

*THE SONG OF SONGS (ŠIR HAŠŠIRIM) AND THE BOOK
OF SONGS (SHIJING): AN ATTEMPT
IN COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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For Professor Wu-chi Liu at his 90th birthday on July 22, 1997

The aim of this study is to analyse the lyric(al)ness of the two great specimens of the ancient and Chinese poetry *Song of Songs* and *The Book of Songs*. The different specificity of the lyricism is underscored in the *poematis personae* of two poetic works: more metaphoric language of the first and more synecdochic of the second, with attention to aesthetic sides of the depicted reality in first, and more restrained ethical values highlighted in the second. The first book is extrovertly and the second introvertly oriented. For both is typical the use of similes, although of different character.

This is a part of a series of articles devoted to the relationships and affinities between the *Bible* and Chinese literature.¹ Since the stress of my studies is usually on genetic-contact relationships, this study is an exception (so far), as there are no connections, direct or mediated, between the *Song of Songs* and *Shijing* [1] *The Book of Songs* whatsoever, and this kind of research could be labelled either as typological or parallel study. In comparative literature, typological (or parallel) studies are of the

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¹ GÁLIK, M.: *The Bible and Chinese Literature as Seen from the Angle of Intercultural Communication*. AAS 2, 1993 (new series), 2, pp. 113-133, *Studies in Modern Chinese Intellectual History: VI. Young Bing Xin (1919-1923)*. AAS 2, 1993 (n.s.) 1, pp. 41-60, *Die junge Bing Xin, der alte Tagore und der gute Hirte. Ein Fallbeispiel aus der modernen chinesischen Geistesgeschichte*. In: KRÜÄMANN, I., KUBIN, W. and MÖLLER, H.-G. (eds.): *Der Abbruch des Turmbaus. Studien zum Geist in China und im Abendland. Festschrift für Rolf Trauzettel*. Nettetal, Steyler Verlag 1995, pp. 211-225. *The Reception of the Bible in the Mainland China (1980-1992): Observation of a Literary Comparatist*. AAS 4, 1995 (n.s.) 1, pp. 24-46, *Wang Meng's Mythopoeic Vision of Golgotha and Apocalypse*. *Annali (Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli)*, 52, 1989, 2, pp. 61-82, *Mythopoetische Vision von Golgatha und Apokalypse bei Wang Meng*. Transl. into German by R.D. Findeisen. *Minima sinica (Bonn)*, 2, 1991, pp.

same value as the genetic-contact (or influence) studies. Sometimes they could be even more important. According to Dionýz urišín: “We can say that typology is that stage in the investigation of interliterary relationships and affinities at which practical comparison presents its results to the theoretical aspect, in which scholarly practice goes hand in hand with theory, constructing at the same time a bridge between the national-literary and the interliterary historical approach.”² This means that these studies could supply us with new informations concerned with the substance of the “literary fact”, its specificities, which is one of the most important targets of the study of literature. In our case it will be the specificity of poetic lyricism.

This is not the first attempt of its kind. Comprehensive articles, such as that by Pei Boyan [1] *Shijing bijiao yanjiu* [] The Comparative Study of *The Book of Songs* and the *Song of Songs*³ and a very instructive study by Christoph Herbsmeier: *Eroticism in Early Chinese Poetry. Sundry Comparative Notes*,⁴ together with two other studies, as Zhou Lianhua [5]: *Shijing yu Yage* [6] *The Book of Songs and the Song of Songs*,⁵ or Zhang Longxi: *The Letter or the Spirit: The Song of Songs, Allegoresis, and The Book of Poetry*,⁶ partly or mostly analyse the allegorical aspects of both books, which is not my concern.

I shall look after presumably original meanings and literary explanation of the love songs they really had after their textual editing known to us and still now they possess.

1

The Book of Songs is a volume of 305 poems which has been divided into three or four sections, of which 160, named *Guofeng* [8] *Airs of States* and *Xiaoya* [9] *Small Refined Songs*, a total of 80 pieces, are relevant to the *Song of*

55-82, *Parody and Absurd Laughter in Wang Meng's Apocalypse. Musings over the Metamorphosis of the Biblical Vision in Contemporary Chinese Literature*. In: SCHMIDT-GLINTZER, H. (ed.): *Das andere China. Festschrift für Wolfgang Bauer zum 65. Geburtstag*. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag 1995, pp. 449-461, *Gu Cheng's Novel Ying'er and the Bible*. AAS 5 1996, (n.s.) 1, pp. 83-97 and *Three Modern Taiwanese Poetesses (Rongzi, Xia Yu and Siren) on Three Wisdom Books of the Bible*. AAS 5 1996, (n.s.) 2, pp. 113-131. Four other studies are to be published soon: *Matres Dolorosae: Wang Duqing's before the Madonna and Guido Reni's La Crocifissione dei Capuccini* (for the *Festschrift* Lionello Lanciotti), *Mythopoeic Warrior and Femme Fatale: Mao Dun's Version of Samson and Delilah*, originally read at the international workshop: *The Bible in Modern China. The Literary and Intellectual Impact*. Jerusalem, June 23-28, 1996 and *On the Necessity of the "Third Covenant" and Inter-religious Understanding: Confessions of an Idealist*, read *ibid.*, and *Gegenwärtige taiwanesische Dichterin Rongzi über den Kohelet*.

² DURIŠÍN, D.: *Theory of Interliterary Process*. Bratislava, Veda 1989, p. 145.

³ Zhongwai wenxue [4] *Chinese and Foreign Literature*, 11, 1982, 8, pp. 4-37 and 9, pp. 4-55.

⁴ SCHMIDT-GLINTZER, H. (ed.): *op. cit.* pp. 323-380.

⁵ Funu zazhi [7] *Women Journal* (Taipei), 173, Feb. 1, 1980, pp. 110-118.

⁶ *Comparative Literature*, 39, 3, 1987, pp. 193-217. This is an excellent study for those interested in allegorical aspects.

Songs, which is known as one poem of 117 verses, but it was probably composed from more individual poems, maybe bridal songs. Traditionally it has been divided into eight chapters, but these do not coincide with the original poems. The number of songs varies according to the modern researchers and translators: e.g., W.O.E. Oesterley found there 28 different poems⁷ and Liang Gong [10], of Henan University, only six, which he overtook exactly from *The Living Bible* (1971) or the Chinese translation entitled: *Xiandai Shengjing* [11] Contemporary Bible (1980).⁸

The traditional authorship of the *Song of Songs* attributed to the King Solomon (reigned 961-922 or 965-931 B.C.) is groundless, in spite of plausibility of the existence of its parts during or even before Solomon's era. Its final redaction took place probably only in the 4th-3rd cent. B.C. as indicated by the presence of Persian and Greek loanwords in the text.⁹

The poems of *The Book of Songs* were written, collected and edited approximately between the 11th and 6th cent. B.C. If we do not know the editor(s) of the *Song of Songs*, the editor of *The Book of Songs* seems to be Confucius (571-479 B.C.), although there are suspicions whether it is true.¹⁰ Allegedly Confucius selected more than 300 from the available more than 3000 poems.¹¹ We know this book from the *Maoshi* [14] Mao Version of *The Book of Songs*, although originally three other versions were in circulation.

The poems of the *Song of Song* were written down in the Palestine during the Persian-Hellenist times. S.R. Driver in the book entitled *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* supposes that they were a product of northern origin due to the geographical names, as Sharon, Lebanon, Tirzah, Damascus, Carmel, etc.,¹² although En-gadi, which is in the south, is also mentioned. In any case, it was half agricultural country with gardens and towns, and half nomadic country with its pastures. It was extraordinary country with different climactic areas with extremely fertile soil but also with deserts. Gilead on the eastern side of the river Jordan, was considered as the paradise for the nomads, and Shulamite, the beloved girl most important among the female representatives among the *poematis personae* of the *Song of Songs*, had the hair that was "as flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead" (4, 1). The plain of Sharon was, and still is, very rich coastal country south of Mt. Carmel: the first famous for its fertility in crops, and the second for its wines.

⁷ OESTERLEY, W.O.E.: *Song of Songs*, 1936. Taken from *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Part 3*. Sydney and Auckland, Tyndale House Publishers 1980, p. 1473.

⁸ LIANG GONG: *Shengjing shige* [12] *Poetry from the Bible*. Tientsin, Baihua wenyi chubanshe [13] 1989, pp. 216-236.

⁹ Cf. LANDY, Fr.: *The Song of Songs*. In: ALTER, R. and KERMODE, Fr. (eds.): *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Cambridge (Mass.). The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 1987, p. 319.

¹⁰ HARBSMEIER, Chr.: op. cit., pp. 343-345.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 345.

¹² DRIVER, S.R.: *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. Cleveland, Meridian 1957, p. 449.

According to a short introduction preceding the translation of the *Song of Songs* in *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha. Revised Standard Edition*: “Symbols and motifs derived from early mythology are still recognizable, but their original reference has been forgotten and they have become part of the special language of human love and courtship.” Here we also read that this poetry “is graceful, sensuous, and replete with erotic imagery and allusions to the ancient myth of the love of a god and a goddess on which the fertility of nature was thought to depend.”¹³ These words are very wise and undogmatic, although they are too general and unconcrete. The love *liason* between god and goddess was analyzed in the works of German scholars, as W. Wittekindt on the cult of Ištar¹⁴ and H. Schmökel on the cult in general, or the sacred marriage and their connections to the *Song of Songs*.¹⁵

It is good that the ancient Hebrew literature, including poetry, have been sufficiently studied within the framework of the ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian interliterary community which certainly existed between approximately the third millennium and 3rd cent. B.C.

