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GROUNDING “LANGUAGE” IN THE SENSES: WHAT THE EYES AND EARS REVEAL ABOUT *MING* 名 (NAMES) IN EARLY CHINESE TEXTS

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Scholarship on early Chinese theories of “language” regularly treats the term *ming* 名 (name) as the equivalent of “word.” But there is a significant difference between a “word” and a “name.”¹ Moreover, while a “word” is often understood to mean a unit of language that is identifiable in its sameness across speech and writing, there is reason to believe that a *ming* was mainly used to mean a unit of meaningful sound.² Analyzing the function of *ming* is a prerequisite for understanding early Chinese theories of “language”—if such a term is even appropriate. Such an analysis will also clarify early Chinese views of the relation of speech to a nonalphabetic script.³

I place “language” in quotation marks because notions of language are historically constructed and variably defined. Before the Common Era, Chinese people would perhaps have possessed a general concept of “speech” in addition to a concept of “Chinese speech.” But until their encounters with other cultures made familiarity with other scripts commonplace, there is little reason to suspect they operated with a similarly general concept of “writing.”⁴ Thus, early Chinese attitudes about speech, writing, and “language” might be distinct enough to merit attention.

It has been many decades since the publication of Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, with its much debated references to Chinese “ideograms.” Derrida makes two controversial comments about Chinese writing. First, he challenges the assumption that writing has a historical telos in which phonetic writing is the normal “outcome.” And second, although he mocks the idea of a graph having a “symbolic” relationship to a “reality singular and unique like itself,” he seems to speculate without irony about Chinese writing as a “movement of civilization outside all logocentrism.”⁵ Derrida asks whether every language must involve a “heliocentric” model of speech and writing. He observes that privileging speech over writing (as in privileging meaning over words or reality over appearance) portrays the latter as a surrogate that serves to indicate the superior status of the former. And he deplors the fact that writing always seems posed as such an “eclipse” of a direct experience of speech. In this way, Derrida encourages rethinking “language” at a fundamental level.

Sinologists have not yet taken Derrida’s comments seriously enough to recognize the need for a thorough analysis of early Chinese metalinguistic terminology.⁶ It is hard to imagine how we can respond to Derrida’s speculation that Chinese writing might dislocate the transcendental categories of Western philosophy’s episteme without taking into account that terminology. An understanding of early Chinese metalinguistic terms seems necessary in order to justify claims about whether this or

that early Chinese “school of thought” or text is “logocentric” or “phonocentric.”⁷ To lay the groundwork for a more informed discussion of these terms in the context of early China, this article focuses on the term *ming* and examines its role in relation to early Chinese ideas about sight and sound. Starting with conceptions of these bodily perceptions, I seek to understand the terminology for speech and writing.

In brief, what is at stake in this analysis of *ming* is the following. In early Chinese texts, certain concepts associated with logocentrism (e.g., reality/appearance, presence/absence) function in a way that is neither the same as, nor exactly the reverse of, the Western philosophical episteme. Moreover, there is no automatic construction of “language” as “absence.” To make this point, I present early Chinese metalinguistic terms like *ming* in the context of the epistemology of the period, wherein reliable knowledge depends on balance between aural and visual modalities.⁸ Early Chinese texts associate the aural and visual with (among other things) speech on the one hand and its enactment on the other.⁹ In addition to the epistemological context, aesthetic and rhetorical tendencies are also crucial for understanding notions of speech and writing in early Chinese texts. In other words, the perceptual symmetry conforms to a stylistic ideal of balancing aural and visual metaphors—part of a pervasive early Chinese literary aesthetic that favors parallelism. Despite this over-determined emphasis on parallelism, the fragmentary and scattered early Chinese textual evidence about conceptions of speech and writing does not always produce parallels in which writing is constructed as visual. Indeed, books often “speak.”¹⁰ Nor do the two sides of the parallels necessarily emerge as equals: hierarchies do occur within such parallels in early Chinese texts.¹¹ Nevertheless, the fact that *visually* perceived action serves as the guarantor of speech seems to counterbalance the “absence” sometimes associated with writing. In short, the emphasis in early Chinese texts on the reliability of vision makes up for occasional suggestions of absence. Hence, this article argues that, as a result of the fact that attention to writing and speech is often subsumed within balances of sight and sound, early Chinese texts do not produce the equations “speech = presence” on the one hand and “writing = absence” on the other.

At the center of this argument is the fact that *ming* is rarely used to mean “graph” in early Chinese texts.¹² This raises doubts about how *ming* should be understood, and on this subject two scholars of pre-Qin philosophy of language quietly disagree. Consistent with his view of early Chinese philosophy as nominalistic, A. C. Graham makes the claim that *ming* “was always discussed in terms of the spoken.” He also attributes to the *Xunzi* and the Neo-Mohists the view that similarity in sound is what makes one name the same as another.¹³ For his part, Chad Hansen only briefly notes his view that something quite different is the case. In the Warring States, he writes, the term *ming* refers to word types, of which graphs and speech are tokens.¹⁴ While neither philosopher elaborates on his interpretation of *ming*, this implicit disagreement is not to be taken lightly. For any thinker who endeavors to reconstruct coherent pre-Qin theories of language, such an important element of a metalinguistic framework is crucial to the overall argument.

I propose to explain the use of the term *ming* by reference to the gradual Qin/Han standardization of the Chinese script, beginning with Qin writing reforms and

culminating with the publication of the first-century *Shuowen jiezi*.¹⁵ Texts from early China indicate that in at least two cases—one from the *Yili* and one from the *Guanzi*—*ming* does function as “graph.” On the face of it, these examples might serve as evidence that in early China *ming* was used to mean something like “words,” in the sense of a linguistic unit that is readily identifiable across both writing and speech. On that assumption, despite the rarity of *explicit* uses of *ming* as “graph,” uses of *ming* might *always implicitly* be intended to mean “writing” as well as “speech.” However, the period in which the occurrences appear complicates this assumption. The passages, from both the *Yili*, which contains pre-Qin and pre-Han materials, and from the *Guanzi*, which was written after the start of the Qin, probably date from the period when scriptural standardization became an issue.¹⁶

With this in mind, my argument is that, at a time when the need to refer to writing in terms of individual units was acute, and before *zi* 字 fully occupied this role, *ming* appeared as “written units.”¹⁷ The few explicit uses of *ming* as “graph” constituted one tentative solution to the need for a term meaning a unit of writing. But I argue that this adaptation of *ming* was unsuccessful, because multiple associations of *ming* with sound and reputation worked against the use of *ming* to include the visual realm of writing. In aural and visual parallels, *ming* took its place on the side of the aural. In other words, *ming* was never used to mean “word” in the sense of something that equally encompasses units of both speech and writing. Instead, *ming* was briefly adopted as a means to refer to individual units of writing. But this usage did not catch on, because names were conceptualized as originally spoken and because, in the Qin/Han standardization of the Chinese script, sound (phonetic considerations) needed to be balanced with sight. Thus, the rarity of the use of *ming* as “graph” reflects a desire to balance speech with a visual nonalphabetic script, within the context of an overall tendency to valorize symmetry in style and perception.

Background

There are two fairly obvious aspects of early Chinese discussions of “language” that should deter any hopes of easily correlating modern or traditional Western metalinguistic frameworks with those of early China. I can only sketch them briefly here, although each merits its own full analysis.

Myths about the Origins of Speech and Writing Divorce the Two

The mythologies about the origins of names, commands, and “crying out” appear to have nothing to do with stories about the origin of writing. Consider, for example, this passage from the *Chunqui fanlu*, which might be a relatively late text, but it puts together some of the more fragmented references to the origin of speech (discussed below in the section titled “Music”). The passage in question begins with the standard idea of correcting names (*zhengming* 正名).¹⁸ It grounds this correction in the very mouths of the ancient sages:

古之聖人，謫而效天地謂之號，鳴而（命施）〔施命〕謂之名。名之為言鳴與命也，號之為言謫而效也，謫而效天地者為號，鳴而命者為名。名號異聲而同本，皆鳴號而達天意者也。

When the sages of old uttered cries in imitation of heaven and earth, those were what we call appellations; when they cried [*ming* 鳴] in giving commands, those were what we call names. *Ming* (name 名) is, so to speak, *ming* (cry 鳴) and *ming* (command 命). *Hao* (appellation 號) is, so to speak, *xiao* (call out 謫) and *xiao* (imitate 效). Calling out in imitation of heaven and earth is an appellation. Crying in commanding is naming. Name and appellation have different sounds but the same root—both cry and call out in order to achieve heaven’s intent. (*Chunqiu fanlu*, 10.1, 深察名號)

In this story, names, cries, and appellations originate in sounds like the cries of birds.

By contrast, myths concerning the origin of writing, which also arises in imitation of heaven and earth, make no reference whatsoever to sound. According to one version of this type of myth, dating from the late Warring States, the lines of the Eight Trigrams seem to be the first form of writing. The *Xici* appendix to the *Yijing* describes their invention in this way:

古者包犧氏之王天下也，仰則觀象於天，俯則觀法於地，觀鳥獸之文與地之宜，近取諸身，遠取諸物，於是始作八卦。...

In antiquity, as for Mr. Xi [i.e., Fu Xi] ruling all under heaven—looking up he observed the images in the heavens and looking down he observed the models in the earth. He looked at how the markings of the birds and animals were appropriate to the earth. Near at hand he took them from his body, and at a distance he took them from things. With these he first made the eight trigrams. . . . (*Yijing*, 繫辭下)¹⁹

In this mythology, writing derives from these visible lines.²⁰ But myths of this sort, like the reference to returning to knotting cords in *Laozi* chapter 80, are not about “writing” as it is typically understood. They are about what linguist Roy Harris calls “non-glottic writing”—in other words, writing that is not recorded speech, but more like charts, diagrams, and mathematical or musical notations.²¹ This form of “writing” may assist in counting, or have mantic and mnemonic functions, but it has no necessary connection to speech.

According to Francoise Bottero, the first Chinese attempt to portray the development from non-glottic to glottic writing did not occur until the *Shuowen jiezi* (ca. 100). The standard reading of *wen* 文 and *zi* 字 in that work’s title is that *wen* means a simple graph, while *zi* is a compound graph. But the opposition between *wen* 文 and *zi* 字 does not preexist the *Shuowen jiezi*, so the interpretation of the title is uncertain.²² Against the standard reading, Bottero argues that the *wen* and *zi* in the title indicate a distinction between the earliest form of writing, which symbolizes directly without mediation of spoken language, and a later developed form, which is a graphic representation of spoken words. Bottero contends that Xu Shen’s account of Cangjie’s creation of writing introduced sound as the second of a two-stage process. First, Cangjie depicted patterns of things, represented directly through written emblems (*wen*). Afterwards, he invented *zi* by employing images to represent words of the spoken language (“attaching [*yi* 益] the phonetic dimension, i.e., pronuncia-

tion to them”).²³ If Bottero’s argument is correct, then Xu Shen’s work was original in being the first to put together these two different roles of writing. In any case, prior to the first century C.E., there is no evidence of an earlier attempt to incorporate the use of writing to record speech into the mythology of non-glottic writing. From that perspective, it makes sense to suggest that early Chinese writers did not think of graphs as primarily transcriptions of speech. As Bottero puts it, according to this view, “The ancients knew how to read before they knew how to write.”²⁴

There Is No Obvious Early Chinese Counterpart for “Word,” at Least before the First Century

The term “word” can be variously defined, but for the purposes of this argument, what is important is the idea of a unit that possesses a kind of “sameness” across different media, specifically spoken and written. A variety of causes might account for the sameness that makes a given word “the same word” whether in speech or writing. For instance, the sameness might derive from being shared “tokens” of a “type.”²⁵ Or the sameness might be explained by the view that the written word is a copy of a spoken word or vice versa. But in each case, the significance for my argument is the potential to claim, on such a basis, that a spoken form of a particular word is somehow “the same as” a written form.

