

**Metaphysical and Mid-Late  
Tang Poetry  
A Baroque Comparison**

**Pengfei Wang**

**Series in Literary Studies**



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*To My Parents*



# Table of Contents

Preface	vii
Foreword by Massimo Verdicchio University of Alberta	ix
Introduction: Toward Redefining Chinese Baroque Poetry through Comparison	xv
Chapter 1 <b>English Metaphysical poetry</b>	1
John Donne: The Erotic and the Divine	1
Andrew Marvell: <i>Eros</i> and <i>Thanatos</i>	9
Richard Crashaw: Eros and Ecstasy	19
Chapter 2 <b>Mid-Late Tang Baroque Poetry</b>	37
Meng Jiao: Benjaminian Allegory	38
Li He: Irony and the Lyric	45
Li Shangyin: Allusion as Disruption	55
Chapter 3 <b>Metaphysical and Mid-Late Tang Conceits</b>	67
The Conceits in English Metaphysical Poetry	75
The Conceits in Mid-Late Tang Poetry	82
Conclusions	91
Works Cited	93
Index	99



# Preface

Years ago, when I began my PhD study comparing English and Chinese Baroque at the University of Alberta, I wasn't really sure how to go about it. I would have probably gone the way of Tak-wai Wong and James J.Y. Liu – a completely different, even contradictory way. That I did not follow the cliché, I owe it to Professor Massimo Verdicchio. As my PhD supervisor, he not only steered me on the right path and directed the dissertation from which this book comes from, but also made available to me his own work on Li Shangyin and the Baroque, and Benedetto Croce's aesthetics. I have also drawn inspiration from his mentor, Paul de Man, whose definition of modernity seems intuitive to me. All these readings have served me well in understanding Chinese poetry as Baroque rather than literally. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Verdicchio. My thanks also goes to Professors Sathya Rao, Waclaw Osadnik, Raleigh Whiting, Irene Sywenky, and Carrie Smith-Prei for their advice and support.

In my work, I choose to focus on only three metaphysical poets: John Donne, Andrew Marvell, and Richard Crashaw. Accordingly, I have selected three of what I think are the most representative Tang “Baroque” poets: Meng Jiao, Li He and Li Shangyin. Important poets on both sides, like George Herbert and Henry Vaughn for the Metaphysical poets (not to mention other great European Baroque poets), and Han Yu and Bai Juyi for the Tang poets are not examined in this work. It is my hope to include these poets, and others, in my continuous comparative study of the Baroque East and West in the future.





# Foreword

by  
**Massimo Verdicchio**  
University of Alberta

I consider it an honor to write the Foreword to Pengfei Wang's *Metaphysical and Mid-Late Tang Poetry: A Baroque Comparison*, as I believe that his comparative study on the Baroque is an important critical event. Like all such events, it is characterized by misunderstanding, confusion and opposition. When we are dealing with the Baroque, and with allegory, which is the main characteristic of the baroque, it comes as no surprise. Benedetto Croce probably spoke for Dr. Johnson and John Dryden, and to a certain extent, for contemporary Chinese critics, when he declared the seventeenth century, the century “without poetry” (*senza poesia*).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Dr. Johnson and Dryden refused to acknowledge the intrinsically “baroque” character of the poetry of John Donne and Richard Crashaw because it differed from traditional poetry, and called it “metaphysical.”<sup>2</sup> James J. Y. Liu and Tak-wai Wong, despite embracing the Baroque as a style to characterize the poetry of Li Shangyin and Meng Jiao, rejected its allegorical character with the result that their comparative analysis failed to provide an adequate analysis of the Baroque in Mid-Late Tang poetry.<sup>3</sup>

We have to be thankful to Georg W. F. Hegel for associating the aesthetic with the symbol and for making allegory an unwelcome term in literary criticism, as the non-poetic and the non-artistic. However, this is only apparently so, as Paul de Man has argued conclusively, demonstrating that for Hegel, the symbol is only the name for the aesthetic phenomenon, which cannot exist independently of allegory. Croce, following Hegel, also rejected allegory and defined it as a form of writing, or a cryptography.<sup>4</sup> However, symbol and allegory are intrinsically related: where there is symbol there is allegory since the symbolic is only the phenomenal manifestation of allegory. For this reason, allegory can be understood as the demystification of the symbol which, at the level of poetic genre, as Nietzsche saw, defines the Baroque style as the decline of traditional symbolic forms in rhetoric, or allegory.<sup>5</sup> Croce, nonetheless, attempted to curb the deleterious spread of allegory, and the Baroque, by confining it to the seventeenth century and denying any further occurrence of baroque in other literary periods. His works on aesthetics, and principally *La Poesia*, are attempts to separate symbol from allegory, and to expunge allegorical forms from poetic ones, without success.