The interliterary community of the Far East came into being much later than the era when both the *The Book of Songs* and the *Song of Songs* have been collected and edited. It began to be formed only in the first centuries of A.D., when first the kingdom of Paekche (18 B.C.- 660 A.D.), on the territory of the present-day Korea, and later Japan, followed China, i.e., *Zhongguo* [15] The Middle Kingdom, or *Zhonghua* [16] The Middle Civilization, at first fully and later partly, in literary endeavours within the Sinocentric world order.¹⁶

The Book of Songs was the first anthology of poetry in Chinese history and it became a paradigm for the poetic creations of the Far Eastern countries in the first centuries of the existence of this interliterary community. Both the contents and forms of *The Book of Songs* and the *Song of Songs* are relatively different, although thematically, as love poetry, in the case of the first partly and in the case of the second fully, are near to each other. *The Book of Songs* was a product of the vast agricultural areas of north China of the central plains of the Huanghe [17] Yellow River nearly without nomadic life, with hunting as one alternative. The flavour of these lands, the people living there for the centuries, left its imprint on this poetry and on its lyric qualities that are different from those in the *Song of Songs*.

2

There is no study, as far as I know, which traces the rise and development of the Near Eastern and Egyptian interliterary community, i.e., the literatures of

¹³ Oxford 1965, p. 815.

¹⁴ *Das Hohelied und seine Beziehungen zum Ištarkult*. Hannover, H. Lafaire 1925.

¹⁵ *Zum kultischen Deutung des Hohenliedes*. Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 64, 1952, pp. 148-155 und *Heilige Hochzeit und Hoheslied*, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag 1956.

¹⁶ GÁLIK, M.: *Some Theoretical Problems of the Interliterary Community of the Far East*. In: *Proceedings of the XIIIth Congress of the ICLA/AILC. The Force of Vision. Vol. 6. Inter-Asian Comparative Literature*, Tokyo 1995, pp. 222-228.

Mesopotamia and Egypt, Hittite and Hurrian, Ugaritic and Phoenician, and ancient Hebrew literatures, following the regularities of the interliterary process. The first chapters of the monumental (finished but only partly published) *Istoriya vseмирnoi literatury* (A History of World Literature) tried to do that but partly owing to the inaccessibility of some materials in the former Soviet Union, the inadequacy of the methodical instructions in this kind of research, or maybe even the faulty decision to discuss the ancient Hebrew literature within the chronological framework of ancient Chinese, Indian and Iranian literatures, resulted in its treatment not being fully adequate.¹⁷ Apart of the fact that the manuscript of this great *oeuvre*, intended for 9 volumes, is much older than its partly published form, and was finished in the 1960s when the important works from the Near Eastern and Egyptian interliterary community known to us, were not studied or did not appear, or were not treated in relation to the *Song of Songs*.

As far as is known up to now the *Bible* is most indebted to the Ugaritic literature. But in very well documented and carefully written article by J.C. Greenfield entitled *The Hebrew Bible and Canaanite Literature*¹⁸ the relationship to the *Song of Songs* is not even mentioned and in the learned book *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan. A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* by W.F. Albright, we find only one which is worth mentioning: "The Shulamite of Canticles (another name of the *Song of Songs*, M.G.) goes back almost certainly to *Shulmanitu*, name of the goddess of love and war, as well as a figure with underworld associations."¹⁹ On another place W.F. Albright connects Shulmanitu with two another goddesses Astarte and Ištar, the first one from the Canaanite and the second one from the Babylonian pantheon.²⁰ Here we are probably on the track of the unnamed goddess mentioned by the translators and commentators of *The Oxford Annotated Bible*. H.P. Müller shows us the description of an Ugaritic princess that is similar to that of Shulamite.²¹

Recently Gwendolyn Leick without having the *Bible* explicitly in mind, helped interested researchers of the *Song of Songs* a lot with her book *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature*. She followed in this well-documented work the history of erotic literature beginning with the Sumero-Akkadian tradition of the third and early second millennia and ending with the sources of the second and first millennia B.C., practically up to the final version of the *Song of Songs*.

In the erotic poetry of Mesopotamia the closest parallels to the *Song of Songs* are bridal songs. According to G. Leick, the ideal framework was created for these songs, where the "young persons of both sexes were able to meet in public and form romantic attachments, although there is an air of furtiveness to their

¹⁷ *Istoriya vseмирnoi literatury* (A History of World Literature). Vol. 1. Moscow, Nauka 1983, pp. 271-302. Pages 143-271 are devoted to the ancient Chinese, Indian and Iranian literature.

¹⁸ ALTER, R. and KERMODE, F. (eds.): op. cit., pp. 545-559.

¹⁹ London, The Athlone Press 1968, p. 131.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

²¹ MÜLLER, H.-P.: *Vergleich und Metapher im Hohenlied*. Freiburg-Göttingen, Universitätsverlag-Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht 1984, pp. 24 and 31.

meetings. The main figure of authority for the girl is her mother, but the brother also plays an important role. The emotional state of the girl is a major theme. She dreams of her lover, she longs to meet him, in secret, and she looks forward to her wedding day, primarily in anticipation or even reminiscence of sensual pleasure”.²²

The main woman protagonist of these bridal songs is the Sumerian goddess Inanna, the forerunner of later Babylonian-Assyrian Ištar and Canaanite Shulmanītu or Astarte (Ashtarot). Her boy-friend is the Sumerian shepherd Dummuḫi (later Tammuz) “who operates in the *edin*, the semi-desert beyond the cultivated land.”²³ The abode of Inanna is the garden, just like that of Shulamite from the *Song of Songs*.

Let us quote here the words of Inanna according to the text entitled the *Manchester Tammuz*:

[He] brought joy into the garden,
I am the girl, the lady, where are you, my man?
[The shepherd(?)] brought joy into the garden,
I am [the girl (?)], the lady, where are you, my man?
Into the garden of apple trees he brought joy,
For the shepherd (?) the apples are loaded
with attractiveness (*hi-li*),
Into the garden of grapes he brought a joy.²⁴

Plant imagery abounds in the *Song of Songs*. Here is one example:

I *am* the rose of Sharon, *and* the lily of the valleys.
As the lily among thorns, so *is* my love among the
daughters.
As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so *is*
my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow
with grand delight, and his fruit was sweet to my
taste...
Stay me with flagons, conform me with apples: for I *am*
sick of love (2, 1-3 and 5)

According to Francis Landy the garden “is the longest episode as well as the central image in the poem; its relation to the poem corresponds to that of the garden to the world.”²⁵ As we shall see later, if not exactly the garden, then the

²² LEICK, G.: *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature*. London and New York, Routledge 1994, p. 67.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁵ LANDY, Fr.: *The Song of Songs*, p. 317.

woods, the nature will also be an overwhelming factor in the poetry of the “Airs of States” and of the Small Refined Songs in *The Book of Songs*.

In some other text devoted to Inanna, she is a “bride” and “consort” of different Sumerian kings. “My consort, maid Inanna, Lady, voluptuousness of Heaven and Earth”²⁶ is a quotation from a hymn eulogizing King Šulgi (ca. 2094-2047 B.C.) and his ritual connection with the goddess of love and fertility. Šulgi is here another “shepherd Dumuzi”, which evokes in us the triangular relation between the unnamed shepherd in the *Song of Songs*, Shulamite and King Solomon. Here “marriage” occurs between Šulgi and Inanna, which in another composition (or royal hymn) dedicated to King Iddin-Dagan of Isin (ca. 1953-1935 B.C.) is delineated as follows:

The day is named, the day is fixed, the day the lord
arouses the woman.
 Give life to the lord! Give the lord the staff and
crook!
 She demands it, she demands it, she demands the bed,
 The bed that rejoices the heart
 She demands it, she demands the bed...
 By the bed that makes the embrace delicious, by him
 (making it delicious); by his delicious bed of the
delicious embrace.²⁷

In the *Song of Songs* the wedding bedchamber of Solomon is depicted:

King Solomon made himself a chariot (a bed, according to the note, M.G.) of the wood of Lebanon.
 He made the pillows thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem (3, 9-10).

In most of Mesopotamian love songs of different genres too much stress is put on the act of love-making or on the pleasure derived from this encounter. This is not the case of the *Song of Songs* and of the biblical poetry in general. There are, of course, other differences, too. E.g. the genitals of the lovers are never mentioned openly in the second, but they are often praised in the first. The royal hymns mentioned above had an impact on the courtly love poetry, where there are more resemblances to the *Song of Songs* than in the bridal songs, namely the description of the male lover:

O my (beloved), fair of locks, my (beloved) fair of locks,

²⁶ LEICK, G.: op. cit., p. 97.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

My sweet one, tree well grown
 O my (beloved), fair of locks,
 O my (beloved), fair of locks, like a date-palm!
 O my (beloved) fair of shaggy neck - like date
 fibres!...
 My (beloved) with a lapis lazuli beard!
 My (beloved) with a beard mottled like a slab
 of lapis lazuli,
 My (beloved) with locks arranged ropewise!²⁸

The description of the girl is simpler and is concerned with other qualities:

‘My beloved bride makes my fame appear in all mouths!
 As sweet as her mouth is her vulva
 And as sweet as her vulva is her mouth’ (gap)
 You are truly a sweet one to talk with!
 You are truly one producing a reign of pleasant days!
 You are truly one establishing prime counsel and
 honest judgment!
 You are truly establishing (in the cult) purity
 and clean hands!
 Beloved of Enlil, may the heart of your personal god,
 Should it become embittered, again relax!
 Come with the sun!
 Go with the sun!²⁹

Both kinds of descriptions of male and female protagonists in the *Song of Songs* are more excellent from literary point of view and aesthetically more valuable. Especially that of Shulamite, taking over some of the feature belonging to a man in the Sumerian love song:

Behold, thou *art* fair, my love; behold, thou *art* fair,
 thou *hast* doves’ eyes within thy locks: thy hair *is*
 a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead...
 Thy neck *is* like the tower of David builded for an
 armoury, wherein there hang a thousand bucklers, all
 shields of mighty men.
 Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes that are
 twins, which feed among the lilies...
 Thou *art* all fair, my love, *there is* no spot in
 thee (4, 1, 3-5 and 7)

²⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁹ Loc. cit.

Only two places allude the female genitals in the *Song of Songs*: the first one where Shulamite acknowledges that she was appointed as a “keeper of the vineyards” but her own “vineyard” she was not able to keep (1, 6), and the second where her navel is depicted as “a round goblet which wanteth not liquor” (7, 2). In the case of the vineyard, this is the opinion of Marwin Pope in the *Anchor Bible*, No. 7c, published in Garden City, New York 1977, who means it literally, which probably is not the case. What navel is concerned, quite a few researchers take it as a euphemism for pudenda, e.g. Paul Haupt in *The Book of Canticles*, American Journal for Semitic Languages and Literature, 18, 1902, p. 239, or Daniel Lys in *Le Plus Beau Chant de la Création*, Paris 1968, and once again Pope, according to whom “navels are not notable for their capacity to store or dispense moisture” (cf. Michel V. Fox: *The Song of Songs and the Egyptian Love Songs*. Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press 1985, pp. 102 and 158-159).

If more dogmatic experts on the *Bible* denied the impact of Tammuz (Dumuzi) cult on the *Song of Songs*,³⁰ they certainly did not take into account the regularities of the interliterary and intercultural process within the specific interliterary or intercultural community. If we may believe at least partly in the biblical history (although very mythopoeized within the theocratic framework), concerning the descent of the Hebrew people from the Patriarch Abraham (fl. ca. 1700 B.C.), which clearly points to its Mesopotamian cradle, beginning with the City of Ur in the south and ending in Haran in the north, then to Canaan (Shechem and Negeb) and Egypt, we make take into account that the people of Israel had the possibility to become acquainted in the course of the centuries, even millennia, with the literature and culture of the places they wandered through or lived in. Maybe the act attributed to God in the prophecy: “Then he brought me to the gate of the Lord’s house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz,” (Ezekiel, 8, 14), is not a proof of Dumuzi’s impact on the *Song of Songs*, but it is a direct evidence of his cult among the Hebrew women right at the entrance of the Lord’s sanctuary! We can find even greater manifestations of admiration towards Ashtaroth we may find in different places in the *Bible* (*Judges*, 2, 13, 10, 6 and *I. Samuel*, 7, 4), but probably in the relation to the *Song of Songs* most important is that pertaining to King Solomon himself:

For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his
wives turned away his heart after other gods:... For

³⁰ *The Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 1473. Here the secondary sources abound, e.g. MEEK, Th.: *Canticles and the Tammuz Cult*. American Journal of Semitic languages and Literatures, 39, 1922, pp. 1-14, HALLER, M.: *Die fünf Megilloth. Ruth, Hoheslied, Klagelieder, Esther (Der Prediger Salomo vom K. Gallung)*. Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr 194, pp. 22, 24 and 45, WIDENGREN, G.: *Sakrales Königtum im alten Israel und in Judentum*. Stuttgart, Kohlhammer Verlag 1955, pp. 78-79. We mentioned SCHMÖKEL’s works in the note 15. There are critical views concerning this opinion, but they are mostly of theological character, see WÜRTHWEIN, E.: *Zum Verständnis des Hohenliedes. Otto Eißfeldt zum 80. Geburtstag*. Theologische Rundschau, Neue Folge, 32, 1967, pp. 177-212, esp. 291.

Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the
Zidonians (Sidonians, M.G.) and after Milcom
(Moloch, M.G.) the abomination of the Ammonites
(*I. Kings, 11,5*).

I think that W.F. Albright was right when he asserted that “repetitive parallelism” which we had the possibility to observe in the quotations, were the “archaic survivals” in some later books of the *Bible*, or “picked up from the mouth of the people, where they had been handed down without change for centuries (as in the Canticles)”.³¹ And in another place he affirmed that some “of the names of pagan divinities have simply become secular Hebrew words with no pagan meaning; mythological expressions are used as poetic symbolism without indicating the slightest reverence for the original pagan deities, just as many Christian poets of the fifteenth-seventeenth centuries A.D.”³²

The examples from the Mesopotamian and Hebrew literature we have used in this contribution, are a good illustration of the so-called integrational and differential functions³³ of literature within the interliterary community. Mesopotamian love songs in different genres helped to form the Hebrew love songs, but the Hebrew love songs were created on a higher level: they integrated some elements of these songs into their structure, but they surpassed them and made them axiologically more valuable and aesthetically more perfect. The same process, may also be observed in relation to the Egyptian songs, although according to my opinion not to such a great extent. These were diligently studied by Michael V. Fox in the extensive monograph *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, mentioned above, and therefore the reader is advised to consult this book.

3

In the Far East the situation was different from that of Near East and Egypt. China could not cherish any cultural or literary gains of its neighbours, since they were uncultured barbarians. She was the only country with *wen* [18] culture, literature, the germs of philosophical thought, having its own script, great art (exquisite bronzes, bronze and bone inscriptions, etc.).

It is not strange that the first Chinese poetry was either without great artistic values, as the *Song* [19] Odes section of the *Book of Songs*, or originally very simple poems or songs from the Airs of States. Some of them preserved their simplicity, some of them are more elaborate, and many of them are comparable to the *Song of Songs*, if they are concerned with love or marriage.

China did not have its Inanna or Dumuzi, Ištar or Tammuz, its Astarte or Shulmanitu. A goddess of love and her lovers were out of the question in China,

³¹ ALBRIGHT, F.: op. cit., p. 221.

³² Ibid., pp. 163-164.

³³ DURIŠIN, D.: *Communautés interlittéraires spécifiques 6. Notions et principes*. Bratislava, Institut de Littérature Mondiale. Academie Slovaque des Sciences 1993, pp. 40-41.

or next to impossible and if they existed in some form, unknown to us, they were never passed on to posterity. The Odes from the *Book of Songs* are “typical sacrificial and commemorative dance songs, there are a number of songs on miscellaneous subjects - moral exhortation, agricultural life, etc.”,³⁴ or they “sing of the grandeur of their ancient kings, (as in the *Lu* [20] Odes, M.G.), in conformity with the universal standard of filial piety”.³⁵ There is no trace of sexuality and eroticism of the bridal songs and their successive poetic forms in Mesopotamian or Egyptian literature.

In the second division of the *Book of Songs*, organized into two sections called *Daya* [21] Great Refined Songs and in Small Refined Songs the situation is different. Whereas in the first section we find the songs comparable to the Odes and mainly concerned with offerings to gods and ancestors, feasting and drinking, eulogies of warriors and their battles, the legends about the founders and ancestors of the Zhou [22] Dynasty (1122-255 B.C.), in the second section, which is much more refined from the artistic point of view, we find authentic examples of restrained, typical Chinese lyricism. By the way, *Yage* [23] i.e. Refined Song is the Chinese name for the *Song of Songs*.

The first highly prizing remark by Confucius is concerned with the song No. 1 in the Mao Version entitled *Guan ju* [24].³⁶ In this contribution I shall use (with minor changes) the best translation of the *Book of Songs* available: that of Bernhard Karlgren in his *The Book of Odes*, although I believe, just as this distinguished Swedish scholar, that the translation does not have sufficient literary value:³⁷

Guanguan [25] cry the *jujiu* [26] birds
on the islet of the river.
The beautiful and good girl
is a good mate for the lord.

The *xing* [27] waterplants are of varying length,
we gather them to the left and right.
The beautiful and good girl,
waking and sleeping he thought for her.

He wished for her but he did not get her.

³⁴ CH'EN SHOU-YI: *Chinese Literature. A Historical Introduction*. New York, The Ronald Press Company 1961, p. 18.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁶ “The Guanju Ode is about joy without excess, grief without harm.” See LAU, D.C. (transl.): *Confucius: The Analects*. Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press 1983, pp. 24-25. A. WALEY in *The Analects of Confucius*. Fourth impression. London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1964, p. 99, translates these words as follows: “The Ospreys! Pleasure not carried to the point of debauch; grief not carried to the point of self-injury.”

³⁷ *The Book of Odes. Chinese Text, Transcription and Translation by Bernhard Karlgren*. Stockholm, The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 1950, p. 1.

Waking and sleeping he thought of her.
Longing and desiring,
he tossed and fidgeted.

The *xing* waterplants are of varying length,
we gather them to the left and to the right.
The beautiful and good girl,
guitars and lutes hail her as a friend.

The *xing* waterplants are of varying length,
we cull them to the left and to the right.
The beautiful and good girl,
bells and drums delight her.³⁸

In the *Song of Songs* we find a different start:

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:
for thy love *is* better than wine.
Because of the savour of thy ointments thy name *is*
as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins
love thee. Draw me, we will run after thee... (1, 2-4)

We see here at first glance that in the *Song of Songs*, the girl or bride is active, she longs for the kisses, and she compares the love with wine. In China it was certainly seldom the case, and in the *Book of Songs* I have found only two songs where active girls were presented, although never in such an open way. In No. 147 called *Su guan* [30], the girl expresses her inner demand:

Would that I could see the white robe,
my heart is pained.
I wish that I could go with you to your home.