What is interesting about the history of Chinese metalinguistic terminology is that the closest approximation to a unit of that sort has been a “Chinese character,” which is readily identifiable in writing by the spaces surrounding it. As Endymion Wilkinson puts it, “almost without exception classical philologists after the Han called ‘words’ characters (*zi* 字).”²⁶ But the concept of a *zi* does not necessarily entail “sameness” across speech and writing. Again, in early myths of the origin of writing, at least from before the *Shuowen*, there are no suggestions that a graph has any connection to sound. Hence, there is no mythological claim that *zi* originated as a record of speech. Nor does the reverse seem to be the case—that speech began as a copy of *zi*. As we have just seen, the origins of writing and speech appear to occur independently of one another.

The problem of grasping the difference between *zi* and “word” is further complicated by the fact that *zi* was only consistently used for “graph” beginning sometime in the Han. Earlier, there appears to be no uniformity in terminology for a single unit of writing.²⁷ Several terms could be used to mean a unit of writing, and *ming* 名 was among them.²⁸ Discussions of the use of *ming* as “graph” date back to the second-century commentator Zheng Xuan (127–200 C.E.), who is often cited to support the claim that “graph” is a suitable reading of *ming* in pre-Qin texts. Indeed, Zheng Xuan asserts repeatedly that, in certain early Chinese texts, the term *ming* means *zi*. His opinion appears to put an end to the matter, especially given how often it is cited. However, there are additional issues for consideration created by the fact that Zheng Xuan’s claim is retrospective. What he actually writes is that *ming* in these earlier texts meant what his readers of the second century *now* mean by *zi*. Zheng Xuan says this in a variety of similar ways about different texts, but the general pattern is “Where those in the past said *ming*, we now say *zi*.”²⁹ Thus, as Zheng Xuan’s formula

indicates, *ming* must have ceased to be used to mean *zi*, since his second-century readers needed to be alerted to this archaic usage.

Because Zheng Xuan presents his comments about *ming* only when writing is at issue, it is apparent that he means *ming* was used to mean “graph”—not that it was used to mean “word.” For instance, his commentary appears about a passage from the *Yili*:

百名以上書於策，不及百名書於方。

If a letter contains more than a hundred *ming*, it is written on bamboo tablets tied together; but if there are fewer than a hundred, it is written on a square board. (*Yili*, chap. 8, 聘禮)³⁰

In another instance, Zheng Xuan adds this comment about a passage from the *Zhouli* that mentions *shuming* 書名.³¹ The most controversial appearance of his formulaic comment about *ming* as *zi* appears in his discussion of *zhengming* 正名 (correction of names) in the *Lunyu*, where his point is that correcting names refers to rectifying the script system. These examples attest that, in saying “*ming* is now *zi*,” Zheng Xuan means that *zi* has replaced *ming* as meaning “a unit of writing,” not that *zi* has replaced *ming* as meaning “word.”

Zheng Xuan’s formulaic comment is reliable in its confirmation that *ming* did once function as graph, but it is less reliable about the scope of this usage (since he dates it as far back as the *Lunyu*).³² The rare extant examples of *ming* used in this way point to a more specific time frame around the end of the Warring States and probably before the Han.³³ The timing of this usage of *ming* raises perplexing questions for the interpretation of *ming* in early Chinese texts as meaning “word”—in the sense of an abstract unit that is “the same” across writing or speech. If, throughout early Chinese texts, an instance of *ming* meant something of that sort, we would have to believe that this usage disappeared by the second century, and the only comment we have on this drastic change in metalinguistic terminology comes from Zheng Xuan. If so, then what was at best a largely implicit use of *ming* was also poorly noted and temporary.

Patterns of Sound and Sight

Literary Chinese features patterns of parallel phrasing that often help determine how interpretation should proceed.³⁴ While the parallel style is impossible to miss, its significance for interpretation is sometimes less clear. The parallelism may appear to be a reflection of “reasonable” rules, the observance of which will produce coherent interpretations.³⁵ Certainly by the early medieval period, parallel style seems reasonable to the author of the *Wenxin diaolong*, who observes that both sides of a linguistic parallelism are necessary because all things that have limbs have them in pairs.³⁶ On the other hand, the habitual patterning may also be seen as a mindless tendency or the unthinking effects of something like a “linguistic unconscious.”³⁷ My argument is that *ming* is aural in this linguistic unconscious. Linguistic parallelism entails two

predictable requirements that affect *ming*: first, sound is contrasted with sight, and second, names are contrasted with a specific finite set of terms.

The contrast of sound and sight in early Chinese texts is evident in parallels of speech—which is audible, with action, which is visible.³⁸ In making this claim, I am taking the graph *yan* 言, often translated as “language,” to mean “speech.” In pre-Qin texts, metaphors of *yan*—coming out of the mouth, being emitted, being heard, and being listened to—all imply that *yan* is specifically speech. The *Xunzi* contrasts *yan* to action, as what is heard as opposed to what is seen.³⁹

It should be noted that in early Chinese texts, books are often referred to as speaking (*yue* 曰 and *yan* 言) and being heard (*wen* 聞). But the fact that the content of books is sometimes described as speech does not counter this understanding of *yan* as speech. It simply reflects that sayings were recorded and books were recited. While early Chinese mythology of the origin of writing does not depict writing as a record of speech, early Chinese texts were certainly aware of this use.

Historically, as early Chinese texts became more interested in the relationship between speech and writing, increasingly frequent contrasts between *yan* and writing occurred. Yang Xiong’s 揚雄 (53 B.C.E.–18 C.E.) *Fayan* explains the difference between speech and writing in these terms: “Speech is the sound of the heartmind and writings the paintings of the heartmind” (言、心聲也，書、心畫也).⁴⁰ The first century *Lunheng*, while extolling the power of speech over writing, specifies that what exits the mouth is *yan*, whereas written lines are literature.⁴¹ It also notes that *yan* is what is emitted by the mouth, while writing is what is established on bamboo strips.⁴² The fifth-century *Wenxin diaolong* says that what is emitted from the mouth is *yan*, while what belongs to the brush is literature.⁴³ Furthermore, it claims that the heartmind entrusts *sound* to *yan*, while *yan* entrusts *shape* to written graphs.⁴⁴ In the matching of sound and vision, the sound of *yan* is juxtaposed with the visibility of writing, as this brief historical sketch of contrasts between speech and writing testifies.

If early Chinese texts understand *yan* as meaning “speech” (rather than “language”), then there is much less reason to expect *ming* to be something other than aural. Examples in early Chinese texts often show *ming* substituting for *yan* and vice versa. Indeed sometimes the two appear together explicitly as things that are heard. For example, there is this passage from the *Han Feizi*:

夫以實(告)〔害〕我者，秦也，以名救我者，楚也。

聽楚之虛言而輕(誣)強秦之實禍，則危國之本也。

[The state of] Qin is harassing us in deed (*shi*), while Chu is rescuing us in name (*ming*). If we listen to Chu’s empty speech (*yan*) and make light of forceful Qin’s fulfilled (*shi*) calamity,⁴⁵ this is the root of endangering the state. (*Han Feizi*, chap. 10, 十過)

Thus, the *ming* of Chu, like its empty talk, is speech. And, as the *Xunzi* notes, speech is the aural contrast of visible action.⁴⁶ Substitutions of this sort that replace *ming* for *yan* indicate that, like *yan*, *ming* is aural.

The fact that *yan* is best interpreted as most often meaning “speech” is also important because, if there is a tendency to interpret early Chinese discussions about *ming* as being about a linguistic unit identifiable across writing and speech, it is

partly because it is far more likely for Western philosophy to have philosophical discussions about language, rather than just speech. But if *yan* is interpreted as “speech,” then these texts spend a great deal of time philosophizing about speech. So, too, they philosophize about names, which, I am arguing, they take to be units of meaningful sound, rather than a more abstract entity involved in both writing and speech.

Aural/Visual Patterns Involving Ming

As with *yan*, *ming* is consistently aural in different types of aural/visual patterns. This “aurality” of *ming* becomes particularly apparent once Han and post-Han texts begin to debate the respective values of writing and speech. It may seem odd to appeal to later texts to support a claim that *ming* functions as “meaningful sound” in an earlier period, so let me say something about why I think this is necessary. Taking into account the retrospection of Zheng Xuan’s claim that *ming* formerly meant “graph,” we can assume that its use does not include meaning “graph” in the second century, and perhaps earlier, since Zheng Xuan does not expect his readers to remember that it once had such a reading. This narrows the question of whether *ming* is used to mean “graph” to texts from the first century or earlier. The only clear examples of *ming* functioning as graph seem to date to around the late Warring States or Qin period. Nevertheless, those who are accustomed to thinking of “word” as an obvious concept, likely to be found in any culture’s metalinguistic framework, may be reluctant to grant the significance of *ming*’s almost exclusively aural usage. Hence, without a contrast to writing, the “aurality” of *ming* might not suffice to refute their argument that *ming* might be used in a way that implicitly includes writing even when speech is at issue. Unfortunately, as noted above, contemplation about glottic writing is a late development in Chinese history.⁴⁷ Therefore, my only recourse is to make the case that (a) aural/visual parallels involving *ming* in contrast to something visual are so stylistically and philosophically important that they appear regularly throughout the history of premodern Chinese texts, and (b) this undermines the plausibility of *ming* being conceived of as anything but aural in early Chinese texts.

Before turning to the contrasts of *ming* with writing, I will first describe the role of *ming* in earlier aural/visual contrasts. The fact that *ming* falls on the aural side of the contrast is hard to miss in cases like *ming* and *xing* 形 (form) or *ming* and *se* 色 (color), as in this passage from the *Lushi chunqiu*:

道也者，視之不見，聽之不聞，... 不可為形，不可為名，...

Of the *dao*, when we look for it, it is invisible, and when we listen for it, it is inaudible. . . .

[I]t cannot act as form (*xing* 形), it cannot act as *ming*. (*Lushi chunqiu*, chap. 5.2, 仲夏紀:大樂)

Although the perceptual modes are less apparent, *ming* is also regularly contrasted with visual items like *ti* 體 (body) and *shen* 身 (body-person), as in this passage from the *Guanzi*:

發於名聲，凝於體色，此其可諭者也。

What issues in *ming* and sound, what congeals in body (*ti* 體) and color, is what can be proclaimed about. (*Guanzi*, chap. 13.3, 白心第三十八)⁴⁸

Or in this, also from the *Lushi chungiu*:

名不可得而聞，身不可得而見

[His] *ming* could not be heard and [his] body (*shen* 身) could not be seen. (*Lushi chungiu*, chap. 10.4, 孟冬紀: 異寶)⁴⁹

Although the “external” chapters of the *Zhuangzi* may date to as late as the Han, the following passage directly lays out the perceptual contrast:

故視而可見者，形與色也；聽而可聞者，名與聲也。

What can be seen from looking is form and color. What can be heard by listening is *ming* and sound. (*Zhuangzi*, chap. 13, 天道)

Similar contrasts of sound and *shi* 實 confirm that when *ming* and *shi* are paired, *ming* is auditory. For instance, the *Guanzi* says:

嚴威不能振，惠厚不能供，聲實有間也。

If severity and awesome power are not capable of terrifying him, and kindness and generosity are not capable of fulfilling their needs, there will be a gulf between the ruler's sound and *shi* 實. (*Guanzi*, chap. 10.5, 君臣上)⁵⁰

Even more importantly, both the *Lushi chungiu* and the *Guanzi* align *ming* with sound while contrasting them to *shi*, making the aural/visual pattern explicit. The *Lushi chungiu* says:

是刑名異充而聲實異謂也

This is an example of form and *ming* being fulfilled differently, and of sound and *shi* 實 being called differently. (*Lushi chungiu*, chap. 18.8, 正名)。

The *Guanzi* includes this contrast of aural *ming* to *shi*:

中無情實則名聲惡矣

But if within there are no feelings or *shi*, his *ming* and sound will be bad. (*Guanzi*, chap. 20.1, 形勢解)。

Thus, the auality of *ming* is apparent both from its contrasts to visual things and from its alignment with sound in such contrasts.