Pengfei Wang's comparative study of English Metaphysical poetry and Mid-Late Tang poetry is an attempt to make up for these earlier shortcomings, both East and West, and restore the Baroque as a legitimate style, and allegory as its essential prosaic and non-artistic form. Only then is it possible to fully appreciate the baroque character of so-called English Metaphysical poetry, as well the apparently difficult and ambivalent poetry of Mid-Late Tang poetry. In this brief introduction I will try to place the analysis of Pengfei Wang in perspective so that the importance and the implications of his groundbreaking work can be properly appreciated.

According to Tak-wai Wong, J. D. Frodsham was the first one to apply the term Baroque to Chinese Literature in a lecture in 1968 on "New Perspectives in Chinese Literature"<sup>6</sup> (Wong 25). Frodsham applied the term to the poetry of Han Yü and Meng Jiao, but his contention was not limited to these poets, or to the post-Renaissance period of the seventeenth century, but to any "recurring historical phenomenon" (quoted in Wong 25). Frodsham, following Nietzsche, defined the Baroque as a decline of art into rhetoric and suggested that tropes such as catachresis, hyperbole and oxymoron in the poetry of Meng Jiao and Lu T'ung might simply be "the decorative overelaboration of a highly conscious, skeptical craftsman, the piling-up of calculated surprises and effects" (quoted in Wong 26). Frodsham argued that these poets share with their Western counterparts a deep concern for the mobility of things, for "Time as a creator and destroyer" (quoted in Wong 26).

Wong, however, felt that Frodsham's definition of the Baroque was too limiting and pejorative, and that his notion of Baroque had to be modified "with a more perceptive reading of the text and a more comprehensive understanding of the term before it could be applied to the study of Chinese literature" (Wong 26). He also extended his critique to James J. Y. Liu's *The Art of Chinese Poetry* who contended that the poetry of Meng Jiao, Lu T'ung and Chia Tao was comparable to English metaphysical poetry in its use of "far-fetched and elaborately developed comparisons," and in its tendency towards "complexity and ambiguity in imagery and syntax" (Wong 28). Wong also took to task Liu's study on the baroque, *The poetry of Li Shang-yin. Ninth-century Baroque Chinese Poet.*<sup>7</sup> Wong claimed that, with the exception of a few paragraphs at the end of Liu's study, the issue of the Baroque was "not properly posed and adequately explored" (Wong 29). He found Liu's view of the Baroque just as restrictive as Frodsham's when he refers to Mid-Late Tang poetry as the period comparable to the seventeenth century in Europe, which was "typified by tendencies toward the exuberant or the grotesque" (Wong 29). Although James Liu was the first to apply the term Baroque to the poetry of Li Shangyin and to the Late Tang period, he did not illustrate, according to Wong, the

elements of Li's poetry with specific examples which would identify him as a Baroque poet, at the same level as European Baroque poets.

Wong is also critical of Liu's argument that if Li Shangyin had been a Western poet of the seventeenth century, he would have certainly qualified as a Baroque poet (See Liu 253). Even though the comparison is appropriate, for Wong it was not sufficient to demonstrate the baroque character of Li Shanyin's poetry. In conclusion, Wong resolved that "the term Baroque in Chinese literary studies to date needs more critical perspective and analysis" (Wong 62).<sup>8</sup>

If Tak-wai Wong may be correct in his criticism of James Liu, his own version of the Baroque did not bring us any closer to understanding these poets. While Wong differs from Liu in what constitutes baroque poetry, their approach is similar and very traditional. This is clear in how they approach translation. For James Liu an adequate re-creation of the original entails the literalization of the original, insofar as this is possible. His aim as a translator is to favor those who cannot read Chinese in the original: "to translate a poem is to try to reproduce the verbal structure of the original, so that the reader of the translation will respond to it, as far as possible, in the same way that the translator responded to the original poem, thereby re-creating, to some extent, what the poet originally created" (Liu 34).