Or even more explicitly:

I wish that I could become as one with you.³⁹

As to the female inactivity, both in the social and private matters, we find relatively more examples in the *Book of Songs*. Probably the best one is No. 145 *Zepo* [31] where, for example, the second stanza reads as follows:

³⁸ *Mao Shi Zheng jian* [28] Commentaries to Mao's Version of the *Book of Songs* by ZHENG XUAN [29] (127-200). Juan 1, SPPY ed. Taipei, n.y., pp. 2B-3B and B. KARLGREN: op. cit., p. 1.

³⁹ ZHENG XUAN, juan 7, pp. 7AB and KARLGREN, p. 92.

By the shore of that marsh there are sedges and lotus fruits.
There is a certain beautiful man,
grandly large and handsome.
Waking and sleeping I know not what to do
In the core of my heart I am grieved.⁴⁰

The mode of *wuwei ziran* [32] *laissez faire, laissez passer*⁴¹ was a kind of *condition humaine* which was left to the Chinese girls and women in the strict patriarchal society. Among the ancient Hebrews the situation was similar but in their literary works there was more freedom and in the *Song of Songs*, as we may observe, Shulamite is as active as both her male partners. It is necessary to say that the *Song of Songs* was an exception in the Hebrew poetry which, in general, was also erotically quite restrained.

Both similarities and dissimilarities are important for the study of literature within its typological framework. One of those similarities is concerned with the concept of nature, mostly outer nature, or even the world. Fr. Landy remarked rightly in her reflection concerned with the *Song of Songs* that the discourse of love in it “draws into its orbits things, plants, animals, geography. It can do nothing else: lovers communicate only through metaphor. The lover explores the other person and finds in the body affirmation, response, and also attitude.”⁴²

In the *Book of Songs* we may see it as clearly as in the *Song of Songs*, although on a different literary, aesthetic and developmental level. In No. 1 the *jujiu* [26] birds and *xing* [27] waterplants (Arthur Waley translates them as the ospreys and water mellows respectively)⁴³ are prototypes for later poetic creations during the whole course of Chinese literature up to the modern poet Li Ji [34] (1922-), as far as I know.⁴⁴ Herein the *Book of Songs* and in Tian Jian’s work, natural facts (mostly plants and animals) are similes and their descriptions induce the inner moods and the outer appearance and characteristics of the characters involved, in our case the lovers of both sexes. In this book the simplest kind of poetic expression is used: plant or animal imagery precedes the description of the human characters involved which, as a rule immediately and schematically, follows. As in No. 118 called *Chou mou* [35], where the first stanza begins as:

Tied round is the bundled firewood,
the Three Stars are in the heavens,

⁴⁰ ZHENG XUAN, *juan 7*, p. 5B and KARLGRÉN, p. 92.

⁴¹ More about this see in CREEL, H.G.: *On the Origin of Wu-Wei*. In: *Symposium in Honor of Dr. Li Chi on His Seventieth Birthday*. Vol. 1. Taipei, Qinghua xuebaoshe [33] 1965, pp. 105-137. Also FUNG YU-LAN: *A History of Chinese Philosophy*. Vol. 1. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1952, pp. 331-334 and passim.

⁴² LANDY, Fr.: *The Song of Songs*, p. 305.

⁴³ *The Book of Songs*. Transl. from the Chinese by ARTHUR WALEY. Third Impression. London, George Allen Unwin Ltd. 1969, p. 81.

⁴⁴ PRŮŠEK, J.: *Die Literatur der befreiten Chinas und ihre Volkstraditionen*. Prag 1955, pp. 155-156 and 568-588.

the second stanza as:

Tied round is that bundled hay,
the Three Stars are in the corner,

and the last one as:

Tied round is the bundled thornwood,
the Three Stars are seen in the door.⁴⁵

According to the explanation given by Karlgren, the bundled firewood (and its variation) is a “standing metaphor for the cohesion and solidarity of the family”,⁴⁶ this time a newly founded family, or marriage at its start, and the Three Stars symbolize the three beautiful girls, probably one first-rank wife and two secondary wives. Not too many if compared with Solomon’s harem where:

There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines,
and virgins without number (6, 8)

The similes in the *Song of Songs* are different, more personal, symbolic in another way, graphic and sublime. This is as Shulamite describes herself:

I *am* black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon
(1, 5)

or:

I *am* a wall, and my breasts like towers (8, 10)

The same could be said about the assertions of the unnamed shepherd addressed to Shulamite:

Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins,
which feed among lilies (4, 5)

or:

Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes that *are* twins
(7, 9)

or:

This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts
to cluster of *grapes* (7, 7)

and lastly:

⁴⁵ ZHENG XUAN, *juan 6*, pp. 3B-4A and KARLGREN, p. 76.

⁴⁶ B. KARLGREN, *loc. cit.*

I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take
hold the boughs thereof; now also thy breasts
shall be as clusters of the wine... (7, 8)

The similes, even if they are close to each other as we have just observed in the case of the two young roes or clusters of grapes (wine), are not so monotonously and more or less mechanically dispersed through the text, as in the *Book of Songs*. By the way, the breasts of Shulamite, are mostly delineated part of feminine body. Probably one simile is not understandable for us, Westerners, that concerned with Shulamite's breasts and the young roes. Roe was in Hebrew a synonym for beauty and might suggest the timidity and delectation.⁴⁷

We find a roe in one of the most beautiful poems of the *Book of Songs*, in No. 23 entitled *Ye you si qun* [36]:

In the wilds there was a dead roe,
wrapped with white grass.
There was a girl with spring feelings (*you nu huai chun*) [37], a fine gentleman enticed her.

In the forest there were shrubby trees,
in the wilds there was a dead roe.
With white grass one wrapped and bound it.
There was a girl like jade (*you nu ru yu*) [38].
Slowly, gently!
Do not move my kerchief!
Do not make the dog bark!⁴⁸

This song probably remained unfinished. The roe here and the young roes in the *Song of Songs* are very different. This one symbolizes a girl, seduced, and later probably abandoned by the impatient fellow. The dead roe alludes to the personal tragedy of the chaste and lovesick girl. It was certainly mainly for moral reasons that the editor(s) included this song into the *Book of Songs*.

Let us return again to the feminine breasts. Breasts are not mentioned in the *Book of Songs*. And not only breasts, if we have in mind the necessary physical endowments of the young bride. The fullest and most typical also for later Chinese poetry is the description of Zhuang Jiang [39], daughter of the Lord Qi [40], who married Lord Wei [41] in 757 B.C.:

Her hands were like soft young shoots,
her skin like lard.
Her neck was like the tree-grub,
her teeth like melon-seeds.

⁴⁷ Cf. LANDY, Fr.: *The Song of Songs*, p. 310.

⁴⁸ ZHENG XUAN, juan 1, pp. 17AB, KARLGRÉN, p. 13.

Her head was cicada-like,
her eyebrows moth-like (*e mei*) [42].
Her smiling mouth was red,
her beautiful eyes well-defined black and white.⁴⁹

The description begins with the soft hands, passes to the face and head, and ends with her neck. Other parts of the feminine body, not to speak about those which are so important for the love life of young people, are not even hinted at. The lips, the first medium for this kind of more intimate communication, and mentioned at the beginning of the *Song of Songs* are here adumbrated only as smiling and red, as a means of primarily social intercourse.

The bodies of the lovers, spouses or newly married couples are never described in the *Book of Songs* in their erotic or sexual meanings.⁵⁰ Other parts of the woman body, except of those mentioned above, were taboos for the editor(s) of this book. The readers of this anthology, and from 136 B.C., practically to the beginning of the 20th cent. A.D., the students were obliged to learn them by heart and thus were taught to follow the moral and social norms and not to indulge in sexual intoxication.⁵¹

In the *Song of Songs* were only the genitals and buttocks were taboo.⁵² The enamoured shepherd adores Shulamite in the following way:

How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's
daughter! the joint of thy thighs *are* like jewels,
the work of the hands of a cunning workman (7, 1).

About her navel we quoted already the relevant text, and about belly her lover has to say:

thy belly *is like* a heap of wheat set about with lilies (7, 2).

Even the beloved male is differently described in the *Book of Songs* than in the *Song of Songs*. We can find the best depiction in three stanzas of the poem No. 55 entitled *Qi yu* [47]:

⁴⁹ This is from the poem entitled *Shi ren* [43]. See ZHENG XUAN, juan 3, pp. 10B-11A and KARLGRÉN, p. 38.

⁵⁰ This could be said in general about the traditional Chinese literature and art, with the exception of later erotic and even pornographic parts, cf. HAY, John: *The Body Invisible in Chinese Art*. In: ZITO, A. and BARLOW, T.E. (eds.): *Body, Subject and Power in China*. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press 1994, pp. 42-77. For the description of the female body in the traditional Chinese poetry see, CHEN HONGSHI [44]: *Lun gudian shi fu zhong de nuxing xingtí miaoxie* [45] Descriptions of the Female Bodies in the Classic Chinese Poetry. *Jiangnan luntan* [46] *Hankou Review*, 10, 1995, pp. 79-85.

⁵¹ CH'EN SHOU-YI: op. cit., p. 32.

⁵² According to M.V. FOX, op. cit., p. 158, *hammuqey y 'rekayik* from 7, 1, means either the place where the thigh turns, or the buttocks which are curved.