These contrasts involving *ming* with visual counterparts belong to a sensory world of early China that divides perception into two main components: seeing and hearing. Later, in the third century, something similar is apparent in Wang Bi's 王弼 (226–249) commentary on the *Laozi*, as Wang Baoxuan interprets it.⁵¹ Analyzing Wang Bi's use of the pair of terms *ming* 名 and *li* 理, Wang Baoxuan sets up a series of parallels in which *ming* aligns with speech (*yan* 言). Without specifying that these two are aural, the arrangement of Wang Baoxuan's patterns implies that both terms contrast to visual items. He notices parallel relations between one set of terms that

apply to the sage (intentions, figure, and speech—*yi* 意, *xiang* 象, *yan* 言) and another set that apply to the universe (patterns, form, and name—*li* 理, *xing* 形, *ming* 名). According to Wang Baoxuan, the intentions (*yi* 意) of the sage are not visible or audible for Wang Bi, but they *can* be manifest in visual figures (*xiang* 象) and audible speech (*yan* 言). So, too, the patterns (*li* 理)—or perhaps “principles”—of the universe are not visible or audible, but they can emerge as forms (*xing* 形) and names (*ming* 名).⁵² Wang Baoxuan indicates places where Wang Bi asserts that speech (*yan* 言) is generated by figures (*xiang* 象), which he aligns with similar claims that names (*ming* 名) are generated by forms (*xing* 形). He also notes that Wang Bi credits speech with clarifying figures (*xiang* 象) in the same way that he credits names with determining forms (*xing* 形). Thus Wang Baoxuan identifies a scheme in Wang Bi’s text according to which (aural) speech and names are generated by, but also determine, (visual) figures and forms.⁵³

While confirming Wang Baoxuan’s sense that *ming* 名 and *xing* 形 constitute the basis of Wang Bi’s view of the world, Rudolf Wagner makes the aural and visual aspects of this contrast explicit. Wagner says that for Wang Bi, “the ten thousand entities are subdivided into two subcategories, each defined in its particularity by either shape (*xing* 形) or name (*ming* 名), which Wagner identifies as “great realms of entities”—with visual on the one hand (including *xing* 形 and *xiang* 象 images) and aural on the other (including *ming* 名 and *sheng* 聲 sound).⁵⁴ In this schema, writing seems to be located on the visual side, insofar as *xiang* 象 are the images in the *Xici*. Moreover, Wang Bi’s aural and visual realms are arguably related to a particular perception in the Zhengshi period (240–249) about the difference between speech and written texts.⁵⁵ Thus, although Wagner does not elaborate on this, in the contrast of aural/visual realms, writing and speech fall on opposing sides.

A debate about speech and the sages’ intent, also from the third century, repeats this emphasis on the aural nature of *ming*. Ouyang Jian’s 歐陽建 (d. 300) “Treatise on Speech Exhausting Intent” omits the former half of the controversy—whether writing exhausts speech (書不盡言)—and focuses on the capabilities of meaningful sound. The treatise affirms the efficacy of speaking, and in the process incorporates *ming* into its defense of speech. It responds to the following proposition attacking speech:

夫天不言。而四時行焉。聖人不言。而鑒識存焉。形不待名。而方圓已著。色不俟稱。而黑白以彰。

Heaven does not speak, yet the four seasons process in it. The sages do not speak, yet their “mirror knowledge” persists in them. Forms do not await being named (*ming*), yet squares and circles appear. Colors do not await being called, yet black and white are manifest. (*Yanjin yilun*, 全晉文論 卷一百零九)

The parallel form of the proposition includes three aural processes in contrast to three visual phenomena that do not depend on them. That is, speaking, naming, and calling are not required. Without a sound, sages still recognize things, as in a mirror. Forms still produce squares and circles. And colors still produce black and white. In response to this attack on meaningful sound, Ouyang’s defense credits speech with distinction making, and then attributes the same function to *ming*. He says, “If

it were not for speech there would not be distinctions” (非言不辯), and “if it were not for names distinguishing things, then mirror knowledge would not be manifest” (名不辯物 則鑒識不顯). Both in its formulation of the problem and in its reply, Ouyang Jian’s aural/visual parallels categorize *ming* as sound.

This habit of contrasting the sound of names with something visual is so entrenched that it is still apparent in Dai Tong’s 戴侗 thirteenth-century *Liushugu* 六書故, which tells a story of the origins of speech and writing. Although from a much later date, the story is pertinent not only because it shows the continued insistence on *ming* as aural, but also because it makes an indisputable distinction between *ming* and writing. In this story the first human cries are followed by *ming*. Writing subsequently appears as an accompaniment to *ming*.⁵⁶ The story also mentions an aural/visual aspect within writing itself, described as a *yin/yang* relation between sound and sight.⁵⁷ In another such contrast, when the *Liushugu* explains the task of a lexicon, it juxtaposes *ming* with *zi*, saying:

以名而求諸書固常不盡。以字而求其物又多不得。

For every *ming*, [the task of] seeking to write it down would certainly be endless. For every *zi*, [the task of] seeking the thing [the *wu*-to which it refers] is also too much for success. (*Liushugu*, vol. 1:15)

Thus the task at hand presents unique difficulties with regard to *ming* on the one hand and *zi* on the other. Since the function of *zi* here is reference, it is hard to imagine what else *ming* could be doing other than indicating sound.⁵⁸ Indeed, the fact that Dai Tong takes for granted that he knows how to pronounce *ming*, but not how to write them, also implies that *ming* are already spoken.⁵⁹ Thus, this is an aural/visual contrast of *ming/zi*, in which Dai Tong does not know how to write speech variants from other districts, and does not know the referents for some of their graphic variants. In sum, in a pattern that extends from the pre-Qin period through to the Song, *ming* appears consistently aural in ever recurring aural/visual contrasts.

Language/Reality

Thus far, I have argued that there are aural/visual patterns that map onto *ming* and its correlative terms, suggesting that *ming* is aural. Here I will consider a possible counterargument related to standard understandings of the binary *ming* 名 / *shi* 實. Because the contrast between *ming* and *shi* is still often understood as marking a distinction between “words/language” on the one hand and “objects/reality” on the other, these uses of *ming* might appear to break with its aural role in aural/visual patterns. Although early Chinese texts do indicate that *shi* is visual, the significance of this visuality for the meaning of *shi* has been overshadowed by the more familiar idea that *shi* means “reality” (or “actuality,” “objects,” or even “stuff”—with the presumption that these are more real than whatever contrasts with them).⁶⁰ It is not surprising that scholarship that proceeds with this pair translated as “*ming* and reality” ends up reinforcing the supposed obviousness of the concept “word.” Scholars looking for a translation for a linguistic unit that supposedly matches with “reality” might be

inclined to adjust their translation from “names” to “word.” After all, “word” is the broader term of the two. This would then map quite nicely onto a familiar theory of language in which words correlate with things that can be called “reality” (on the assumption that, even granting the performative nature of language, things still seem more real than words).⁶¹ In this way, insofar as they seem to conform to a well-known theory of language, *ming/shi* pairs might appear to be a significant challenge to my argument.

Furthermore, when understood as “words and reality,” the *ming/shi* pair can evoke a culture/nature dichotomy that often underwrites language/reality dualisms, which is another reason why standard readings of *ming/shi* are potentially damaging to my argument. This makes language/reality a compelling interpretation of the pair, if one believes there is reason to expect the appearance of a nature/culture dichotomy in early Chinese texts.⁶² Even binaries posed explicitly in aural/visual terms can easily seem like nature/culture contrasts. For example, in the aural/visual binary pattern that Wagner identifies in Wang Bi’s reading of the *Laozi*, he outlines the following binary scheme. On the aural side, he sees “social processes”: social renown, social status, and honoring worthies. On the visual side, he sees “material entities”: material goods, physical survival, and goods that are hard to come by.⁶³ With social and material as the category titles, there are grounds for inferring (correctly or incorrectly) that Wagner is pointing out a social/natural (and perhaps language/reality) binary in Wang Bi’s commentary.

But the reason this may be an incorrect inference is precisely that Wagner argues that both sides of the binary ultimately point to two different perceptual modes.⁶⁴ He describes *xing* and *ming* in the final stage of Wang Bi’s system as “abstract categories” for two kinds of entities that are “linked” to the “instruments of perception.”⁶⁵ Moreover, if speech and writing are contrasted, then they fall on different sides of Wang Bi’s aural/visual divide. In other words, it is not the case that “language” (meaning both speech and writing), as a cultural phenomenon, would contrast with nature or reality. Furthermore, if writing belongs on the side of visibility, *and* if there is a nature/culture divide, then Wang Bi’s position would have to be that vision and writing are natural, while sound and speech are not—a view that seems implausible in light of Chinese mythology about the cosmic origins of music.⁶⁶

In addition to the implications of these aural/visual polarities from the early medieval period, there are many hints that early Chinese texts do not treat *ming* as language in contrast to reality.⁶⁷ That understanding of *ming* and *shi* is most jarringly at odds with the technical uses of these terms in mathematical texts, where *shi* functions as a “dividend,” while *ming* seems to mean something like a “modification.”⁶⁸ If we understand *shi* as corresponding broadly to a visual scope of things, in juxtaposition to the aural, this may explain *both* why there are passages where it seems *shi* cannot mean “reality” *and* why its use is often compatible with understanding it as bearing a greater aura of “realness.”

The fact that *xing/ming* (形名 form/name) sometimes seems a lot like *ming/shi* reinforces the suspicion that aural/visual categories make better sense of what is going on with *ming/shi*. For instance, the early medical texts, the *Lingshujing* and the *Nan-*

jing 難經, both describe things that have *ming* but do not possess *xing*. That is, the *Lingshujing* asserts that *yin* and *yang* have *ming* but lack *xing*, unlike the predictably sequential four seasons and five phases. It then implies that this is because *yin* and *yang* can be enumerated and distributed in multiple ways.⁶⁹ If we were to ignore the usual visual connotations of *xing*, we might try to make sense of this by saying that it is about the “signifiers” (*ming*?) of *yin* and *yang* lacking fixed “signifieds.” But “signified” is an unlikely use of *xing*. (If any graph would be used in this sense in the first century B.C.E., *yi* 義 is more plausible.)⁷⁰ Alternatively, one might say that the passage is about “signs” (*ming*?) lacking concrete referents. But *ming* is not the subject of the sentence, which is to be expected since this is a medical text, not a linguistic text. The thing that lacks form is not the name of *yin*, but *yin* itself. Thus the *Lingshujing* seems to be saying that *yin* and *yang* lack *xing*, in the sense that they can take a multitude of visual forms depending on the context. The case in the *Nanjing* makes a similar claim about the twelve *jing*—the channels of the pulse—one of which is a combination of things that have names but no form.⁷¹ However “lacking form” may be interpreted, the passage does not say the channel of the pulse is not “real.” This channel still counts as one of the twelve *jing*, which suggests that *ming* alone is sufficient for something to possess reality. In light of habitual *xingming* visual/aural contrasts, it is hard to ignore that *xing* in these instances of *xingming* also could mean visual form. The implication is that most things—unlike *yin* and *yang*—have both *ming* and form. Although it may seem like a matter of matching language and reality, pairing *xing* and *ming* is better understood as matching the visual with the aural.

These examples from obscure contexts form a binary system not very different from what Wagner identifies as Wang Bi’s apprehension of the world: on the one hand, the aural, and on the other, the visual. These are not nature/culture binaries, nor do they undergird a language/reality binary. On the contrary, what we have is one rule of perceptual and aesthetic parallelism (sound contrasts with sight) combined with another (names contrast with a limited set of terms). Together they culminate in the requirement that names, which are aural, contrast with a finite set of visual counterparts.