Liu believes that we can make sense of poems "without committing ourselves to a definite theory," but when one translates the choice cannot be naïve since it is dictated, inevitably, by the preconceptions of the translator. (Liu 32) This is true of the Chinese language, where pronouns and other grammatical elements are placed at the discretion of the translator. In addressing these difficulties, Liu describes the "eternal dilemma" of the translator to decide between a "literal" and "literary" translation. By the term "literary" Liu means figural or allegorical. Every translator in deciding whether to translate literally or figuratively "steers a dangerous course between the Scylla of dull pedantry and the Charybdis of irresponsible dilettantism" (Liu 35). In any case, one should steer clear of the "literary" because its "excessive freedom" makes translation not only "undesirable, but at times impossible" (Liu 35).

Liu argues that a poem "can mean more than one thing at the same time, on different levels" (Liu 32), which implies that a symbolic reading is to be preferred to an allegorical one. The symbolic allows for the possibility of different interpretations, while the allegorical involves "definite identification of elements in a poem with actual persons and events" (Liu 32). Liu's definition of allegory is somewhat different from Hegel's and Croce's, but it amounts to the same. In his example, allegory is like personification, an enigma to be resolved. Instead of considering a poem as "an autobiographical revelation," he writes, it is better to take each one "dramatically" (Liu 32). This approach requires the reconstruction of a dramatic situation that makes sense of a poem

in more than one way, without identifying the main characters of the drama. He gives the example of Shakespeare's Dark Lady, whose identity is not necessary to understand the dramatic situation of the sonnets. The actual agents are not important, what is relevant is the extent to which the poet allows us to enter "into the worlds of moral indignation, conjugal affection, and paternal love that can afford us some guide to the value of these poems as poetry" (Liu 32). In the case of Shakespeare's "Dark Lady" knowing her identity would not add to our understanding and evaluation of the sonnets: "All we need is the dramatic situation implicit in the sonnets themselves" (Liu 32). For this reason, Liu dismisses the literary, or allegory, as irrelevant and opts in favor of a literal or symbolic approach. Yet, if Shakespeare's Dark Lady, instead of a she, turns out to be a "he," as it has often been suggested, would that not make all the difference to a reading of the sonnets?

Indeed, the navigation between the literal and the literary, or the figural, is like navigating between Scylla and Charybdis: almost an impossibility, both for the translator and the interpreter. However, doing away with the literary would be like getting rid of Scylla or Charybdis, and this is an even greater impossibility. The "figural," or allegorical, is undesirable and impossible precisely because it is difficult, if not impossible, to read, unlike the symbolical which relies on the literal that makes reading more accessible and enjoyable. Liu's symbolic approach promotes a literal meaning, at many levels, to resolve the ambiguity which characterizes, in this case, the poetry of Li Shangyin. However, this approach does not bring us closer to understanding Li's poetry or baroque poetry. What makes the comparison possible between Li and poets as diverse as Quevedo, Marino, Crashaw, Gryphius or Góngora, are not the "baroque" elements which they may have in common, as Wong suggests, (Wong 26) but the allegorical nature of their poetry, or, which is the same, the manner in which the apparent symbolic representation of their poetry is interrupted or interfered with.

Pengfei Wang's study takes its starting point from this problematic by analyzing Mid-Late Tang poetry as Baroque or allegorical poetry, comparing it to English Metaphysical poetry. The comparison is not based on the baroque elements, which their poetry may have in common, but on an analysis of their poems as allegorical compositions, and by means of a discussion of conceits and rhetorical devices. The first chapter analyzes three poems of John Donne, Andrew Marvell and Richard Crashaw, emphasizing their baroque characteristics. The second chapter does the same with analyses of three poems of Meng Jiao, Li He and Li Shangyin. Their similarities and differences are the subject of the third chapter, which is a theoretical chapter on Baroque conceits. While the second chapter is an original reading of the three Mid-Late

Tang poets, the first chapter is an important contribution to the study of Donne, Marvell, and Crashaw, as Baroque poets.