Elegant is the lord,
 his ear-plugs are of precious stones.
 Hair-fastening leather cap is shining as a star.
 How imposing, how conspicuous!
 Elegant is the lord, never can I forget him.⁵³

This kind of beauty and elegance has nothing to do with a living male body, it is a beauty of the statue. In the eyes of Shulamite her lover

is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.
 His head *is* as the most fine gold, his locks *are*
 bushy, *and* black as a raven.
 His eyes *are* as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters,
 washed with milk *and* fitly set.
 His cheeks are as a bed of spices,
as sweet flowers: his lips *like* lilies dropping sweet myrrh.
 His hands *are as* gold rings set with beryl: his belly
is as bright ivory overlit *with* sapphires.
 His legs *are as* pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold:
 his countenance *is* as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.
 His mouth *is* most sweet: yea, he *is* altogether lovely.
 This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters
 of Jerusalem (5, 10-16).

This description corresponds to that of Shulamite from the mouth of the shepherd. It highlights their common characteristics, as black colour, eyes of doves, milk, spices, lilies, myrrh and sweetness of the kisses, but also those which are the properties of kings, even gods. His body from head up to feet evokes in her the forgotten images of mythical ancestors. The impact of the cult of statues of earlier “pagan” origin here could be clearly documented.⁵⁴ In spite of that the beauty of her friend has more male characteristic features than the Chinese gentleman.

4

“What will ye see in the Shulamite?” asks probably the shepherd and responds, at first, enigmatically: “As it were in the company of two armies,” and then enumerates we have partly met in this contribution, or such that seem to be congenial to our European taste, and partly not, as we have seen in the “young roes and the Shulamite” metaphor:

⁵³ ZHENG XUAN, *juan 3*, pp. 9B-10 and KARLGRÉN, p. 37.

⁵⁴ Cf. MÜLLER, H.-P.: *op. cit.*, p. 27, HERMANN, W.: *Gedanken zur Geschichte des altorientalischen Beschreibungslieses*. *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 75, 1963, pp. 177-179 and GERLEMAN, G.: *Ruth - Das Hohelied*. Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag 1965, p. 65.

Thy neck *is* as a tower of ivory; thine eyes *like*
 fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim:
 thy nose *is* as the tower of Lebanon which
 looketh toward Damascus.
 Thine head upon thee *is* like Carmel, and the hair
 of thine head like purple... (7, 4-5)

Here the face and head of Shulamite evokes in the reader the land of the Hebrews and its northern neighbours. Lebanon, Heshbon, Carmel are the metaphors of her eyes, nose and head.⁵⁵ But immediately after the quoted passage, there follow likewise enigmatic words: “a king is held in tresses”, which according to Fr. Landy alludes to the sacred marriage of the Shulamite and the king.⁵⁶ If this is right assumption, then Shulamite is here put into the Near Eastern mythological framework and similar to Inanna in her relationship to Sumerian kings.

Shulamite is not only the long forgotten goddess and queen and paragon of beauty, she is also a model of moral purity. In Jewish tradition she represented the Hebrew people as the spouse of God and later in Christian era the Church as the bride of Jesus Christ.⁵⁷ In the Catholic Church, the Shulamite as “all fair” and without “spot” (*mum 'en*) on the body and soul, became an *epitheton ornans* of Saint Mary, Mother of Christ.⁵⁸

In the Shulamite and in her *unum et duum* lover we find the highest hypostasis of human love, with even divine traits. Divine also in the “pagan” meaning, as its antecedents in the Near Eastern and Egyptian literary legacy show. Its erotic and ethical purity compatible even with the strict and high Jewish and Christian standards is new. The Hebrew editor(s) of the *Song of Songs* certainly managed to purge its text from all elements which might pose a danger to sexual morals. The editor(s) of the *Book of Songs* did just the same, although using different literary devices and even stricter ethical postulates.

⁵⁵ In Chinese poetry and literature in general, woman is often depicted in different way. In the song No. 264 entitled *Zhan yang* [48] we read: “A clever man builds a city wall,/ a clever woman overthrows it./ Beautiful is clever woman,/ but she is an owl, a hooting owl;/ a woman with a long tongue,/ she is a promoter of evil./ Disorder is not sent down from Heaven,/ it is produced by women./ Those who cannot be taught or instructed are women and eunuchs.” (ZHENG XUAN, juan 18, pp. 24 AB and KARLGREN, p. 237). Cf. also the opinion of Confucius in the text related to the note 70.

⁵⁶ LANDY, Fr.: *The Song of Songs*, op. cit., p. 315. By the way, The King James’ version (which is used in this study): “the king *is* held in galleries”, is in this case, not appropriate.

⁵⁷ Cf. e.g., UFFENHEIMER, B.: *Myth and Reality in Ancient Israel*. In: EISENSTADT, S.N.(ed.): *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilization*. Albany, State University of New York 1986, pp. 151-152 and the commentaries to the translation in the King James’ version. The first of them reads as follows: “The church’s love unto Christ”, which should be the basic meaning of the *Song of Songs*.

⁵⁸ van den OUDENRIJN, M.A.: *Von Sinne des Hohenliedes*. Divus Thomas Freiburg (Schweiz), 31, 1953, p. 279.

Let us now return once again to the song No. 23. There the girl like a jade was similar in her purity to the Shulamite. Maybe she was not “fairest among women” (5, 9 and 6, 1) and certainly not beautiful “as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem” (6, 4): On the other hand the words of the shepherd could be applicable for the Chinese girl: “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights” (7, 6). The girl with spring feelings in her bosom is a disguised expression for a lovesick, but timid, ethically and socially responsible girl. She is holding (*chi*) [49] her feelings (*qing*) [50] within the boundaries prescribed at least by the social norms of her community.⁵⁹ In contrast to the Shulamite, she is not depicted in the nude, but in her “nakedness”. When her minion tries to unfasten her girdle, she asks him to be slow and gentle and to undress her only to the most inevitable measure and not to make the dog bark. Her body is invisible but her amorous longing is clearly to be seen. All other is left to the imagination of the reader or hearer.

Another girl in the poem No. 76 *Jiang Zhongzi* [51] tries to persuade the boy to be more careful when trying to woo her and not to break *qi* [52] willows, mulberries and the *tan* [53] trees, and not to provoke her parents, brothers and neighbours to intervene, since she loves him.⁶⁰

In one another simple song No. 87 *Qian shang* [54] a girl teases a boy before a possible *rendez-vous*:

If you lovingly think of me,
I will lift my skirt and wade the Chen.
But if you do not long for me,
is there no other man?
Oh you most foolish of foolish fellows!⁶¹

In the poem No. 94 *Ye you man cao* [55] is not possible to decide whether the main *poematis persona* is *masculini* or *feminini generis*. The protagonist says:

In the open grounds there is a creeping grass,
the filling dew is plentiful.
There is a beautiful person (*you mei yi ren*) [56]
with clear and rounded forehead.
We met carefree and happy
and my desires were satisfied (*shi wo yuan xi*) [57]⁶²

We, of course, cannot know what desires were meant in the last line. This song ends with marriage and living together.

⁵⁹ Cf. GÁLIK, M.: *The Concept of Creative Personality in Traditional Chinese Literary Criticism*, Oriens Extremus, 27, 1980, pp. 183-202, esp. 196.

⁶⁰ ZHENG XUAN, juan 4, pp. 7B-8A and KARLGREN, p. 51.

⁶¹ ZHENG XUAN, juan 4, p. 14A and KARLGREN, p. 57.

⁶² ZHENG XUAN, juan 4, p. 18A and KARLGREN, p. 61.

The love in the *Book of Songs* and in the *Song of Songs* is very different. In the *Song of Songs* we do not see the souls, the psychology of the loving couple. The love is put on the very top of the value ladder and probably the most beautiful words about love in the whole world literature were said here. But these words do not care what love in human life really represents:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon
thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; jealousy *is* as
cruel as the grave: the coals thereof *are* coals of fire,
which hath a most vehement flame.
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods
drawn it: (8, 6-7)

But in spite of this:

if a man would give all the substance of his house for
love, it would be utterly contemned (8, 7).

Mainly for these lines was the *Song of Songs* included by some into the Wisdom books of the *Bible* along with *The Proverbs*, *The Ecclesiastes*, *The Book of Job*, *Ecclesiasticus* and some others.⁶³ What was wisdom for the sages of ancient Israel, was folly for those of China. Confucius would certainly condemn such a kind of love as pleasure carried to the point of debauchery⁶⁴ and overstepping the boundaries of the right path or of the golden mean.⁶⁵ The old Hebrew sons and daughters of God were different from those of China. The dictates of the heart⁶⁶ were the same, only the measure of their fulfilment and their delineation in the works of literature and art was divergently defined and realized.

In the poem No. 228 *Xi sang* [58] a young girl meets the lord of her heart under the mulberry trees and feels very happy. The end of the poem may be understood as follows:

Love that is in my heart, (*xin hu ai yi*) [59]
why it should not be expressed? (*xia bu wei yi*) [60]
To the core of my heart I preserve it (*zhong xin zang zhi*) [61]
Could I ever forget it? (*he ri wang zhi*) [52]⁶⁷

⁶³ According to *Rediscovering the Bible* by L. GROLLENBERG, London, SCM Press Ltd. 1978, p. 211, to this group belong also the *Psalms*, *Proverbs* and the Five Megilloth or Scrolls, i.e. except of the *Song of Songs* and *Ecclesiastes*, also *Ruth*, *Lamentations* and *Esther*. As to the question of belonging to the wisdom books of the *Bible*, the opinions slightly differ.

⁶⁴ See note 36.

⁶⁵ Cf. A. WALEY: *The Analects of Confucius*: "At seventy I could follow the dictates of my heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right" (p. 88).

⁶⁶ Loc. cit.

⁶⁷ ZHENG XUAN, juan 15, p. 8B and KARLGREN, p. 181.