Ming and Sound

First- and second-century Chinese lexicography on *ming* confirms a significant association of names with sound. The gloss of the graph *ming* 名 in the *Shuowen jiezi* begins with *ming* 命 (ordain) and adds, “When it is dark (*ming* 冥) and one cannot see one another, one names (*ming*) oneself by word of mouth” (冥不相見，故以口自名).⁷² While the *Shuowen* employs a good deal of these punning glosses, a century later the *Shiming* takes paronomastic features one step further. The *Shiming*, whose preface asserts its aim of “correcting names,” simply explains each name via a pun apparently intended to clarify its meaning. In the case of *ming* 名, for instance, it says *ming* 名 is *ming* 明 (bright). Thus, the *Shiming* achieves its stated aim of correcting names by relying on sound to determine meaning. Elaborating on this early lexicography of *ming* 名 as bright, Peter Boodberg emphasizes the crescent

moon, suggesting that early Chinese graphosemanticists must have associated the “crescent” on the left side of *ming* 名 with the one on the right side of the graph *ming* 明 (bright):

Paronomastically, *ming*, “name,” is equated with *ming* 明 <*mjang*, “bright,” “made clear or distinct,” with *ming* 命 *mjang*, “fate,” “decree” (graphically “mouth” + “command”), and with *ming* 鳴 <*mjeng*, “to call, as a bird or other creature” (graphically: “mouth” + “bird”). The first equation suggests that some ancient Chinese graphosemanticists thought of the ‘crescent’ element in the graph for “name” as reminiscent of the “*ming*-crescent” of the dextral part of the graph *ming*, “bright,” rather than being equivalent to the *hsi*-crescent. The “mouth” element in “decree” and “to call” points to the possibility that there existed in the oldest form of Chinese writing a mouth element which was not phonosemantically related to a *k’u* ‘mouth’, ‘opening’, but was read *ming* and meant perhaps “call,” “to call,” and that the “*ming*-mouth” graph served as etymonic in the three graphs: 名 *ming*, “name,” i.e. “name-call”; 鳴 *ming*, “bird-call”; and 命 *ming* “hight-call,” “fate-call,” “call of destiny.”⁷³

For my purposes, what is interesting in Boodberg’s reading is the implication that these lexicons treat *ming* as oral/aural.⁷⁴ The thirteenth-century *Liushugu* does the same, using evidence from its reading of a pre-Han text. In its gloss of *ming*, commenting on the moon element of the graph, it cites a passage in the *Zhouli* about using names during warfare. It notes that banners and pennants are not visible enough to distinguish in the dead of night during battle, hence *ming* are used.⁷⁵ This suggests that *ming* (name) is *ming* (bright), not because *ming* is visually perceived, but precisely because, in the absence of sight, *ming*, as sound, manages to clarify.

Metaphors in early Chinese texts follow this tendency to present names as aural. Often described as sonorous (*sheng* 聲), *ming* in early Chinese texts functions primarily to mean “personal name” or “fame” (aural, in the sense that a reputation is generally presented as heard). *Ming* is deployed in metaphors of sounds and echoes. In addition to innumerable references to hearing names, there are even references to listening to names.⁷⁶ Notably, one can hear and listen to names directly (*wenming* 聞名 and *tingming* 聽名).⁷⁷ The phrasing does not emphasize the medium of speech required for hearing or listening to names because the names are already oral/aural.

By contrast, when the phrase *shuming* 書名 occurs, it does not seem to mean that names are visible, but rather that a name, which is sound, is visible once it is written down. *Shuming* can be read as verbal (“to write a *ming*”) or nominal (“written *ming*”). For instance, it may mean “written name” in a passage from the *Zhouli*, where a traveling official goes out to various parts of the kingdom in different years, making sure things are in order:

七歲屬象胥，喻言語，計辭令；九歲屬瞽史，諭書名，聽音聲。

In the seventh year, he [the traveling official] assembles interpreters to become familiar with spoken conversation [or “speech and conversation”] to reckon phrased commands [or “phrasing and commands”]. In the ninth month, he assembles blind musicians and recorders to proclaim [?] written names [or “scripts/books and names”] to listen to tonal sounds [or “tones and sounds”]. (*Zhouli*, chap. 5.52, 秋官司寇)⁷⁸

This appears to be a seventh-month assessment of speech followed by a ninth-month assessment of books. But the ninth month's task (devoted to books) is also an aural process. It specifically involves listening to sound and also calls for inviting in blind people (who cannot possibly see the graphs). Presumably, the blind musicians, who have memorized the books, produce the tones and sounds, while scribes have the job of looking at the graphs and recording them.⁷⁹ But even if "written names" is the best translation of this phrase, sound is crucial to the process. Moreover, other passages that mention seeing names (on a register) or seeing a name (on a coffin) emphasize the medium, insofar as we are made aware that the name has been written *on something*.⁸⁰ As a result, there is a sense that the *shu* (write) added to *ming* implies that *ming* are not, in and of themselves, written. By contrast, while *shuming* as "written names" may be rare, there are no nominal examples of *yanming* "spoken *ming*." Hence, the rare cases of *shuming* as written names could suggest that a *ming*, when written, becomes something else, "a written *ming*"; whereas when spoken, a name remains what it is: "a *ming*." In other words, *ming* is directly audible, but *ming* is only visible once a graph for the sound is written on something.

Comparison with other terminology might help clarify this point. In addition to writing *ming*, one can also write merit (*shuxun* 書勳) and write gifts (*shufu* 書服), et cetera.⁸¹ Just as texts say that personal names can be seen once they are written, so, too, they say surnames (*xing* 姓) and appellations (*hao* 號) can be seen in these conditions.⁸² Han stelae contain patterns of speech being erected (*li yan* 立言) and names being recorded (*zai ming* 載名).⁸³ All this suggests that the mere fact that *ming* can be written down does not suffice to prove that the term *ming* itself is used to mean "word" or regularly functions as meaning "graph." After all, the terms *xun*, *fu*, *xing*, *hao*, and *yan* are not thought to function as meaning "writing" even though they, too, can be inscribed and made visible.

Music

If *ming/shi* does not conform to the contrast of language versus reality, and *ming* are not surrogates for "real" or "actual" things, then how do early Chinese texts conceive of the relationship between speech and writing? Returning to the discussion of mythology, it appears that they belong to parallel and contrastable media of sound and sight.

In some cases, the mythology contrasts writing with music. According to Ron Egan, pre-Han theories about the natural origins of music are "largely undeveloped" relative to their theories about writing, but he maintains that early Chinese texts discuss music analogously to writing through tropes of nature that point to cosmic origins.⁸⁴ Looking, then, at later texts, there are expectations of parallelism regarding the aural origins of music and the visual origins of writing. For instance, crediting the origin of writing and music to different sages, the second-century *Zhonglun* says that one sage *heard* the cries of birds (*ming* 鳴) and created music, while another *saw* the tracks of birds and made writing.⁸⁵ While not mythology, Cao Cao's third century commentary on the *Sunzi* explains the phrase *xingming* (形名) in a striking link of

ming to music. It says that *xing* 形 refers to “flags and banners” while *ming* 名 refers to “bells/gongs and drums.”⁸⁶ If Cao Cao’s gloss is not anachronistic, then the *Sunzi*’s usage is an aural/visual parallel.

Indeed, the creation of nomenclature plays a part in stories about the origin of music. The (first-century?) *Baihu tongyi* and the *Lunheng* invoke ideas about surnames being rooted in music. In answer to a query about why there are one hundred surnames, the *Baihu tongyi* explains that the ancient sages determined the clan *xing* by blowing them out on musical pitch pipes:

以為古者聖人吹律定姓，以記其族。人含五常而生，〔正〕聲有五音，宮、商、角、徵、羽，轉而相雜，五五二十五，轉生四時。故百而異也。

In the past, the sages fixed the clan names by blowing the musical pitch pipes, and thereby registered their kindred. Humans are born with five constants. Sound has five tones: *kung*, *shang*, *jue*, *zhi*, and *yu*, which turn and are assorted together (five times five making twenty-five), which turn, giving birth to the four seasons. Thus, there are a hundred different ones. (*Baihu tongyi*, chap. 33, 姓名)⁸⁷

While not invoking the ancients, the *Lunheng* references a similar phenomenon, in this case accounting for *ming* as well as surnames.⁸⁸ The *Lunheng* reports:

五音之家，用口調姓名及字，用姓定其名，用名正其字。口有張歛，聲有外內，以定五音宮商之實。

The experts of the five tones use their mouths to articulate the surnames, personal names, and styles, using the surname to fix the personal name, and the personal name to determine the style. With the mouth’s opening and closing, their sound produces outwardly and inwardly, thereby fixing the *shi* of the five tones, *kung* and *shang*. (*Lunheng*, chap. 74, 詰術)⁸⁹

The *Guoyu* also mentions an officer harmonizing people’s surnames.⁹⁰ Even Confucius himself may have had some expertise in piping surnames. In Kenneth DeWoskin’s translation, a passage from the *Lunheng* reads: “Confucius blew the pipes, and he thereby came to know that he was a descendant of the house of Yin.”⁹¹

In light of these stories about the musical aspects of names, it is important to consider the implications for ideas about the origins of speech. No ancient sage is credited with the origin of *yan* 言 per se, but Huang Di, the sage who is said to have “corrected names” (*Shiji* and *Lunheng*) is also credited with producing *de* 德 tones (*Yantielun*).⁹² Kui is credited with the origin of music in the *Shujing* and in Xi Kang’s “Music Has in It neither Grief nor Joy.” Sages are held responsible for the invention of dance, plant cultivation, chariots, ceramic vessels, city walls, bows and arrows, the calendrical system, clothes, alcohol, and writing.⁹³ So either speech itself is not important enough to attribute to a sage or, more likely, the origin of speech is blended into passages about the inventions of tones and names. Although our evidence of the myths on the origin of music comes from relatively late periods, nothing in earlier texts suggests a different conception of how speech originates. Hence, the mythology that explains the origin of names in music also seems to give speech a cosmic pedigree that is parallel to, but separate from, that of writing.

Conclusion

If *ming* is an aural component in aural/visual parallels, then the Chinese literati would have seen it as an unsuitable candidate for “graph” during the threat of desemanticization, described by William Boltz.⁹⁴ While much of Boltz’ work analyzes actual developments of writing in early China, the following comments will focus on the implications of his research for early Chinese conceptions of speech and writing.

Boltz’ argument about what was taking place in the Chinese script prior to the reforms compares received versions of texts with excavated manuscripts recovered from Mawangdui tombs. From his study of the Mawangdui texts’ graphic variants, Boltz concludes that around 200 B.C.E., a number of graphs were being used mainly for their phonetic value. In other words, single graphs were being utilized to write several “different but phonetically similar words.”⁹⁵ People were beginning to write words based on phonetic considerations rather than semantic ones. Boltz posits that a long-standing balance in the Chinese writing system between the paronomastic use of graphs and the use of graphic determinatives was tipping in this period. Although Boltz does not present this as an aural/visual contrast, the paronomastic uses were dependent on sound, while the graphic determinatives were dependent on sight. Hence, in relation to this argument, one might say the balance between representing sound alone versus using visual classifiers to indicate meaning was leaning toward sound.

For my purposes, Boltz’ theory highlights a historical period marked by a *perceived* need to maintain balance between sound and sight in the writing system. The story of the arrested development of desemanticization that Boltz describes seems a likely frame to account for the gradual emergence of *zi* as the uniform term for “graph.” According to Boltz, paronomasia expanded before the end of the third century B.C.E. (In my terms, sound gained the upper hand, so to speak.) Experiments with the use of *ming* as “graph” probably date from around that time, perhaps as part of the effort to create the terminology necessary for discussing the need for order in the graphic system. The first use of *zi* as “graph” seems to occur in the first century B.C.E., well after the script reforms were underway, while *wen* 文 was also being used to mean “graph.” But by the end of the first century of the Common Era, the standardization of the script was complete. (“Balance” was restored. Or perhaps things were now tipped toward the visual, depending on how you look at it.) At the same time, *zi* was firmly established as the term for a unit of writing.⁹⁶ The use of *ming* as “graph” was so much a thing of the past by the time Zheng Xuan wrote in the second century that readers needed to be told that it was ever used in that way. If my theory that *ming* was considered inherently aural is correct, then it makes sense that the experiments with adopting *ming* to mean “graph” would fail. With balance as a high priority, adapting an aural term for a visual context would surely only appear to exacerbate an already disturbing incursion of sound into visual territory.