Mid-Late Tang poetry, which has always been read literally, or symbolically, gains a new perspective when read rhetorically or allegorically. Pengfei Wang provides for each poem two translations: one literal, the other literary, or figural. The difference is clear in the analysis of a true Baroque poet like Meng Jiao, but also in Li Shangyin and Li He. The trope of allusion, which characterizes much of Li Shangyin's poetry, is a baroque device meant to displace the apparent symbolic character of poetic representation; in Li He, instead, the Baroque element is evident in the ironic displacement of ancient poetic forms.

The two poetic schools are discussed in Chapter III. This is the theoretical chapter where Pengfei Wang deals with the theories of metaphor of Emanuele Tesauro and Matteo Peregrini, which were well-known in seventeenth-century Europe, and had an influence on Baroque poetry in Italy and Spain. English literary criticism, however, was, and still is, reluctant to adopt these theories or to accept poets like Donne, Marvell and Crashaw as Baroque poets. "Baroque" is still not an acceptable term since, as I have indicated, it is not just a question of labels but of poetics and, reading allegorically. Chapter III also deals with Baroque conceits and contrasts their use in both Metaphysical and Mid-Late Tang poetry.

The importance of Pengfei Wang's study for Chinese literature, and for literary criticism in general, lies not only in the study of these poets and poems, a choice which is necessarily limited by time and space (one hopes that in the future the choice will be extended to other poets and poems), but in his contribution to Comparative Literary Studies East and West, which began with Frodsham, James Liu and Tak-way Wong. There is understandable resistance to the Baroque, as there was to Frodsham's early vision of a Chinese literary history on the model of Western literary history. This need not be the case. It is true that a different periodization of Chinese Literary History could make it more comprehensible to a Westerner and it wouldn't radically alter the way its poetry, or literature, is read. However, if we accept Nietzsche's definition of Baroque as a poetic style, which can be found in any period and in any country, it will be easier to approach Chinese poetry, once we keep in mind that, whether Western or Chinese, behind its symbolic façade, it will still be a rhetorical or Baroque composition. All poetry, that is, all great poetry, is always allegorical, and will always be Baroque poetry. Despite our deepest wish, poetry can never be symbolic because, the symbol is only "a veil" that persists for as long as we choose to remain blind to the essential prosaic, or allegorical, nature of poetry, and art. It is to Pengfei Wang's great merit that this comparative study of English Metaphysical and Mid-Late Tang poetry has shown the way to a

deeper and more rewarding reading of these great poets and their poetry, both East and West, which, it is hoped, will inspire others to follow his lead.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Benedetto Croce. *Storia dell'eta Barocca in Italia. Pensiero, poesia e letteratura e vita morale*. Bari: G. Laterza, 1957.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson. "Life of Abraham Cowley." *Lives of the English Poets*. London: J. M. Dent, 1925; John Dryden. "A Discourse of the Original and Progress of Satire." *Of Dramatic poesy, and other critical essays*. Ed. George Watson. London: J. M. Dent, 1962, 2: 144.

<sup>3</sup> James J. Y. Liu. *The Poetry of Li Shang-yin. Ninth-century Baroque Chinese Poet*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969; Tak-wai Wong. "Toward Defining Chinese Baroque Poetry." *Tamkang Review*, vol. viii, April 1977, no.1, 25-72;

<sup>4</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel. *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Arts*. Oxford: At the Clarendon press, 1975, 499-501. For Paul de Man, see "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*." *Aesthetic Ideology*. Edited with an Introduction by Andrzej Warminski. Minneapolis/London: The University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 91-104. For Benedetto Croce see, *La Poesia. Introduzione alla critica e storia della poesia e della letteratura*, a.c.d. Giuseppe Galasso. Milan: Adelphi, 1994. The English translation is by Giovanni Gullace. *Poetry and Literature. An Introduction to its Criticism and History*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981. For the reference to allegory, see Croce, 227, Gullace, 40.