Where love is concerned, these lines are probably the most beautiful in the whole *Book of Songs* and comparable to that “as strong as death” or as “a most vehement flame”, but expressed with simplest means: “how great is my joy! (*qi luo ru he*) [63], “how should I not be happy” (*yun he bu luo*) [64] or as we have just seen: “Could I ever forget it?” The loving encounter of the unnamed Chinese lady was situated in a field with mulberry trees comparable to the garden in the *Song of Songs*.

The garden is the most important *topos* of the surrounding nature and the world in the *Song of Songs*. In this garden lies probably a green bed where Shulamite and her favourite boy made love (cf. 1, 16).⁶⁸ The Chinese girl does not say a word about herself and the boy is also silent, but Shulamite’s lover begins with a geysir of epithets and similes concerning her and her bodily charms:

A garden inclosed *is* my sister, *my* spouse; a spring
shut up, a fountain sealed.
Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates with
pleasant fruits, camphire, with spikenard,
Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all
trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the
chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living
waters, a stream from Lebanon.
Awake, O north wind; and come south; blow upon my
garden, *that* the spices thereof may flow out. Let my
beloved come into his garden, and eat his fruits (4, 12-16).

Here is the naked body of Shulamite presented in all her nudity, only wrapped up into the exotic plants, spices and perfumes.

Invitation to love is quite clear from the 16th verse which is the last in the Chapter 4. The 1st verse of the Chapter 5 is its consummation:

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have
gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honeycomb
with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat,
O friends; drink, ye, drink abundantly, O beloved (5, 1)

In China such a long chain of plant and other metaphors concerned with a woman would be unimaginable. “*Ai* [65] was not a proper subject of discourse in pre-Han China,”⁶⁹ wrote Chr. Harbsmeier. And if there was a concept of love, it was the ordinary love among the sexes inevitable for the prolongation of *humanis generis* in a well-ordered and strictly ethical society.

⁶⁸ According to G. GERLEMAN: op. cit., p. 72: “It is not possible to deny that in these poems the love life is presented in a way that is unique in the whole *Old Testament*.”

⁶⁹ HARBSMEIER, Chr.: op. cit., p. 350.

Amor uxoris, yes, *amor puellae*, no. There was neither *amor Dei*, nor *amor divae* in China. Love was a part of manners, ethics and of social rites, a part of human feelings that should be in agreement with *xing* [66] human nature led by the reason and held within the proper boundaries, just as everything else, poetry inclusive, as we have seen above. By the way, Confucius despised women as low and shallow people: “The master said, Women and people of low code of moral and manners are very hard to deal with. If you are friendly with them, they get out of hand, and if you keep your distance, they resent it.”⁷⁰ (17, 25)

For this Sage, god-like love between women and men could be only incomprehensible and even dangerous.

5

God-like love in the *Song of Songs* and its aesthetic expression had much to do with the religious spirit and the literature or art of Near Eastern and Egyptian peoples. The poetic experience about two millennia long we mentioned above, has been at least to some extent interwoven into the texture of this magnificent *chef d'oeuvre*. The language of the *Song of Songs* is beautiful and sublime through the magic of the words as shown by H.P. Müller on the example of the garden sequence quoted above.⁷¹ “A beautiful word metaphorically suggests a beautiful thing”⁷² and “words similar in sound are drawn together in meaning”,⁷³ these two phenomena are often to be met in this work, e.g. in the request of the lover: *pithi-li 'a hoti ra 'jati jonati tammati*⁷⁴ which means in English: Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled (5, 2), or (*shelahayikh*) *pardes rimonim 'im peri megadim keparim 'im neradim nerd wekarkom qaneh weqinamon*,⁷⁵ i.e., (Thy plants) are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon (4, 13-14). In the first the magic of euphony is formed with its use of the end morpheme *-ati*, i.e. my; in the second, a “cluster of consonants are nearly permuted, alliterate tandem”⁷⁶: *prd* of *pardes* in *peri megadim im keparim 'im neradim*, *p* drops 'im *neradim nerd*, two *ks* in *karkom* are coupled with two *qs* in *qaneh weqinamon*, and two *ws* in *wekarkom* and *weqinamon*.

⁷⁰ Quoted according to A. WALEY's translation in *Analects of Confucius*. London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., fourth impression 1964, pp. 216-217.

⁷¹ MÜLLER, H.-P.: *Poesie und Magie in Cant 4, 12-51*. Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Suppl. III/1, 1977, pp. 157-164.

⁷² LANDY, Fr.: *The Song of Songs*, p. 307.

⁷³ Loc. cit. Taken over from Roman JAKOBSON: *Linguistics and Poetics*. In: *Selected Writings*. Vol. 3. Paris, Mouton 1981, p. 43.

⁷⁴ Cf. MÜLLER, H.-P.: *Vergleich und Metapher im Hohenlied*, p. 19.

⁷⁵ LANDY, Fr.: *The Song of Songs*, p. 307.

⁷⁶ Loc. cit.

There are many repetitions and parallelisms in the *Song of Songs*. The famous image of tender and caressing love: “His left hand *is* under my head, and his right hand does embrace me”, is repeated twice (2, 6 and 8,) and it is good example for parallelism, too. Another one concerned with the daughters of Jerusalem as the witnesses of the love, is repeated three times in completely the same wording: “I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please” (2, 7, 3, 5 and 8, 4). In the garden sequence already mentioned twice we find the following parallelisms: “a garden inclosed” and “a spring shut up” (4, 12), “spike-nard and saffron”, “calamus and cinnamon” and “myrrh and aloes” (4, 14).

The highest literary and aesthetic achievements of the *Song of Songs* are its similes and metaphors. Since at least two excellent works⁷⁷ to my knowledge appeared concerning this question, and we pointed to it *passim* in this contribution, probably a few remarks only would be sufficient. In particular the similes are very rich. Among them the similes concerned with the objects of the exquisite material culture and the persons depicted, are most numerous. Such are, for instance, the Shulamite’s thighs that were “like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman” (7, 1), or her neck like “a tower of ivory” (7, 4) and the “tower of David” (4, 4). Some are related to geographical terms, like “the tower of Lebanon” (7, 4) which was connected with Shulamite’s nose and “the tents of Kedar” (1, 5) alluding to the black colour of her skin. Plant and animal similes also abound and they usually have a very strong symbolic value, as a roe or young hart (2, 9,17 and 8, 14) attributed always to the male and alluding to quickness and timidity, and young roes, if they are twins, are compared to female breasts, the dove symbolizes the chastity and undefiled state of the body and probably also of the soul. But the soul or spirit are not among the *topoi* of the *Song of Songs*. Plant images, like that of the apple tree in relation to the boy were used in the Sumerian religious texts for the girls, the girl here is compared to the palm tree (7, 8-9).⁷⁸ Both symbolize their slim bodies. Some geographical similes put the sign of equality between the Shulamite and the land of Hebrews and their immediate neighbours and thus make out of her the metaphor for Israel.⁷⁹ One simile at least with her majestic portrait “*that* looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as *an army* with banners” (6, 10) reminds the researchers of Astarte or Syrian-Phoenician goddess Aphrodite *parakypusa*.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ MÜLLER, H.-P.: *Vergleich und Metapher im Hohenlied* and LANDY, Fr.: *Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs*. Sheffield, The Almond Press 1983.

⁷⁸ MÜLLER, H.-P.: *Vergleich und Metapher im Hohenlied*, p. 25.

⁷⁹ Cf. the text belonging to the note 55.

⁸⁰ FAUTH, W.: *Aphrodite parakypusa. Untersuchungen zum Erscheinsbild der vorderasiatischen Dea Prospiciens*. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur. Abhandlungen des geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse. Jahrgang 1966, Nr. 6, 1967, pp. 44 ff. and 72.

Metaphors are not so common in the *Song of Songs*, but they are very impressive as to their utterance and creative twist. “A bundle of myrrh *is* my beloved unto me,” says Shulamite about the shepherd, and then proceeds: “he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts” (ibid.). Or: “I am the rose of Sharon, *and* the lily of valleys,” (2, 1) she says about herself. The shepherd says about her: “A garden inclosed *is* my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” (4, 12). Here we may see not only “mimesis” (imitation, representation) of the nature, but also *poiesis* (creation) in Paul Ricoeur’s interpretation.⁸¹

If Western poetry (and the literature in general), including the poetry of Near Eastern peoples, Egypt and Hebrew literature, operated within the premise of Aristotle: “Art follows Nature” (*he techne mimetai ten phusin*),⁸² in China and in the Far East in general, the literary traditions followed to a great extent, the premise from the *Da xu* [67] *Great Preface to the Book of Songs*, attributed to Wei Hong [68] (1st cent. A.D.): “Poetry is where the intent (*zhi*) [69] of the heart/mind goes.”⁸³ Manifesting the same meaning, but even closer semantically to Aristotle’s utterance is that by the later poet Lu Ji [70] (261-303) who wrote that “poetry originates in emotions” (*shi yuan qing*) [71].⁸⁴ The *topos* of poetry, according to Aristotle, is Nature, and Nature is also the *topos* of the *Song of Songs*: in the *Book of Songs* the *topos* is emotion, or better to say emotions, or the souls of the delineated persons, while the bodies, as we have shown, are very roughly sketched. In the *Song of Songs* there is a direct and intimate connection between nature and the lovers, mostly involving their bodies. The nature is also in the *Book of Songs*, but something as *xing* [74] stimulus in Pauline Yu’s translation,⁸⁵ and a source of imagery. If the bodies are the chains linking the lovers with the nature and the world

⁸¹ Cf. RICOEUR, P.: *Stellung und Function der Metapher in der biblischen Sprache*. In: RICOEUR, P. und JÜNGEL, E.: *Metapher. Zum Hermeneutik religiöser Sprache*. München, Ch. Kaiser Verlag 1979, p. 53.