But there is one aspect of the narrative of desemanticization from which I would like to distance my argument: the suggestion of an (albeit averted) evolutionary trajectory. In one sense, Boltz’ hypothesis could not be further from the controversial

theory of Jacques Gernet, discussed by Derrida in *Of Grammatology*. For Boltz, writing, by definition, is linked to speech. There is no question of Chinese graphs being “in principle” not corruptible by phonetic influence as a result of being singular symbols of an equally unique reality. But on the other point of controversy—the evolutionary theory of writing—Boltz’ position is not unlike that of Gernet. He describes a trend toward desemanticization that is “natural enough in a strictly evolutionary sense.”⁹⁷ Thus, in answer to Derrida’s question about whether speech must be the sun whose “eclipse” by writing is a divergence from the natural course of things, it seems that only a “conscious and conscientious standardization and regularization” permits Chinese writing’s escape.⁹⁸ On this point, Boltz’ answer (if not his reason for it) is like Gernet’s.

My account of aural/visual balance constitutes another approach to answering Derrida’s question. In Boltz’ discussion of the reasons why early Chinese literati wanted to avoid the impending desemanticization, he notices that scholars in the third century B.C.E. would be motivated by a desire for aural/visual balance—what Boodberg calls “appropriateness . . . of graph and sound.”⁹⁹ However, Boltz also suggests that the literati perceived “graphs as visual . . . representations of words.”¹⁰⁰ This view that Chinese scholars of circa 200 B.C.E. operated with a concept of “[spoken] words” whose relationship to writing was characterized as “representation” is consistent with the belief in the evolutionary trajectory of writing, according to which linguistic sound grows increasingly central, and writing can only “eclipse” sound’s dominance by means of a deviation from the natural telos.

By contrast, what I have attempted to do here is posit a reason for why the Chinese literati rejected the trend toward desemanticization without also positing a natural trajectory for writing. In the absence of that trajectory’s presumption of the ever-increasing centrality of sound, it is easier to make a case that the literati’s reflections on “language” in this time period, while very much interested in names, did not involve a concept of “word,” and did not present graphs primarily as the representation of speech (although, of course, they were aware of their use to record speech). Instead, their “linguistic” concerns were about balancing a variety of audible items (*sheng* 聲, *ming* 名, *yan* 言, *hao* 號, et cetera) with a number of visible entities (*wen* 文, *zi* 字, *xing* 形, *xiang* 象, et cetera).

This balance constitutes a partial answer to the question about whether “the relationship of shadow and light, of writing and speech . . . itself [might] appear in a different way.” To take the perspective that, for Chinese writers in the third century B.C.E., (aural) speech was “the sun” in relation to (visual) writing would be to view the situation with aural/visual categories that the texts do not emphasize, and therefore to overlook the aural/visual categories that the texts do highlight: the prescription that (aural) speech be balanced by (visual) action (*xing* 行 and *shi* 實).¹⁰¹ Hence, the general requirement for aural/visual balance suggests that there *might have been* a kind of difference in early China (although the ideas involved may be too specific to early Chinese texts to be interesting to postmodern theory).¹⁰² The fact that writing and speech are subsumed into balanced aural/visual contrasts means, metaphorically speaking, that there are echoes and shadows, not a disruptive moon shadowing

the sun. Moreover, the patterns for speech/writing do not correspond to the binaries Derrida highlights in the Western episteme. This is most clear in the case of the “language/reality” binary, which cannot be of central importance insofar as the need for a balance *within* perception has prominence. In other words, while language/reality seems to map nicely onto writing/speech in the traditional Western episteme, it does not map neatly onto hearing and seeing since neither perceptual mode seems any less real. As a result, the language/reality binary is not always lurking in the background. The rules of the pattern are still a “textual strategy,” but at least they look a little different.

For the goal of assessing logocentrism in early Chinese texts, the difference in rules is relevant. In the derivation of logocentrism from phonocentrism, the idea of a pure truth outside language is patterned on a view of inner speech as more “present” than speech, and speech as more present than writing. That is, the certainty of truth is modeled on the sensation of hearing one’s own inner monologue. But perhaps alphabetical writing, with its emphatic attachment to sound, reinforces a specific interpretation of that inner voice. Working backwards from alphabetic writing casts internal sound in a particular light—as the most interior, and least derivative, of three levels of vocalization. Perhaps as a result, the opposition of “language” (alphabetic writing and audible speech) to inner sound also fosters hearing that interior sound *as articulate*. In other words, what is heard silently in the mind is not just an inner voice or inner sound, but an inner *speech* that is superior to both spoken and written speech.

By contrast, in a context where writing and speech were not thought of as forming the category “language,” the sounds of the heartmind themselves appear differently. Thus, diagnosing logocentrism in early Chinese texts seems to raise questions about the nature of its phonocentrism as well. Is it significant that, in early Chinese valorizations of sound, it is the perceptual mode of music (not speech) that seems to matter? As Saussy suggests in his analysis of the opening line of the *Shijing*, the undeniable importance of sound is apparent in the text’s tactic for justifying the value of poetry: borrowing the “Yueji’s” comments about “voice” and substituting the graph for “speech.” Indeed, as Saussy notes, it is as if the text implies that “the relationship of ‘speech’ to ‘sound’ is one of lesser to greater.”¹⁰³ Does this mean that the experience of hearing oneself emit (musical?) cries or exclamations is more revealing of the subject’s sense of “presence to the self” than hearing oneself produce speech *per se*?¹⁰⁴

This argument lays preliminary groundwork for discussing whether there is logocentrism in early Chinese texts in general, or in some particular early Chinese text or “school of thought.” First, any attempt to reconstruct attitudes toward “language” in early China must note the importance of sound and consider whether it is justified, in any particular context, to interpret a *ming* as a “word.” Second, interpretations of apparent denigrations of writing in early Chinese texts must consider the context of the reliability of the visual before presuming logocentrism. Incorporating an awareness of these issues into interpretations of “early Chinese philosophy of language” calls for rethinking the equations from the Western philosophical episteme: speech/

presence/reality versus writing/absence/appearance. In this sense “Chinese writing” may, as Derrida speculates, cause the Western episteme to vacillate, if only in the sense of indicating a possibility of thinking in different ways about “language.”

Notes

I would like to thank the two anonymous readers for their comments. The research for this article was funded by generous grants from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation.

1 – Linguists debate various ways to define “word” (which include, among other things, a morphological object, a syntactic atom, a listeme, and a phonological unit), but the differences in these definitions are not relevant to the aspect of the use of “word” that is at issue in this argument: that is, “word” as encompassing a unit of both speech and writing.

2 – There are difficulties in defining the word “word” as it applies currently or historically to the Chinese language (not to mention even greater difficulties in applying the term to notions about “language” in early Chinese texts). As William Baxter and Laurent Sagart point out, some concepts of “word” match certain characteristics of Chinese words, but “none coincides with it exactly” (William Baxter and Laurent Sagart, “Word Formation in Old Chinese,” in *New Approaches to Chinese Word Formation: Morphology, Phonology and the Lexicon in Modern and Ancient Chinese*, ed. Jerome L. Packard [New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998], p. 39).

While not of the opinion that words are phonological units, William Boltz comes close to allowing that a word of premodern Chinese might be considered the smallest meaningful *sound* in the language. According to Boltz, given the “characteristically monosyllabic and isolating structure” of premodern Chinese, “it is not misleading to speak of Chinese morphemes as tantamount to words, and to think of the word itself as the smallest entity of the language that has both a sound and a meaning” (William Boltz, “The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System” in *American Oriental Series* [New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994], vol. 78, p. 18). But when it comes to the question of the conception of a “word” in the perspective of the writers of early Chinese texts, Boltz takes *ming* 名 to mean “word” in the sense that includes “graph.” Citing the Han commentator Zheng Xuan, he writes that *ming* “is used meaning ‘word’ of either the spoken or written language with equal force” (ibid., p. 138).

3 – My focus is on texts dating from approximately the fifth century B.C.E. to the first century, but my use of the term “early China” can extend to the end of the Han. My aim is to make a point about something that occurs around the late Warring States, Qin, and early Han, but this is not always possible in light of the difficulty of accurately dating individual passages from these texts. When

necessary, I use later texts to make points about things about which my earlier evidence is silent, which I signal by noting probable dates for the texts.

Unless otherwise noted, all chapter numbers for Chinese texts in the original are according to the Chinese University of Hong Kong Chinese Ancient Texts "CHANT" database. Unidentified translations are my own.

- 4 – Whether Chinese writing developed entirely in isolation from other writing systems is an unresolved question. Francoise Bottero might be correct in her suggestion that “the hypothesis of an independent invention of writing in China is difficult to sustain,” and it seems that “the *idea* of writing is likely . . . to have come from the West” (Francoise Bottero, “Writing on Shell and Bone in Shang China,” in *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process*, ed. Stephen Huston [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], pp. 250–261, at pp. 258–259). But for my purposes what matters is that early Chinese texts make no reference to borrowing this idea. Before the transmission of Buddhist scriptures, if the authors of early Chinese texts were aware of a script other than Chinese, it was certainly not their habit to acknowledge it.
- 5 – The case for reading the comment as ironic is that it introduces the quote from Jacques Gernet (Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974], pp. 90–91). I take the aim of Derrida’s grammatology to be to “dislocat[e], through access to another system linking speech and writing, the founding categories of language and the grammar of the *episteme*” (ibid., p. 92). Lest Derrida’s project be read too uncharitably, this “hallucination” is not uncalculated, as John Cayley and Yang Lian point out. Attending to the context of Derrida’s claim, they argue that a grammatology depends on “transcultural, translinguistic engagements between distinct systems of inscription,” not the actual existence of a system outside all logocentrism. “The Chinese system of written inscription is . . . simply the most spectacular example of a tenable dislocation from ‘our’ position in relation to the Word, the Logos, ‘the mouth, the sun that is god’s mouth’” (John Cayley and Yang Lian, “Hallucination and Coherence,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 10 [3] [2002]: 773–784; see esp. pp. 775–776).

For more reactions to Derrida’s comments, see Arnd Bohm, Henry Staten, and Rey Chow, “Derrida and Chinese Writing,” *PMLA* 116 (2001): 657–660. Other scholarship involving Derrida and Chinese philosophy more broadly includes Robert Shepherd, “Perpetual Unease or Being at Ease—Derrida, Daoism, and the ‘Metaphysics of Presence,’” *Philosophy East and West* 57 (2) (2007): 227–243; Wang Youru, *Linguistic Strategies in Daoist Zhuangzi and Chan Buddhism: The Other Way of Speaking* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Timothy J. Nulty, “A Critical Response to Zhang Longxi,” *Asian Philosophy* 12 (2) (2002): 141–146; Wayne D. Ownes, “Tao and Differance: The Existential Implications,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 20 (2) (1993): 261–277; Chien Chi-Hui, “Theft’s Way: A Comparative Study of Chuang Tzu’s Tao and

Derridean Trace," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 17 (1) (1990): 31–49; James J. Y. Liu, *Language, Paradox, Poetics: A Chinese Perspective*, ed. Richard John Lynn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Chang Han-liang, "Hallucinating the Other: Derridean Fantasies of Chinese Script" (Working Paper #4, Center for Twentieth Century Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Fall 1988), pp. 1–15; and Michelle Yeh, "The Deconstructive Way: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Chuang Tzu," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 10 (2) (1983): 95–126.