<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche, "On the Baroque style." *Human, All too Human. A Book for free spirits*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Introduction by Richard Schacht. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 1996, 245-46.

<sup>6</sup> J. D. Frodsham, *New Perspectives in Chinese Literature*. Canberra: Australian National U. Press, 1970. For Tak-wai Wong see note 3.

<sup>7</sup> James J. Y. Liu. *The Art of Chinese Poetry*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962; *The Poetry of Li Shang-yin. Ninth-century Baroque Chinese Poet*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969.

<sup>8</sup> Wong also discusses the use of the baroque by Kalvodová and McLeod (36-45) and the Baroque in the poetry of Meng Jiao and Han Yü. (46-60).

# Introduction

## Toward Redefining Chinese Baroque Poetry through Comparison

Don't reproach us our lack of clarity  
because this is what we do. (Pascal)

A comparison between English Metaphysical and Mid-Late Tang poetry is only possible if we understand by Baroque a poetic style that occurs in opposition to traditional, mimetic or symbolic forms of art. This definition, which comes from Nietzsche, describes the Baroque, which is usually associated with the plastic arts and the poetry of the seventeenth century, as a style that can occur in any period and in any place, whether in England, or Europe, or in China. Nietzsche writes that the Baroque style emerges when “any great art starts to fade, whenever the demands in the art of classic expression grow too great.”<sup>1</sup> He gives the example of Michelangelo, whom he calls the father or grandfather of Italian Baroque, and the artist who broke from the artistic mold of classical rules of art. The Baroque style may lack the nobility we confer on the symbol and on symbolic representations, nonetheless, it is always to allegory that we turn to understand the artistic and the poetic; just as we turn to Baroque poets to learn about our modernity, as I hope to show in my discussion of the English Metaphysical and Mid-Late Tang poets. The Baroque does not belong solely to the seventeenth century in Europe, or ends with it. It is not an artistic style which is determined by history or literary history. On the contrary, an historical approach, which is always symbolic, entails the repression of allegory, and the end of the Baroque.

The Baroque, when understood as allegory, has not fared too well with literary critics or philosophers. Benedetto Croce, the twentieth-century Italian critic and philosopher, regarded the Italian seventeenth century as a “century without poetry” (un secolo senza poesia).<sup>2</sup> He denied that the Baroque can be found in the work of writers other than the seventeenth century. For Croce, Baroque poetry is allegorical poetry and as such, it was neither poetic nor artistic, because art is symbolic. Allegory, on the contrary, is non-artistic, anti-artistic, and should be avoided at all costs. Croce spent a lifetime separating symbol from allegory in poetry, but always without success.<sup>3</sup> Croce derived his concept of allegory from Hegel who, in the *Aesthetics* identified the artistic with the symbol, and allegory with the non-artistic.<sup>4</sup> He defined allegory as “*frostig*

*und kahl*,” (*icy and bleak*) and dismissed it as “a product of the intellect and not of concrete intuition and of the deep feeling of imagination, and lacking inherent seriousness, prosaic, and distant from art” (Hegel 501). Following Hegel, Croce wrote that “Allegory is not a direct form of spiritual expression, only a kind of writing or cryptography” (Croce’s *La Poesia* 227).<sup>5</sup>

In Art criticism, the Baroque is usually confused with Mannerism, an exaggeration of form found in the Late Renaissance, however, they are the expression of two dominant and opposing artistic styles. The former emphasizes unity, the latter vitality and multiplicity. There have been many definitions of Baroque. Jorge Luis Borges defined it as “that style that deliberately exhausts (or at least tries to) its own possibilities, and that borders on self-caricature.”<sup>6</sup> Benedetto Croce, in his study on the Baroque mentioned above, thought that the term derived from “Barocco,” after the fourth mode of the second figure in the nomenclature of syllogisms in Scholasticism. (If A=B and some C does not equal B, then some C does not equal A). He also thought that the term came from the Portuguese for *perrola barroca*: a jeweller’s term for an irregular shaped or flawed pearl.<sup>7</sup> Rene Wellek, despairing of a definition, after presenting all possible variations, concluded that “the Baroque has provided an aesthetic term which has helped us to understand the literature of the time, and which will help us to break the dependence of most literary history from periodization derived from political and social history” (Wellek 97).<sup>8</sup>