⁸² There are also different views. E.g., H.-P. MÜLLER follows W. WOLF and his work *Die Kunst Ägyptens. Gestalt und Geschichte*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer Verlag 1957, and asserts that in the Near Eastern art there was not a tendency to “follow Nature”, but to create ideal images (Denkbilder), i.e. not only to imitate that which could be grasped by the senses and the reason, but to go behind them. Aristotle premise comes from his work *Meteorology*, IV, 3. More about this see in WIMSATT, Jr., W.K. and BROOKS, C.: *Literary Criticism. A Short History*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf 1966, pp. 21-56.

⁸³ ZHENG XUAN, juan 1, p. 1A and YU, Pauline: *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*. Princeton, Princeton University Press 1987, p. 31.

⁸⁴ LU JI: *Wen fu* [72] *Essay on Literature*. In: *Lu shi heng ji* [73], SPPY ed., juan 1, p. 2A and YU, Pauline: op. cit., p. 33.

⁸⁵ YU, Pauline: op. cit., pp. 47 and 57. For a different explanation concerning *xing*, see TSE YIU-MAN [75]: *Fu, Bi, Xing*. Tamkang Review, Vol. XXIV, Nos. 3-4 (Spring-Summer 1994), pp. 53-85, esp. 63 ff., CHOU YING-HSIUNG: *The Linguistic and Mythical Structure of Hsing as a Combinational Model*. In: DEENEY, J.J. (ed.): *Chinese-Western Comparative Literature. Theory and Strategy*. Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press 1980, pp. 51-78, KAO, Karl S.Y.: *Rhetorical Devices in the Chinese Literary Tradition*. Tamkang Review, Vol. XIV, Nos. 1-4 (Autumn-Summer 1983-1984), pp. 325-337 and DAI WEN-QUN: *Xing Again: A Formal Re-investigation*, Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews, 13, 1991, pp. 1-14.

in the *Song of Songs*, in the *Book of Songs* it is done the majority of cases through the inner qualities and values of the involved characters. The nature in this case serves only as the background for the “emotions” (better to say “inner nature”), in evoking or alluding to them. The natural images are preceding the depictions of the inner states, or they are put between them.

Let us take once again the song No. 23 as an illustration. In it the first two lines: “In the wilds there was a dead roe/ wrapped with white grass/”, is clearly divided from: “There was a girl with spring feelings/ a fine gentleman enticed her.” In the *Book of Songs* the words of the Shulamite addressed to the shepherd: “My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice” (2, 9) is a perfect simile, but it would be unimaginable in the *Book of Songs* for moral reasons as an invitation to the improper love and also incompatible with the lyric code of the early Chinese poetry. If the poem No. 76 depicts us the scene with the boy coming secretly to the garden of girl’s family and she asks him to be careful, she is doing that in order to warn him not to transgress decorous behaviour.⁸⁶ Probably for this reason only was this splendid piece, often translated into foreign languages, included into the *Book of Songs*. In the *Song of Songs* the shepherd meets the Shulamite and probably stays with her during the night, since his “looking” and “shewing” ends with the short but wonderful *alba*:

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn,
my beloved, be thou like a roe or a young hart
upon the mountains of Bether (2, 17)

Confucius said about the *Book of Songs* the following statement: “The Odes are three hundred in number. They can be summed up in one phrase, ‘Swerving not from right path’.”⁸⁷

The literary theory of Confucius was strictly ethical. But within its expressive and emotional framework, there was enough place for the aesthetic demands. It worked, just like the creative poetry itself, within the formula *wen rou dun hou* [76]

which can be translated as “moderate, gentle, sincere and deep”.⁸⁸ Similarly the *Book of Songs* is characterized by Bei Boyuan as *wen rou shen zhi, bao liu er han xu* [78] “moderate, gentle, deep and grasping, conservative and allusive”. *Song of Songs* is according to her *ri lie fen fang, chi luo er fang lu* [79] “enthusiastic and full of fragrance, erotically provocative and of loose morals”.⁸⁹ The last judgement is probably too strong. In one of his most pregnant statements, Burton Watson, described the poems of the *Book of Songs* as “often pure vignettes of feeling. Some-

⁸⁶ See text concerning the note 60.

⁸⁷ LAU, D.C.: op. cit., pp. 10-11.

⁸⁸ A good exposition see in WANG HONGTU [77] : *Wenrouduhou (Gentleness and Kindness)*. Tamkang Review. Vol. XXIV, Nos. 3-4 (Spring-Summer 1994), pp. 87-98.

⁸⁹ BEI BOYUAN: op. cit., 9, 1982, p. 50.

times they describe a scene, sometimes they tell a story, but more often the scene and the story are outside the poem, or merely hinted at within it, the body of the poem being given up to an expression of the emotions they arouse.”⁹⁰ This characteristic probably derives from the definitions of Chinese poetry presented above, where both intent(s) of the heart or feeling(s) only partly reflect the contents of poetry. Its greatness lies in the capacity to depict the inner scenes of human beings, their hearts and souls, and this is clearly visible especially in comparison with the completely different, mostly extrovertly oriented poetry of the *Song of Songs*. As for as love poetry is concerned, in the *Book of Songs*, we find the plant and animal imagery around or among the delineated human characters and closely connected with wooing, lovesickness, desire, sorrow, wedding, marriage, separation and desertion. Probably except of lovesickness of the Shulamite, there is no other aching emotion in her heart, and this was only of a short duration. The love in the *Song of Songs* is presented as that among supernatural beings, its surroundings are similar to that of the Garden of Eden from the *Genesis*, 2, 1-25, or to some forgotten identities of the “pagan” gods and goddesses. The poems from the *Book of Songs*, we have analysed in this contribution, were mostly collected in the northern feudal states of China, and reflected the life of people, including the aristocracy of those times (mostly of the 8th-7th cent. B.C.), but they did not have the slightest connection with anything god-like, divine or paradisiacal. We do not find a superhuman aspect in the *Wirklichkeit-saussage* (reality-utterance) of this lyric poetry. God created Adam and Eve naked and they remained so up to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden after the Fall.⁹¹ Erotic imagery of the *Song of Songs* is audacious, but still within the framework of the ethically sound and decorous, as an *opus* created in a theocratic realm and quite early regarded as the allegory of God’s Love to his people. We know that it was without great difficulties integrated into the biblical canon.⁹²

⁹⁰ WATSON, B.: *Early Chinese Literature*. New York and London, Columbia University Press 1962, p. 215.

⁹¹ *Genesis*, 1, 27, 2, 15-25 and 3, 10-24.

⁹² But how it exactly happened we do not know. See Fox, M.V.: op. cit., pp. 250-252. One of the reasons for its canonization might be its recitation at the festivals among the Hebrews which “were not days of prayer, sacrifice and ritual alone. From various evidence, early and late, we know that they were joyous, even raucous, festivities in which the people ate, drank and made merry both in the sanctuary area (‘before the Lord’) and in private homes (‘in your gates’)...” Later “during the Second Temple period (after 516 B.C., M.G.) on the 15th of Ab (probably at the beginning of the grape harvest)... the girls would dress up, dance in the vineyards, and flirt with the eligible young men”, according to Mishnaic *Taanit*, 4, 8) (pp. 251-252). This last is very similar to ancient China in the times of writing down and probably also editing of the *Book of Songs*. In the song No. 95 entitled *Zhen Wei* [80] we read:

The rivers Zhen and Wei are amply flowing,
knights and girls
are holding *jian* [81] plants in their hands.
The girl says: “Did you look around?”
The knight responds: “Yes, I did.”
“Shall we proceed and look again?”
Beyond the Wei,

In China there was no almighty *fiat* and also not the love of god or gods for mankind or its part. In the Zhou era, Tian [84] Heaven was the highest god there, but maybe he was of an anthropological origin, probably the ancestor of the ruling dynasty.⁹³ If in the poem No. 260 entitled *Zheng min* [88] the first verse reads: “Tian gave birth to the multitude of people,” it meant only that these Zhou people were his natural progeny, and originally he was one of them. The poem then proceeds thus:

He endowed them with bodies and rules.
The people hold fast to moral norms,
because they love those beautiful virtues.⁹⁴

The poetic imagery of the *Book of Songs* is much simpler than that of the *Song of Songs*. Due to its main mission, to be the guide to moral life and a well-ordered society, more was not necessary. The main characteristics of the *Book of Songs* by Confucius quoted above, were taken from animal imagery: *poematis personae* should follow the example of the sturdy stallions, not swerving from their road,⁹⁵ the right path of ethical and socio-political life. On the other hand, in the *Song of Songs*, which presented much more complex and developed imag-

there is truly good and pleasant.
The knight and the girl
merrily sport together (*xiang xue*) [82].
Then they present each other a peony. (SEE ZHENG XUAN, juan 4, p. 18A and KARLGREN, pp. 61-62).

According to A. WALEY: *The Book of Songs*, p. 28, this was a custom in the State of Zheng [83], the present Northern Honan Province, and it took place in the third month, i.e. during the spring and not in July or August, as in Israel. Ancient China concerned, see also GRANET, M.: *Chinese Civilization*. Transl. by K.E. INNES and M.R. BRAILSFORD. New York, Meridian Books 1958, pp. 162-164.

It is necessary to say that in the time of canonization the connections of the *Song of Songs* with older “heathen” practices were already forgotten.