- 6 – Although his reasons are different from mine, Haun Saussy also argues that studies of early China are not sufficiently engaged with deconstruction (Haun Saussy, "Outside the Parenthesis [Those People Were a Kind of Solution]," *Modern Language Notes* 115 [2000]: 849–891). Sinological scholarship that may seem engaged with deconstruction often either has no commitment to it, or, as Saussy suggests, fails to achieve it. But in terms of philosophical studies of early China, the former predominates. As Saussy notes, A. C. Graham's denial of logocentrism in early China is hardly a genuine engagement with deconstruction, and there is little reason to think Graham would have disagreed. Moreover, although David Hall and Roger Ames' hermeneutically informed pragmatism often invokes deconstruction as a bridge for understanding the early Chinese cosmos, they do not describe their own work as deconstruction. It is true that philosophers in the analytic tradition have reached some conclusions that are, at a very general level, compatible with Derrida's—conclusions that have had a significant impact on Anglophone studies of early Chinese philosophy; however, these ideas emerge from resources within the analytic tradition itself and are not due to any engagement with deconstruction. Saussy rightly points to the formulaic aspect of occasional studies comparing Derrida to one or another early Chinese thinker. But the vast majority of Anglophone scholars in the field of early Chinese thought tend either to carefully distance themselves from deconstruction or be outright dismissive of it. Hence, there is a problem with Saussy's (tongue-in-cheek?) proposal that deconstruction in the field of Chinese studies might begin by "establishing a local form of the metaphysics of presence, the Enlightenment subject, or what you will. . ." (Saussy, "Outside the Parenthesis," p. 881). This proposal encourages interest in finding mind/body problems and reality/appearance dichotomies in a field where deconstruction has made almost no impression. Indeed, the recently emerging support for attempting such arguments seems far more aimed at precluding deconstruction than enacting it. Hence, deconstructively inclined sinologists really should not be encouraging these recent attempts. (I am grateful to Steven Coutinho, Bryan Van Norden, and Dan Robins for their perspectives on the state of scholarship on early Chinese philosophy.)
- 7 – Derrida's comments about Chinese writing in *Of Grammatology* concern logocentrism, but the responses have often involved questioning whether phonocentrism is characteristic of some aspect of early China. For example,

James Liu argues that Chinese language is not phonocentric (Liu, *Language, Paradox, Poetics*, p. 23). His assertion seems hard to reconcile with Derrida's denial of ever claiming that phonocentrism is European, or even mainly European:

I insisted that phonocentrism was instead a universal phenomenon, that it represented a moment, strata, layer of the history of, let's say, humanity or human culture. That's the point where I distinguish between phonocentrism and logocentrism. . . . Logocentrism is something else. Of course, there are some links between them; but logocentrism would be, in fact the Greek, "Western" if you want, philosophical form of western phonocentrism. But I really tried to make a sharp distinction between the two possibilities, the two structures. (Jacques Derrida in "Introduction to Kojin Karatani's 'Nationalism and Ecriture' Discussion Summary by Megan Becker-Leckrone," *Surfaces* 5 201.1 [V.1.0.A-31/12/1995], 13)

Confusion about defining these terms seems responsible for some of the disagreement in the field; hence, I will spell out the definitions with which I am working, which belong to Joshua Kates. According to Kates, Derrida's logocentrism is "the precomprehension of all language through the *logos*, viewing it in light of its capacity for reference and for truth." And phonocentrism is "presence to a subject . . . and, with that, the privilege of speaking or oral discourse" (Joshua Kates, "A Transcendental Sense of Death? Derrida and the Philosophy of Language," *MLN* 120 [5] [2005]: 1041 n. 32).

- 8 – Cayley and Yang's analysis of Ezra Pound's poetic appropriation of Chinese also focuses on these two perceptual features of Chinese writing as a means of dislocating the Western episteme. However, Cayley and Yang are more interested in the potential synaesthetic aspect of Pound's poetry resulting from its use of more than one writing system (Cayley and Yang, "Hallucination and Coherence," p. 779).
- 9 – See Jane Geaney, *On the Epistemology of the Senses* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), pp. 30–83.
- 10 – The *Han Feizi*, chap. 21, 喻老, says that what is written in books is speech (書者言也). The aural nature of books is still emphasized even in the second-century *Dadai liji*, chap. 6, reference to a king hearing the speech of books and then scrambling to inscribe them on various household objects:

王聞書之言，(暢)〔惕〕若恐懼，退而為戒書。於席之四端為銘焉，於机為銘焉，於鑑為銘焉. . . .

When King Wu heard the speech of the books, he was impressed to the point of abject terror. He immediately withdrew and began to inscribe "admonitory writings" on the four corners of his mat, his table, his mirror. . . . (Mark Csikszentmihalyi, trans., "Reimagining the Yellow Emperor's Four Faces," in Martin Kern, ed., *Text and Ritual in Early China* [Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005], pp. 226–248, at p. 233)

Increasing contrasts between writing and speech have bearing on the question of orality and literacy in early China—a subject that is much debated in

current sinological scholarship. One part of the debate involves the nature of the physical transmission of texts and the timing when written texts became commonplace. Passages in Warring States texts that mention writing (on bamboo, silk, metal, and stone) could suggest ample transmission of physical texts themselves. But the contrary argument notes that such references are rare, and the practice of reading in the Warring States entailed memorization, recitation, and performance of texts as essential features of learning even among the elite. Ritually significant contexts of writing also mattered—including the placement and materials involved. This would make oral/aural features of textuality at least as important as written features. A separate concern is that the transmission of texts can be seen as unrelated to their composition, and the composition might be taken as the most important feature for considering whether writing represents the cultural mainstream. If the argument is that composition occurs without much consideration of spoken language, the claim that follows is that writing is still dominant even when transmission is primarily oral. But in that case, “writing” seems to represent the totalizing authority of textual heritage, not graphs per se. Thus, perhaps the conflict between the positions in this part of the debate could hinge on terminological differences. Other considerations involve graphic variants in different transcriptions of the same texts based on phonetic loans versus those based on graphic confusion. For discussions on these subjects, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Rewriting Early Chinese Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 260; Kern, *Text and Ritual in Early China*; Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of *Wen* in Early China,” *T’oung Pao* 87 (2001): 43–91; David Schaberg, *A Patterened Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001); Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Christopher Conner, *The Empire of the Text: Writing and Authority in Early Imperial China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); Edward Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); and Gary Arbuckle, “Literacy and Orality in Early China” (unpublished lecture given at Calgary Institute for the Humanities, 1994; http://www.cic.sfu.ca/old_site/nacrp/articles/litoral/loral.html).

- 11 – Hence, Zhang Longxi is able to locate passages in early Chinese texts to argue that, relative to speech, writing is sometimes constructed as more “absent” (Zhang Longxi, *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992]; see also Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend* [West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1984], p. 91).

Rather than denying these hierarchies, the sinologists who emphasize balance in early Chinese cosmology tend to argue that the binaries are mutually

constituted and therefore their hierarchies are flexible and not absolute. Although I do not doubt this, the sometimes concomitant expectation that such philosophy might constrain misappropriations of power seems unfounded.

12 – Laurent Sagart contends that *ming* 名 functions as “graph” only at the end of the Warring States period, where it occurs “in texts on ritual like the *Zhouli* and the *Yili*.” Sagart’s study concludes that *zi* 字, *wen* 文, and *ming* could mean “Chinese character” in Old Chinese, but other usages were “eventually displaced by *zi* 字” (Laurent Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese* [Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1999], p. 211). I find usages of *ming* as “graph” in the *Guanzi*, chap. 10.5, 君臣上, and the *Yili*, chap. 8, 聘禮, discussed below. My interpretation of occurrences of *shuming* 書名 in the *Zhouli* does not agree with Sagart’s. See discussion of *Zhouli* 5.52 below.

13 – In *Disputers of the Tao*, Graham actually only says that discussions of *ming* 名 and *shi* 實 (what he calls “names and objects”) do not concern writing, but the implication is that no use of *ming* does. He writes: “[The idea] that the Chinese would . . . be saved from phonocentrism by the habit of recognizing words as written rather than spoken, may be significant in the long run but seems less relevant to the classical age. Most teaching and debate was oral, doctrine was what someone ‘said’ and ‘I have heard. . . ,’ and *the issue of names and objects was always discussed in terms of the spoken, not the written*” (A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argumentation in Ancient China* [La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989], p. 228; emphasis added).

Graham’s reading of the *Xunzi* and the *Neo-Mohist Canons* confirms that he endorsed this view generally: “Like Hsun-tzu in his *Right use of names*, the only other pre-Han text which discusses the problem of common names, the Mohist has a radically nominalistic approach to naming. We name a particular object ‘horse’ and apply the name to all objects which are like it (*jo* 若), of a kind with it (*lei* 類). Judging by a fragment in [Canon] A 31, the nominalist analysis is extended to the name itself; *we refer to the similar objects by sounds which are like the initial sound*” (A. C. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics, and Science* [Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1978], p. 32; emphasis added).

Hans-Georg Moeller suggests something similar in saying that in early Chinese philosophy, “‘Language’ is never meant when names are discussed.” However, Moeller does not actually comment on whether *ming* was used to mean a unit of writing (Hans-Georg Moeller, “Chinese Theory of Forms and Names,” *Philosophy East and West* 24 [1] [1997]: 179–170; see esp. p. 184).

14 – Hansen comments that Warring States philosophers “seldom remarked on the use of written characters,” and concludes that the use of graphs “did not incline writers to draw strong distinctions between writing and speaking.” He adds: “Key terms like *ming* (names) and *yan* (language: words) seem to function much as our English translations do, i.e., referring to abstract *types* of which both written or spoken items are *tokens*” (Antonio S. Cua, ed.,

Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy [New York: Routledge, 2003], s.v. "Philosophy of Language," by Chad Hansen; see esp. p. 569). Hansen makes a similar assertion regarding the "Chinese folk theory" of language, suggesting that Confucian philosophers were referring to written graphs when discussing "the rectification of names" (Chad Hansen, "Chinese Ideographs and Western Ideas," *Journal of Asian Studies* 52 [1993]: 393–399; see esp. p. 393).

Other scholarship related to theories of language in early China is more difficult to interpret on this point. For instance, Rudolf Wagner identifies *ming* as belonging on the aural side of Wang Bi's aural/visual categories (discussed below), but he also implies that he thinks *ming* is a general term not limited to either writing or speech: "In these statements [from the *Laozi*], the difference made in the *Xici* between the written and the spoken language is blurred in the general term *ming* 名" (Rudolf Wagner, *Language, Ontology, and Political Philosophy in China: Wang Bi's Scholarly Exploration of the Dark* [Xuanxue] [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003], p. 8). The historian Mark Edward Lewis translates *ming* as "name/word," and notes that in relation to *xingming* 形名, "names were originally oral, but since they were to serve as a standard for judgment in the future, they must have been set in writing." However, *ming* can be written down without *ming* being used to mean a graph, so this does not suffice to establish what position Lewis endorses (Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* [Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1999], p. 33).

John Makeham's comments about *ming* suggest that the use of the word changed from a meaning that did not include "graph" in the *Lunyu* to including it as late as the early third century (John Makeham, "The Earliest Extant Commentary on the *Lun yu*: *Lun yu Zheng Shi Zhu*," *T'oung Pao* 83 [1997]: 260–299). Makeham argues that the *Lunyu*'s uses of *ming* should not be interpreted as meaning writing, but he writes as if *ming* was used to mean "graph" in the late second and early third centuries by Xu Gan's (170–217) contemporaries: "For him [Xu Gan] it was the original and essential meaning of the classics that was of fundamental import. In contemporary scholarship, however, the written word (*ming*) was no longer employed principally to elucidate the actuality (*shi*) that gave the written word its message" (John Makeham, *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994], p. 124). Thus, Makeham not only does not resolve the question of when *ming* came to be used in a way that included writing, he also appears not to accept the implications of Zheng Xuan's comment (discussed below) that, whereas *ming* meant writing in the past, in the late second century they used *zi* for that purpose (Makeham, *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought*).