In England, poets like John Donne, who seemed to stray from accepted and traditional poetic forms, were declared non-poetic and prosaic.<sup>9</sup> When John Dryden read Crashaw and Dr. Johnson read John Donne, they found the poetry of these poets distasteful and abstract. They called it “metaphysical” but they might as well have called it “Baroque,” as with the rest of Europe. In his *Lives of the English Poets*, Dr. Johnson suggested that metaphysical wit was the result of a “discordia concors: a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike.”<sup>10</sup> John Dryden in “A Discourse of the Original and Progress of Satire” (1693) disapproved of John Donne’s wit and satire: “Would not Donne’s satires, which abound with so much wit, appear more charming if he had taken care of his words, and of his numbers? But he followed Horace so very close that of necessity he must fall with him. And I may safely say it of this present age, that if we were not so great wits as Donne, yet certainly we are better poets.”<sup>11</sup> They had to wait for T. S. Eliot to counter Dr. Johnson’s negative assessment and to recognize their rightful place in the history of English poetry, and reinstate them as modern poets.<sup>12</sup> However, contemporary criticism is still divided as to whether to keep the name “metaphysical” or to call them “Baroque” poets, as the rest of the European poets of the seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup>



English scholars have listed the main characteristics of English Metaphysical poetry: conceit and emblem, theatricality, antithesis and paradox, quiddity (a form of syllogism), contrast between erotic love and religious love and, in particular, an opposition to the Renaissance poetic ideal of "*ars est celare artem*." The latter was also the major aspect that Samuel Johnson found objectionable in Baroque poetry that, in his view, perverted the doctrine of "*ars est celare artem*" into its very opposite. However, this was, precisely, the distinctive character of Metaphysical or Baroque poets for whom true art is *ars est praesentare artem*, in a radical break from traditional Renaissance poetry, and the influence of Petrarch and Petrarchism. However, at stake, in hiding or concealing art, is not simply a question of approach but an aesthetic one, of symbol or allegory.

The question of Baroque can be understood as a version of the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, the classical and the modern but the differences are not so clear cut. If the Baroque can be said to be decidedly on the side of the ancients, as a seventeenth-century aesthetic which is superseded by more modern poetic forms, such as Romanticism and Modernism, as an artistic style and not as a historical period, the Baroque is on the side of the moderns. The in-between character of the Baroque, which situates it both in the past and in the present, is what accounts for the complexity of the Baroque but also for its modernity. As Paul de Man has defined it, "Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching, at last, a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure. This combined interplay of deliberate forgetting with an action that is also an origin reaches the full power of the idea of Modernity."<sup>14</sup> In severing itself from the past, the Baroque also severs itself from the present. Modernity, explains de Man, confronts us at all times with an unsolvable paradox: "Literature exists at the same time in the modes of error and truth, it both betrays and obeys its own mode of being" (de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 163-64). Literature, understood as allegory, or as Baroque, partakes of both past and present, as ancient and modern, and, of course, as both symbol and allegory.

The modernity of Baroque, or Baroque literature, or Baroque lyric, is characterized by its non-mimetic, non-symbolic form or, simply, by allegory. As such, Baroque's modernity is determined by its distance from a symbolic form, from the way it departs and undermines a concept of art as symbol. As allegory, the Baroque undermines and obscures the specific literal meaning of a representation open to (symbolic) understanding. On the other hand, allegory contains a representational, or symbolic, element that allows for understanding but only in order to show that the understanding it reaches is necessarily in error. Since allegory can only blindly repeat the earlier model

without finally understanding it, it is, essentially, the negation of modernity. However, our lack of understanding is, paradoxically, what makes it modern. The less we understand a poet, writes de Man, the more he is misinterpreted and made to say the opposite of what he said, the more he is truly modern, that is, different from what we, mistakenly, think we are ourselves (de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 164). This paradox defines the modernity of the Baroque and its essence as allegory, as well as, its constitutive symbolic character.