⁹³ Cf. ELVIN, M.: *Was There a Transcendental Breakthrough in China?* In: EISENSTADT, S.N. (ed.): op. cit. p. 327, who states that the “Zhou conquest of the Shang towards the end of the second millennium B.C.E. brought the appearances of another supreme God (i.e. different from Di [85] or Shangdi [86] of the Shang-Yin [87] Dynasty, ca. 1766-1122), M.G.). This was Tian [84], usually translated ‘Heaven’, a rendering that has the defect of concealing what was originally a clearly anthropomorphic being.” See also CREEL, H.G.: *The Origin of Deity T'ien*. In: *The Origins of Statecraft in China*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press 1970, pp. 493-506. For different opinion see ALEXANDER, D.L.: *The Concept of T'ien in the Confucian Thought and Its Ethical Implications*. Ph.D. thesis. University of California at Santa Barbara 1980, pp. 11-12 and 26-176. Cf. also ENO, R.: *The Confucian Creation of Heaven. Philosophy and Defence of Ritual Mastery*. Albany, State University of New York 1990, esp. pp. 1-29, 181-189, 205-214 and 285-289.

⁹⁴ ZHENG XUAN, juan 18, p. 15B and KARLGREN, p. 228.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Lu Ode* No. 297 named *Jiong* [89] in ZHENG XUAN, juan 20, pp. 1A-2A and KARLGREN, p. 254.

ery from the literary point of view, the Shulamite was compared to a mare, due to her beauty, from the chariots of Pharaoh (1, 9).⁹⁶

The language and imagery of the *Book of Songs* was not enough studied from literary point of view.⁹⁷ Something different could be said about the *Bible* (including the *Song of Songs*), where especially since the revival of interest in the *Bible* in the Renaissance era, much have been done. Some contemporary researches were mentioned above. Here I would like to point out only the opinion of Robert Lowth, the discoverer of the *parallelismus membrorum* in the Hebrew literature, who in his book *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753, 2nd ed. 1763) highlighted its *sublimitas* (hypsos) following the ideas attributed to Cassius Longinus (3rd cent. A.D.). Lowth wrote there about the “force of composition, whatever it be, which strikes and overpowers the mind, which excites the passions, and which expresses ideas at once with perspicuity and elevation”.⁹⁸

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I think that in these years the researchers in the ancient Chinese lyric poetry should devote more energy in the study concerned with the “lyric fact” and its specificity. The problem of “lyric(al)ness” in ancient Chinese poetry should be followed both in the intra- as well as in the interliterary way.

Here I would like to call the attention of both the Chinese and Western students to the book entitled *Literaturnaya mysl Kitaya na rubezhe drevnosti i srednikh vekov* (The Literary Mind of China at the Turn of Ancient Times and the Middle Ages)⁹⁹ by the Russian Sinologist I.S. Lisevich. Here, among others, two important modes of the lyric tropes of ancient Chinese poetry, were treated with a high degree of success. These are *bi* [90] simile, or analogy, and *xing* [74], mentioned above. By their meaning, they belong among the most problematic concepts of Chinese poetics in general. When analysing them, Lisevich remarks, that Western researchers commit an error if they try in their explication to bring the terms closer to the Euro-American reader with the aid of concepts of European poetics, for thereby they tear them out of the system of traditional Chinese poetics which is considerably different. Thus, while the second of them, comes closest to the European metaphor, allegory or symbol (although it does not fully agree with any of them), in poetry it is considered to be a “spontaneous growth of *qi* [75]” (i.e. vapour, primordial matter-energy) or as “the words of response of the mind” to some external or internal stimuli (p.

⁹⁶ “I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots” in the King James’s version, is more approximately translated in M.V. Fox: op. cit., pp. 83 and 104: “To a mare of Pharaoh’s chariotry/ I compare you, my darling.”

⁹⁷ Among the rare and valuable exceptions we may find Pauline YU: op. cit., but she devotes, according to my opinion, too much attention to the allegorical explanation of the poems.

⁹⁸ Quoted according to KUGEL, James L.: *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press 1981, p. 279.

⁹⁹ Moscow, Nauka 1979.

119). The same is also valid for the concept of *bi* [90] which could be defined as a certain metaphor with the traits of allegory and mainly of the comparison. Traditional Chinese poetics, as graphically evident from the two examples just cited, is not primarily concerned with an investigation of the verbal texture of a work, with an exact differentiation or definition of poetic tropes or figures of speech, but is interested in understanding the essential phenomena standing behind the work, or making its origin possible, in determining the philosophico-ethical hotbed on which or from which it originates. Like ancient Chinese literature, its literary poetics was also philosophically oriented, with its world outlook. Unfortunately, it was also less lucid, far more inexact in its expression than that in European antiquity or in later European literary criticism. Precisely thanks to the philosophical and ideological orientation, it was possible to assign the genre *song* [19] to the highest degree of the genre hierarchy in ancient Chinese literature, for this genre presented allegedly “in the very highest measure an incorporation of the Absolute – Dao [91]” (p. 129). If we return once again to the well-known premise of “swerving not from the right path” as *pium desiderium* of the *Book of Songs* and the Chinese poetry or literature in general as requested by Confucius, then we see that “literality” was prevailing over “figurality” (terms used by Michelle Yeh),¹⁰⁰ since for the editor(s) of these works it was not important what colour the “sturdy stallions” of the state Lu were (grey-and-white, brown-and-white, red, light-yellow, bay, flecked, even hair-legged or fish-eyed):¹⁰¹ they had only to gallop vigorously stright away along the right path, i.e. the Absolute or Dao in Confucian apprehension.

We may slightly correct Lisevich’s view. Committing of an error, he speaks about, has its positive features, too. One should study the problem simultaneously from both its sides, the foreign and the Chinese. The history of its study is relatively long and has brought positive results. This history starting with A. Waley’s assertion that the “‘figures of speech’, devices such as metaphor, simile, and play on words, are used by the Chinese with much more restraint than by us”,¹⁰² proceeds with J.L. Bishop’s remark that both similes and metaphors “are sufficiently rare and usually of such an elementary nature”,¹⁰³ and continues up to our days with the researches made by Wai-lim Yip, S. Owen, Shan Chou, Pauline Yu and Michelle Yeh, who following mainly Owen’s researches, came up with the idea that “Chinese metaphor is metonymic or synecdochic in nature or, to put it differently, it is metonymically or synecdochically derived.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ YEH, Michelle: *Readings of Metaphors in Classical Chinese Poetry*. In: WONG TAK-WAI (ed.): *East-West Comparative Literature: Cross-cultural Discourse*. Hong Kong, Department of Comparative Literature of the University of Hong Kong 1993, pp. 337-363, esp. pp. 345 and 354.

¹⁰¹ Cf. note 95, esp. KARLGREN’s translation.

¹⁰² WALEY, A.: *Introduction*. In: *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf 1919, p. 21.

¹⁰³ See YEH, M.: op. cit., pp. 338-339.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 354 and OWEN, S.: *Transparences: Reading the T’ang Lyric*. Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 39, December 1979, 2, p. 244.

Synecdoche, as we know, is the most important species of metonymy, or according to J.T. Shipley “metonymy is a form of synecdoche”.¹⁰⁵ Be it as it may, the prominent Czech literary theoretician Josef Hrabák is right when qualifying every literary work as synecdochic because it “informs us only about a part of the reality, i.e. it explicitly shows only some things, all other we have to create with the help of our imagination”.¹⁰⁶ The measure of this “lyric(al)ness” is always conventional and in ancient and traditional Chinese literature it was always obligatory, as was shown in this contribution.

This “lyric(al)ness” was not studied enough in different literary and cultural areas, but certainly more is known about it in the Western part of the world, see, for example, the first part of the excellent book by E. Staiger’s *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*.¹⁰⁷ It is true, as stressed by Michelle Yeh, that the Chinese poetic imagery places heavier demands on the reader¹⁰⁸ and, of course, on the literary critic, too, especially on such that are judging it from the angle of Western poetics.

The first words of Staiger’s book reminded me that in “one of the purest example of lyric style”, i.e. *Auf allen Gipfeln ist Ruh* (1780) by Johann Wolfgang Goethe,¹⁰⁹ we do not find any metaphor, and the last quoted poem in the book on the *Song of Songs* by H.-P. Müller ends with Paul Celan’s *Atemwende* (*Turn of Breath*) (1967) with “Dröhnen” (noise) of “Metapherngestöber” (blizzard of metaphors).¹¹⁰ Certainly not the quantity of metaphors makes the lyric poetry great but the quality of its lyric spirit. The literary images of the *Book of Songs*, as has been shown in this contribution, are much more simple than those of the *Song of Songs*, but they are more introvert and albeit not so beautiful as concerned the style and art, they are great products of the literary genius of Chinese people at the dawn of its literary history. The more synecdochic character of Chinese poetry make its reading more difficult for Westerners accustomed to more metaphoric language of Near Eastern or later European literatures. Although very different, “lyric(al)ness” of both *Song of Songs* and the *Book of Songs* present two apogees of the literary creativity of the Near and the Far East in the last millennium of the B.C. times.

¹⁰⁵ SHIPLEY, J.T.: *Dictionary of World Literature*. Totowa, New Jersey, Littlefield, Adams & Co. 1972, p. 271.

¹⁰⁶ HRABÁK, J.: *Poetika* (Poetics). Prague, Československý spisovatel 1973, p. 136.

¹⁰⁷ Zürich, Atlantis-Verlag 1946, pp. 13-88.

¹⁰⁸ YEH, M.: op. cit., pp. 359-360.

¹⁰⁹ STAIGER, E.: op. cit., p. 13.

¹¹⁰ MÜLLER, H.-P.: *Vergleich und Metapher im Hohenlied*, p. 56.

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