Hajime Nakatani also seems to miss these implications in his brief history of the use of the term *ming*, where he writes: "for the Han commentators and lexicographers name meant written character." In Nakatani's discussion of fame in early medieval China, he asserts: "the Chinese term *ming* . . . con-

flates ‘name’ and ‘fame’ as well as ‘title’ and ‘graph.’” Whereas that assertion does not specify a temporal development, Nakatani also proposes a history of *zhengming* as “correct word” in the context of the *Lunyu*, in contrast to “rectification of fame” in the context of the end of the later Han. This claim would be more persuasive if it were supported by citations of passages from later Han texts that explicitly use *zhengming* to mean rectification of fame, since *zhengming* is certainly used in multiple ways (e.g., providing moral correction by clarifying how a term should be used, proposing how a government should be stabilized, explaining where the source of naming originated, describing the preoccupations of the Ming Jia 名家, explicating technical questions about how terms work in conjunction with each other, and so on). Both the idea that *ming* means “word” in Warring States texts and the claim that it means “graph” in Han texts are things that this essay aims to refute (see Hajime Nakatani, “The Empire of Fame: Writing and the Voice in Early Medieval China,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 14 [3] [2006]: 535–566; see esp. pp. 543–544). For more on *zhengming*, see note 18 below.

Hui-chieh Loy argues for reading the *ming* of *zhengming* in *Lunyu* 13.3 as “speech,” but he includes “graph” as a possible sense of *ming*, citing Zheng Xuan (Hui-chieh Loy, “*Analects* 13.3 and the Doctrine of ‘Correcting Names,’” in *Confucius Now: Contemporary Encounters with the Analects*, ed. David Jones [Chicago: Open Court, 2008], p. 240).

15 – Boltz writes: “The *Shuo wen chieh tzu* is the end product of the process of orthographic reformation that began with the well-known efforts by Li Ssu 李斯 (ca. 280–208 BC) to standardize the script just after the political unification of the empire in 221 BC under Ch’in Shih Huang ti” (Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 156).

16 – The dating of the *Yili* as a whole is uncertain, but Boltz says the text was known before the Qin and probably belongs to a corpus of pre-Han texts concerned with ritual. Endymion Wilkinson lists it as a Warring States text (William Boltz, “*I li* 儀禮,” in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe [Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 1993], p. 237; Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, Harvard-Yenching Monograph Series 46 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998], p. 460).

The only other compelling example I have found where *ming* seems to mean “graph”—an example on which Zheng Xuan does not comment—is from the *Guanzi*, chap. 10.5, 君臣上:

天子出令於天下…衡石一稱，斗斛一量，丈尺一縵制，戈兵一度，書同名，車同軌，此至正也。

When the Son of heaven issues orders to the realm. . . . When there are standard beam and weight for weighing, standard *dou* and *hu* for measuring, standard *zhang* and *chi* for bolts of cloth, standard lengths for spears and other weapons and when writing uses common graphs (*shutongming*), and when vehicles have the same axle width—

the ultimate in standards prevails. (W. Allyn Rickett, trans., *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China*, rev. ed. [Boston: Cheng and Tsui, 2001], vol. 1, p. 409)

Compare with the “Zhongyong”:

今天下車同軌，書同文，行同倫。

Now, throughout the empire, vehicles have the same axle width, writing uses the same characters, and conduct has the same rules. (*Liji*, chap. 32, 中庸)

The *Guanzi* is thought to contain materials dating from the fifth century B.C.E. to the early Han, but the passage in question is about Qin reforms, so it clearly postdates the start of the Qin (W. Allyn Rickett, “*Kuan tzu*,” in Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, pp. 244–251).

- 17 – It might seem possible that *ming* 名 in these instances is a substitute for *ming* 銘 “inscription” (see note 80 below), but the two terms (*ming* 銘 and *ming* 名) were not pronounced identically in old Chinese. According to Baxter and Sagart, the difference in the sound of the two terms is a clear example of a particular type of sound alternation that indicates a morphological difference (Baxter and Sagart, “Word Formation in Old Chinese,” p. 61). Unfortunately, pre-Qin texts show no evidence of references to counting *ming* 銘 that might help clarify whether it could mean a single graph. The term *ming* 銘 suggests carving or engraving, but in later texts when *ming* 銘 is counted, it seems to mean the inscription as a whole. (As Mark Csikszentmihalyi notes, in Han texts *ming* 銘 is sometimes used to mean a certain admonitory genre of writings, whether written on hard surfaces, bamboo, or silk [Csikszentmihalyi, “Reimagining the Yellow Emperor’s Four Faces,” p. 231].)
- 18 – If we keep in mind the role of sound in the early Chinese cosmos, aptly described by Roel Sterckx, we might more readily see the reasonableness of thinking that correcting units of meaningful sound could order the world (Roel Sterckx, “Transforming the Beasts: Animals and Music in Early China,” *T’oung Pao* 86 [2000]: 1–46). The full significance of the aural nature of *ming* for interpretations of *zhengming* is beyond the scope of this article. I will address it in “The Sounds of Zhèngmíng (正名): Setting Names Straight in Early Chinese Texts,” (forthcoming).
- 19 – Edward Shaughnessy, *I Ching: The Classic of Changes* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), p. 205; translation modified.
- 20 – Admittedly, the myth does not explicitly say that it concerns the origin of writing, and, as Boltz points out, it is only in the Han that earlier mentions of Cangjie (which are extremely uninformative) become linked to such stories about Fuxi. But, as Boltz argues, it is partly the suggestion of methods of tally and record-keeping in the Fuxi myths that makes them seem relevant to writing (Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 136).

- 21 – Roy Harris, *The Origin of Writing* (London: Duckworth, 1986) and *Signs of Writing* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
- 22 – Francoise Bottero, “Revisiting the *Wen* 文 and the *Zi* 字: The Great Chinese Character Hoax,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 74 (2002): 21.
- 23 – *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 24 – *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 25 – Philosophers disagree about definitions of “word types” and the kind of ontological status they possess. If a word type means nothing more than “a word as identified generally, apart from its use in any particular context,” as Chris Fraser defines it, perhaps early Chinese texts sometimes signal this with their use of *zhe* 者 (although it is noteworthy that early Chinese “dictionaries” explain meanings through instances of use rather than definitions taken apart from any particular context) (Chris Fraser, “Language and Ontology in Early Chinese Thought,” *Philosophy East and West* 57 [4] [2007]: 420–456; see esp. p. 424).
- Granting this possible use of *zhe* 者, there is also no indication of early Chinese texts philosophizing about the difference between terms used with and without *zhe* 者. This makes it seem unlikely that anyone was working with something like Charles Sanders Peirce’s distinction between word tokens and word types. Most importantly, even if such a distinction was silently assumed, it need not have meant that units of writing and speech were viewed as tokens of the *same* type. (My thanks to Bryan Van Norden for drawing my attention to this last point [personal communication, April 2005]).
- 26 – Wilkinson argues that this phenomenon first became apparent in the first-century B.C.E. *Shiji* and became the norm after the Han (Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, p. 46).
- 27 – The idea that writing might have had to develop to a certain level of availability before linguistic terminology became consistent should not be surprising. That advancement would enhance opportunities for conceptualizing both speech and writing. As Roy Harris notes in his discussion of the work of D. R. Olson, the properties of writing itself facilitate the process of noticing linguistic structures and units (Roy Harris, *Rethinking Writing* [Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2000], pp. 207–211).
- 28 – See note 12 above (Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*, p. 211).
- 29 – Zheng Xuan makes this claim about instances of *ming* in the *Zhouli*, the *Yili*, and the *Lunyu*. In reference to the *Zhouli*, he writes: “In the past they said *ming*, now we say *zi*” (古曰名今曰字) (cited in Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 138). In reference to the *Yili*, he writes: “*Ming* are written graphs. Now we call them *zi*” (名書文也今謂之字). To support his reading of the *Lunyu*’s use of *zhengming* 正名 as the

- “correction” of written words, he cites the passage from the *Yili* (which he mistakes for the *Liji*) where he takes *ming* to be “graph” and says, “Of old they said *ming*. These days we say *zi*” (古者曰名 今世曰字) (*Yili zhushu, Shisan jing zhushu: zheng li ben*, vol. 18 [Taipei: Taiwan Guji, 2001], p. 521).
- 30 – John Steele’s translation, slightly modified. The passage begins 若有故，則卒聘。束帛加書將命 (If occasion calls for it, then, after the formal business of the mission is over, a further communication is conveyed in a letter handed in along with a roll of silk) (John Steele, *The I-li or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* [London: Probsthain and Co., 1917], p. 232).
- 31 – *Zhouli*, chap. 5.52, 秋官司。 *Shuming*, which could be translated as “written names” in some cases, is discussed in more detail below. Boltz contends that the *Zhouli* is a pre-Han text (William Boltz, “*Chou li*,” in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, pp. 25–29).
- 32 – As Makeham argues, Zheng Xuan stresses the value of the written word repeatedly in his reading of the *Lunyu*, reflecting, in Makeham’s view, a projection based on “the background of Han classical studies, where the written word was elevated to an unprecedented status” (Makeham, “The Earliest Extant Commentary on the Lun yu,” p. 287). In other words, as Makeham sees it, Zheng Xuan “finds” the meaning “written word” in early uses of *ming*, because he is a product of the Han.
- 33 – Again, Sagart contends that it occurred only at the end of the Warring States and only “in texts on ritual like the *Zhouli* and the *Yili*.” But I would omit the *Zhouli* and add the *Guanzi* example, which postdates the beginning of the Qin (Sagart, *The Roots of Old Chinese*, p. 211; see note 12 above).
- 34 – As Wagner points out, the parallelism of Chinese literary style has long been apparent and was first described in a Western language by Gustave Schlegel in 1892. Wagner identifies a richer variety of patterning devices than those identified by Schlegel and dubs them “interlocking parallel style” (IPS) (Rudolf Wagner, *The Craft of a Chinese Commentator* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000], pp. 55–57).
- 35 – This is how Wagner portrays IPS. It is a rational faculty, which, if ignored, might produce “a social practice of attributing the seeming lack of coherence in Chinese philosophical arguments to inconsistent thinking by the Chinese authors” (*ibid.*, p. 56).
- 36 – *Wenxin diaolong*, chap. 35, 麗辭, articulates this as a principle of good writing:
- 造化賦形，支體必雙；神理為用，事不孤立。夫心生文辭，運裁百慮，高下相須，自然成對。
- Nature, creating living beings, endows them with limbs in pairs. The divine reason operates in such a way that nothing stands alone. The mind creates literary language, and in doing this it organizes and shapes one hundred different thoughts, making what

is high supplement what is low, and spontaneously producing linguistic parallelism. (Vincent Yu-chung Shih, trans., in Vincent Yu-chung Shih, *Liu Hsieh, The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons: A Study of Thought and Pattern in Chinese Literature* [New York: Columbia University Press 1959], p. 190).

37 – By “linguistic unconscious” I mean something like Stephen Owen’s “discourse machine,” which he posits to interpret the *Wenxin diaolong*. According to Owen, the text “produces utterances by its own rules and requirements . . . processing an initial statement and amplifying it according to predictable rules” (Stephen Owen, “Liu Xie and the Discourse Machine,” in *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity, and Rhetoric in the Wenxin Diaolong*, ed. Zhong-qi Cai [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001], pp. 175–192, at p. 175). As an example of the rules, Owen describes the way the *Wenxin diaolong* makes a series of claims about “literary men” (*wen shi* 文士) only for the text to conclude, “since this happens in regard to *wen* . . . it is also to be expected in the *wu*” (ibid., p. 179).

