛外展的结构也会产生思辨的迫切性，通过对既要达成结论又要游离于结论之外的逻辑的诉求，既体现出概念性及适时性的构思，又作为对立的支撑物而存在。弥尔顿和华兹华斯都是既明显地在外展结构的框架之内游离又最终转而回归到意义的完成上来的一流大师。今天在场的约翰·威尔金森也是这样。

我们有必要进一步提出一个逆向定义。诗思通过压力之下的语言张力而在其中产生，但是并非绝对地由这种内在机制生产出来，就好比一台语言机器以生产意义的模式组装起来，然后打开开关，作为监控者的诗人稍做更正就万事大吉了。众所周知，不管在社会演化的哪个时期，话语实践都会在眨眼之间轻易接受老生常谈的东西，卑微地屈从于商业或政治的扭曲，并通过自我堕落来与其他因素相妥协。所有这一切都是某时代文化中的语言现实，我们不能只是抗拒它，因为由语言变化而产生的活力以及由卑贱的工具论观点导致的衰变，假如不摆出一副清教徒般的轻蔑，就不可能截然分开。

因此，通过认识某种语言总的文化体系并与之角力，通过辨明以下的立场，亦即既不拒绝接受又不沾沾自喜地鼓吹诗人是正确含义的仲裁者的观点，诗思得以产生。不管语言使用者说他们对语言的含义有何等的权力，语言是由意义习惯产生的，它拒绝硬性摊派给它的动机和意图。作为社会实践的行为规划，这是根植于语言自身张力的反力：这是诗人的安置地，在这里，诗人的思辨产生了诗思。

诗思如何得到可辨的形体，它是如何成形的？诗歌语言是它的形式和物质基础，但是不管它与日常语言的关系怎么样，使用中的词语辨义是典型的充满争议的领域，在这个领域中，诗艺和诗体冲击着未形成定论的结构，不断地超越我们的阅读期待。这种悬而未决的状况得辩证地看，因为诗行结尾以及诗节划分既构成又抵制额外的含义，与未确定含义的前驱处于角逐的状态。未确定含义的高度密集维持着诗歌字里行间语言高度的张力水平，亦即诗歌的弦外之音，这种情况类似于晦涩，而其自身确实有几分晦涩；但是强烈的诗思就常常在这里产生，它产生于诗行结尾处或者跨越诗行结尾时所呈现的紧张态势，甚至产生于诗歌为达到某目的而自戕或自我牺牲所产生的两难境地上，而诗却以不妥协不让步的姿态出现。这种模式的思不是一元的（与观点不一样），它自身冲突不休，从根本上说是辩证的。

因此，诗歌在书页上、在读者脑海中、在知识体系里、在记忆深处以及在道德意义上的含义就不再属于诗人；不再属于语言体系的范畴；它不再栖身于有关价值观争辩的方式、政府控制不同的模式或者关于未来生活的设想。即使是公共范畴或阐释群体的观

念也不能把自己当做它的庇护所，对于我们想象中面对未知知识储备丰厚的子孙后代而言，情况也是如此。这些东西都是某种辩证能量的外壳，这能量游刃于诗歌创作不同的方法中，它不能为它的外壳所定义或包含，它要打破这些外壳以便成为崭新的东西：新的诗思。

The American Tract

John Wilkinson

Abstract: This paper identifies the persistence of a nineteenth-century conception of national destiny in contemporary American poetry usually thought of as avant-garde. A recent book by the distinguished poet Susan Howe is cited as an example. It is argued that by contrast some “canonical” American poetry of the mid-twentieth century is more radical in both content and prosody, as with the anti-colonialism of Frank O’Hara.

Key Words: poetry United States destiny identity

Author: John Wilkinson is a British Poet, Professor and Poet in Residence at the University of Notre Dame du Lac, U. S. A.