One other critic who has made an important contribution to the study and the understanding of Baroque is Walter Benjamin. Although his study, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, was meant to describe the German Baroque Mourning Drama, the German *Trauerspiel*, his work makes an important contribution to the relation of Baroque and allegory, and to notions of social decline and decay.<sup>15</sup> Central to his view is the notion of a divine concept of violence that interrupts the course of time and initiates a future in a long tragic “suspense.” In this suspense is inscribed what has been called “the politics of suspense,” or “the suspension of the political,” founded on the belief of an absolute break, or rupture, with the past. In Benjamin, this radical abolition, inversion and reversal of the past, is explicitly established in the German classical Baroque.<sup>16</sup> However, only the poetry of Meng Jiao seems to come close to Benjamin’s concept of allegory, as I point out in my discussion of the poet in chapter two.

Chinese poets of the Mid-Late Tang experienced a similar case of ostracism from their contemporaries. Although their poetry was admired, the poetry of Meng Jiao, Li He and Li Shangyin, which I discuss in this study, went unappreciated and almost forgotten until they were discovered by later poets and recognized not only as great poetry, but also as modern poetry, or “Baroque” poetry. According to Tak-wai Wong, J. D. Frodsham was the first to apply the term Baroque to Chinese Literature, and to Tang poets, in particular, in a lecture in 1968 on *New Perspectives in Chinese Literature*.<sup>17</sup> Frodsham applied the term “Baroque” to the poetry of Han Yu and Meng Jiao but his definition was not limited to the Tang poets or to the post-Renaissance period of the seventeenth century, but was applicable to any “recurring historical phenomenon.” Frodsham followed Nietzsche and his view of Baroque style, as I have indicated, namely, that Baroque implies a decline in art into rhetoric and that “tropes and catachresis, hyperboles and oxymorons” in the poetry of Meng Jiao and Lu Tong might simply be “the decorative overelaboration of a highly conscious, skeptical craftsman, the pilings-up of calculated surprises and effects.” Frodsham argued that what these Chinese poets share with their Western counterparts is a deep concern with the mobility of things, with “Time as a creator and destroyer” (Wong 26).

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# Index

## A

A. C. Graham, xxi, 59, 60, 72, 75, 89  
Alexandra Finn-Atkins, 29, 34  
Allegory, xv, 32, 35, 74, 97  
An Lushan Rebellion, 38, 72  
Andrew Marvell, vii, xxi, 1, 9, 10,  
13, 19, 34, 69, 81, 87, 89, 93, 96,  
97  
Ann Berthoff, 81  
Aristotle, 12  
Arthur Cooper, xxi, 59

## B

Baroque, vii, xv, xvi, xvii, xviii, xix,  
xx, xxi, xxii, xxiii, 1, 3, 7, 9, 13, 19,  
29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 40, 43,  
44, 45, 55, 56, 61, 64, 65, 69, 70,  
71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 81, 85, 87, 89,  
91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98  
Baudelaire, xxiii, 32  
Benedetto Croce, vii, xv, xvi, xxiii,  
74, 96

## C

Chang E, 42  
Chen Ziang, 53  
Civil War, 21, 22  
Conceit, 89, 95, 96, 97  
Countess of Denbigh, 19, 24, 87

## D

David Hinton, xxii, 37, 38, 45, 64

Decius, 5, 76  
Derek Hirst, 34  
Du Mu, 45

## E

Earl of Denbigh, 21  
Elizabethan, 1, 30, 32, 35, 68, 91,  
96, 98  
Emanuele Tesauro, 69, 70, 89  
Ephesus, 4, 5, 76

## F

Fusheng Wu, xxii, 37, 50, 53, 64

## G

Gary Kuchar, 32, 35  
George Herbert, vii, 32, 35, 96  
Gregg Lambert, 33, 35  
Gregory of Tours, 5, 76

## H

Han Yu, vii, xviii, 38, 40, 43, 65, 73,  
89, 94  
Harold Bloom, 6, 34  
Haun Haussy, 74  
Hegel, xv, xxiii, 95  
Helen Gardner, 5, 34  
Herbert Grierson, 1, 31, 34  
Heyang, 46, 47, 55, 84, 88  
High Tang, 72, 82  
Hugh Grady, xxiii, 32, 35