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内容提要: 引述著名诗人苏珊·豪的一部近作为例证，本文意在鉴定一个贯穿 19 世纪的概念天命民族，它在当代美国诗歌中通常被认为是属于先锋派。通过比照可以说明，一些 20 世纪中期的美国“正典”诗歌与弗兰克·奥哈拉的反殖民主义一样，在内容和作诗法两方面都更为激进。

关键词: 诗歌 美国 天命 身份

作者简介: 约翰·威尔金森，英国诗人，美国圣母大学教授、住校诗人。

In the United States a belief persists that humanity will be perfected in this nation, drawing all people into the adventure its revolution inaugurated. This belief can puzzle those from older nations, particularly since it co-exists in many US citizens with a highly exclusive idea of American identity. Only because the US remains an immigrant country with renewed infusions of a commitment to this American future, does such persistence make sense. Personal and national destiny are not distinguished in the immigrant imaginary. The country’s marked religiosity reflects the same certainty that intense anticipation can make anything happen. But destiny is matched by the immigrant experience of loss. Loss is mitigated by recasting personal and social history according to powerful racially and culturally based myths and stereotypes; when we get to heaven we’ll still wear the Irish green or talk in the rhythms of the African Gold Coast. And while heaven’s promise will surely be realised, that will be for our grandchildren-deferral is implicit in the immigrant imaginary.

In some parts of the world, a contempt for the US is rooted in the idea that Americans have no sense of history, and live only in the present. This is a misconception. Americans inhabit a sense of a sure future, and a sense of the past as an inalienable gift-even if ever-threatened and

liable to tarnish if not polished regularly. Because the present falls under the tutelage of myths of past and future, revoking any need for the continuous negotiation a real and violent history demands, this can be mistaken for living just for the day. But the day remains subservient to the claims of the collective past and of the national future, and this subservience can be measured in the extent of family debt-which contrary to the assumptions of moralists, represents first and foremost a commitment to the promise of America, through house purchase and educational investment. Meanwhile for most Americans the present feels flimsy and imperilled.

Nor should we forget that a sense of American destiny extends far beyond the US, propagated through its cultural products into the poorest and remotest corners of the earth. The longing to emigrate to the US remains widespread, as American politicians do not tire of pointing out to critics of its foreign policy. It is not surprising then that the United States has become the world's savings bank. Hopes still appreciate best where debts are greatest.

Contemporary American poetry provides a surprising amount of evidence to support such generalisation, and at different levels of writing practice. Fearing that poetic language might seduce them into immediate pleasures, many creative writing students write a sort of unpoetry whose non-poetic character is the guarantee of its poetic truth. These poems are characteristically obsessed by relationships with parents and grandparents, or by the cultural particularity of the communities in which a student was raised; students register a pressure on them to realise a destiny which they are bound to pass on to another generation, and whose deferral must be accounted for. An emphasis on cultural origins becomes a kind of propitiation of the disappointed forebears, as well as compensation for the thinness of experience governed by deferral. When I first read poems by Chinese American students whose parents and grandparents were immigrants to the US, I was delighted by their cultural detail. Now that I have learnt they mostly describe the same family and community rituals, I wonder if these families do all burn money to secure their children's success in exams, or if this is a story Chinese American students think they must tell to sound culturally authentic. Or whether their parents burn money more to assert Chinese identity than because they believe in the ritual's efficacy. Or whether the students are slyly excusing themselves from unrealistic expectations by hinting that if their parents had been truer to their cultural identity and burnt money, these poems would be saturated enough in cultural detail to be published in *The New Yorker*!

More remarkable is the way thoughtful and ambitious American poetry can remain true to millennial patriotic myths while at the same time it is read by intellectuals as deconstructive of myths of presence. It is becoming evident, in poetry as elsewhere, that such deconstructive moves are perfectly compatible with a theology no longer invoking God as a presence, but recast as the eternally belated. This theology preserves the general trajectory of progressivism while able to accept endless disappointment, withdrawal and failure in the present.

In American poetry a special dynamic can be observed around tradition, leading to poems as markers for positions relative to past and future, rather than ensembles re-gathering during each time of their reading. The supposition that every generation throws off the shackles of the previous generation is deeply embedded in the American avant-garde; and it follows that to use traditional poetic resources tends to be interpreted as a mark of political reaction. Conservative critics approve avant-garde poets if those poets happen to exploit traditional forms; so a rhyme is a rhyme no matter whether it opens up infinite space, clinches a point or fans out into multiple ambiguity. Meanwhile radical critic-theorists stay on the lookout for backsliding into elitist (that is, European) cultural references and the presumed affirmation of conservative cultural pieties to be inferred from regular syntax. The influential two-volume anthology, *Poems for the Millennium*, a