**I**

Itrat-Husain, 19

**J**

J. D. Frodsham, xviii, xxii, 65, 75, 89, 91  
 J. W. Van Hook, 69, 89  
 Jack Dalglish, 9, 34, 68, 88  
 James J. Y. Liu, xix, 57, 74  
 Ji Shaoyu, 64  
 Jiaying County, 50  
*Jinshi*, 38, 46  
 John Donne, vii, xvi, xxi, xxiii, 1, 2, 7, 32, 33, 34, 35, 68, 69, 70, 80, 81, 87, 89, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98  
 John Dryden, xvi, xxiii  
 John T Shawcross, 93  
 Jorge Luis Borges, xvi

**K**

Katrin Ettenhuber, 32, 35, 69  
 King Charles I, 21

**L**

Li He, vii, xviii, xxi, xxii, 37, 45, 46, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 65, 72, 73, 84, 85, 87, 91, 94, 95  
 Li Shangyin, vii, xviii, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, 37, 45, 46, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 65, 72, 73, 74, 75, 85, 88, 89, 91, 94  
 Liang Dynasty, 64  
 Louis L. Martz, 32, 35  
 Lu Guimeng, 54, 65  
 Lu Tong, xviii, xix  
 Luoyang, 38

**M**

Mario Praz, 29, 35  
 Matteo Peregrini, 70, 71, 89  
 Meng Jiao, vii, xviii, xxi, xxii, 33, 37, 38, 40, 41, 45, 72, 73, 82, 88  
 Metaphysical, vii, xv, xvii, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, xxiii, 1, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 67, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74, 75, 80, 81, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98  
 Michelangelo, xv  
 Mid-Late Tang, xv, xviii, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, 37, 44, 67, 72, 73, 75, 82, 87, 91, 92, 93, 94, 97, 98  
 Mo Chou, 63

**N**

Neo-Classicism, 75  
 Nietzsche, xv, xviii, xxi, xxiii, 74, 91, 92, 96  
 Nigel Smith, 9, 34, 78, 79, 89

**O**

Odette De Mourgues, 34  
 Ovid, 1, 76

**P**

Palace Style, 37, 46, 52, 53, 54, 84, 85, 87  
 Pan Yue, 63  
 Paul de Man, vii, xvii, xxiii  
 Paula M. Varsano, 61  
 Petrarch, xvii  
 Poetry on Things, 52

**Q**

Qing Dynasty, 55  
 Queen Henrietta Maria, 21

**R**

Renaissance, xvi, xvii, xviii, 9, 10,  
32, 35, 67, 68, 69, 73, 81, 87, 95,  
96  
Rene Wellek, xvi, xxiii  
Richard Crashaw, vii, xxi, 1, 19, 34,  
69, 82, 87, 93, 95  
Romanticism, xvii, 75  
Rosemond Tuve, 30, 35

**S**

Saint Teresa of Avila, 27, 34  
Samuel Johnson, xvii, xxiii, 1, 67,  
88  
Seven Sleepers, 4, 5, 7, 76, 81, 87  
Sima Xiangru, 47  
Song Dynasty, 55  
Southern Dynasties, 37, 46, 50, 62,  
65, 84, 95  
St. Augustine, 32, 35  
Stephen Owen, xx, xxii, 57, 61, 65,  
72, 82, 89  
Steven Zwicker, 34  
Su Xiaoxiao, 46, 49, 50, 51, 55, 84,  
85, 87  
Symbol, xxiii  
Symbolic, 97

**T**

T. S. Eliot, xvi, xxiii, 31, 35, 95  
Tak-wai Wong, vii, xviii, xxii, 44,  
73, 74, 91  
Tang Dynasty, 37  
the Gorges, 38, 44, 45, 83, 88  
Theodore Redpath, 34, 89  
Theodosius II, 5, 77

**W**

Walter Benjamin, xviii, xxiii, 32, 35  
West Lake, 50  
West Mount, 50

**X**

Xi Shi, 53  
Xiao Gang, 52

**Y**

Yuefu, 38

**Z**

Zhong Dan Cheng, 47  
Zhu Ziqing, 54  
Zhuangzi, 57, 64  
Zhuo Wenjun, 47