38 – See Geaney, *On the Epistemology of the Senses*, pp. 67–80.

39 – It says: “[The filial son’s] speech can be heard and actions can be seen” (言為可聞 行為可見) (*Xunzi*, chap. 27, 大略).

40 – Also, regarding the supposed inadequacies of speech, *Fayan* chap. 5, 問神, makes it clear that the sage has no such problems:

言不能達其心，書不能達其言，難矣哉！惟聖人得言之解，得書之體。
Speech cannot reach the [limits of the] heartmind, writing cannot reach [the limits of] speech. It is so difficult! Only the sage is able to achieve the release of speech and the embodiment of writing.

41 – *Lunheng*, chap. 82, 書解, reads: “Speech exits the mouth, literature is written patterns/lines” (出口為言，著文為篇).

42 – The line says: 言出於口，文立於策 (*Lunheng*, chap. 28, 問孔). A third-century text, Lu Ji’s (261–303 C.E.) *Rhapsody on Literature* (*Lujiji*, chap. 1, 文賦) is more explicit about ear/mouth involvement, while maintaining the same sensory alignment: writing goes in the eyes, speech comes out of the mouth, and sound goes into the ear:

思風發於胸臆，言泉流於唇齒。紛葳蕤以馭選，唯毫素之所擬。文徽徽以溢目，音泠泠而盈耳。

Gusts of thought issue forth from the breast/ Fountains of speech (*yan*) flow from the lips and teeth/ Luxuriant profusion and powerful splendor/ Are captured by the writing brush and white silk/ Graphs (*wen*), brilliantly shining, inundate the eye/ Music (*yin*), richly sounding, fills the ear. (James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese Theories of Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975], p. 73; translation modified)

43 – *Wenxin diaolong*, chap. 44, 總術, says:

予以為發口為言，屬筆曰翰。

In my opinion, oral statements are plain words, and whenever these are committed to the brush, they are literary writings. (Shih, *Liu Hsieh*, p. 230)

44 – *Wenxin diaolong*, chap. 39, 練字, says:

心既託聲於言，言亦寄形於字。

The sound of the mind is expressed in speech (*yan*), and speech resides [its shape] (*xing* 形) in characters. (Shih, *Liu Hsieh*, p. 211; translation modified)

45 – It is easy to misread this passage as supporting an anti-names (or worse, “anti-language”) position, in which *shi* constitutes the real, specifically in contrast to names that are empty. But it is important to note that the reference to “empty *ming*” itself implies that not *all* names are empty.

The *Shiji*, chap. 4, 世家, version of this passage is instructive of the connection of *yan* and *ming* in that it replaces *xuyan* with *xuming*:

夫以實伐我者秦也，以虛名救我者楚也。王恃楚之虛名，而輕絕疆秦之敵，王必為天下大笑。

46 – For the line from the *Xunzi*, see note 39 above.

47 – Discussions like that of the *Xici*, which do not link the origin of writing with sound, are not sufficiently concerned with “glottic writing” to help clarify the relation of writing to speech.

48 – Rickett translates this as, “What they articulated through name and sound or conveyed through body gestures and facial expression was what they were able to express” (W. Allyn Rickett, trans., *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) vol. 2, p. 92).

49 – *Kongzi jaiyu* 39.2 has a similar line using *xing* 形 as “body.”

50 – Rickett, *Guanzi* (2001), p. 406; translation slightly modified. In this reference to the ruler’s prestige in the *Shangjunshu* 商君書, chap. 4, 去強, it is clear that “sound” means something like “fame,” in contrast to *shi*:

威以一取十，以聲取實，故能為威者王。

One who has prestige captures ten by means of one, and grasps *shi* by means of the very sound of his name. Therefore he who succeeds in having prestige, attains supremacy. (J.J.L. Duyvendak, *The Book of Lord Shang: A Classic of the Chinese School of Law*, trans. from the Chinese with introd. and notes [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928], p. 202; translation slightly modified)

51 – Wang Baoxuan, *Xuanxue tonglun* (Taipei: Wunan Tushu, 1996).

52 – Regarding the interpretation of *li* 理, *Xunzi* chap. 22 notes that it is perceived by the eyes: “Form, body, color and *li* are differentiated by the eyes” (形體，色理以目異). The language of *Zhonglun* chap. 8 also suggests vision in contrast to sound, assuming that the connotations of *xian* 顯 are visual: “Their praising is done without names; their principles are not individually displayed” (其稱也無其名，其理也不獨顯).

It is not clear exactly when “patterns” ceases to be a better translation of *li*. Henricks argues that in the writings of Xi Kang (223–262) *li* contrasts

to “common reason,” “natural order,” and things that can be known by the human mind (Robert G. Henricks, *Philosophy and Argumentation in Third-Century China: The Essays of Xi Kang* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983], p. 21). Roger Ames suggests “coherences” as a translation (cited in Charles Holcombe, *In the Shadow of the Han: Literati Thought and Society at the Beginning of the Southern Dynasties* [Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994], p. 172 n. 31).

- 53 – This is not the main point for Wang Baoxuan. He argues that figures are generated by intentions, while forms are generated by the formless, which he reads as the equivalent of *li* 理. He notes that Wang Bi says this source is *dao*, but also treats the source as *li* by making similar references to “utmost *dao* 至道” and to “utmost *li* 至理,” as well as to “the extreme of *dao* 道之極” and to “the extreme of *li* 理之極” (Wang Baoxuan, *Xuanxue tonglun*, p. 208).
- 54 – Wagner, *Language, Ontology, and Political Philosophy in China*; see esp. pp. 57, 99, and 100. Wagner sees this aural/visual matching as Wang Bi’s systematizing innovation. For instance, Wagner says that, in an act of what might even be characterized as “intellectual violence,” Wang Bi attributes to the *Laozi* the idea that touch is subsumed under the category of vision, while taste is subsumed under hearing (ibid., p. 108). Wagner writes: “In his [Wang Bi’s] presentation, these organs are fitted into a binary construct with eye and touch perceiving the *xing* 形, ‘shape’ of ‘material entities,’ *wu* 物, and ear and taste perceiving the *ming* 名, ‘names,’ of ‘achievements,’ *gong* 功, or ‘processes,’ *shi* 事” (ibid., p. 97). In terms of early Chinese approaches to the senses, these sensory confluences are plausible (with the exception of *shi* 事). Indeed, these pairings would help account for the sensory patterns of *mingli* 名理 in this line in *Heguanzi* chap. 11, 泰錄:

范無形，嘗無味，以要名理之所會。

They schematized the shapeless, tasted the flavorless, in order to reduce to the crucial the meeting-place of names and patterns. (A. C. Graham, trans., “A Neglected Pre-Han Philosophical Text: Ho-kuan-tzu,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 52 [3] [1989]: 526)

Perhaps taste and hearing are related, since we mostly smell the flavors of food, which, like hearing, takes the term *wen* 聞. Moreover, the *Zuozhuan* notes that “As for sound, it resembles taste” (聲亦如味) (*Chunqui zuozhuan*, chap. B 10.20.8). This might explain the remark by Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263) in the “*Yuelun*,” 樂論, about the *dao* having “no sound and no flavor” (無聲無味), which is sometimes read as “the five sounds have no flavor” (五聲無味) (全三國文·魏卷四十六). In that case, the line in the *Heguanzi* suggests that the effort to find the meeting of the visual (patterns) and aural (names) entails sensing the nonvisual (formless) and nonaural (tasteless).

- 55 – Wagner remarks that while scholars in the Han thought the sages’ spoken “subtle words” had ended with Confucius, scholars in the Zhengshi period

(240–249) thought they could replicate them with oral “pure words.” He cites Wang Baoxuan as persuasively explaining why “short bursts of oral philosophy were more highly appreciated during the Wei and Jin than written tracts or even commentaries and brought more fame to their authors. Confucius did not write a book but communicated—and could only communicate—his insights through ‘subtle words’” (Wagner, *Language, Ontology, and Political Philosophy in China*, pp. 47–48).

56 – The passage about the stages in the invention of writing reads:

稍益有知然後漸能名命百物而號召之聲稍備矣。文字未興也其類滋其治繁而不可以莫之徵也然後結繩之治興焉治益繁巧益生。故有刻畫竹木以為識者今蠻夷與俚俗不識文字者猶或用之所謂契也。契不足以盡變於是象物之形指事之狀而刻書之以配事物之名。而簡牘刀筆興焉所謂書也。

When their understandings had somewhat advanced, they began to be able to give names to and ask for material objects. The number and variety of these, and of the corresponding dispositions to which they gave rise, in the absence of writing which was as yet uninvented, rendered some means of reference a necessity, and dealings by means of knotted cords came into use. The institutions and the crafts of mankind continuing to develop, marks were employed by cutting on wooden and bamboo materials; such marks as are now still made by the Man and I barbarians, and by ignorant rustics unacquainted with writing. And this was known as Notching. Notching being found insufficient for all the variations required, next came figures representing natural objects, and forms indicative of actions, states or relations, cut out in lines, to serve as counterparts of the spoken names of the same objects, actions, states, or relations; with these, tablets and graving-knives were invented. And this is Writing. (*Liushugu* [Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshu Guan, 1976]; L. C. Hopkins, trans., *The Six Scripts or The Principles of Chinese Writing by Tai T'ung*, with a memoir of the translator by W. Percival Yetts [London: Cambridge University Press, 1954], pp. 27–28)

57 – The *Liushugu* describes its method of presenting each element in its lexicon in the following way:

聲形而上也文形而下也。... 聲陽也文陰聲為經文為緯。

The sound form [*shengxing*] comes first, the graph form [*wenxing*] follows. . . . The sound is the *yang*, the graph is the *yin*: the sound is the warp, the graph is the woof. . . . (Hopkins, *The Six Scripts or The Principles of Chinese Writing by Tai T'ung*, p. 33)

As Don Ihde notes, we commonly overlook that sounds have form. Ihde argues compellingly that sounds do have shape aspects, which we are typically able to hear although we rarely notice this fact (Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* [Athens, OH: Ohio University Press], pp. 56–71).

58 – With less linguistically oriented terminology, Hopkins translates this as “To seek a written sign for every name used in spoken language would be hopeless, even a search for the natural counterpart of every written character must leave many undiscovered” (Hopkins, *The Six Scripts or The Principles of Chinese Writing by Tai T'ung*, p. 61). Perhaps Hopkins’ choice of words (“natural counterpart”) is meant to suggest that the “*wu* 物 of *zi* 字” are limited to

things like bird tracks and other phenomena in the physical environment, but this seems unnecessarily restrictive.

59 – The text says:

有字而不知其物者。

有名而不得其字者。

There are graphs for which I do not know their referents.

There are names for which I have not obtained their graphs. (*Liushugu* 1:15)

60 – Even Graham never notices that *shi* is visual, although it is precisely when discussing *ming/shi* cases that he says *ming* is only spoken (Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 228). (For the visual nature of *shi*, see Geaney, *On the Epistemology of the Senses*, pp. 121–127.) Graham regularly translates *shi* as “reality” and “objects,” and treats *shi* as something that is in opposition to “language.” In doing so, he equates *ming/shi* with appearance/reality. In other words, even though he says he believes *ming* is always spoken names in *ming/shi* pairs, he does not seem to think that this has any bearing on interpreting the term *shi* or its relationship to speech. Overlooking these implications permits Graham to attribute to early Chinese texts the view that “language” merely supplements and distorts the truly real (whether internal or external). For instance, he argues that the *Zhuangzi* views “language” as having no effect on our perception of “reality” or of “ideas” (an unfortunate cognitive-sounding translation of *yi* 意, which is better understood as “intentions”) (Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 200). Perhaps Graham proposes that early Chinese texts contain this view of perception and language because it suits his focus on spontaneity in early Chinese thought. After all, it is hard to think in terms of spontaneously responding to a “reality” understood as independent of words if one believes that words are *not* merely appearances but part of “reality” (i.e., recognizing *ming* as meaningful units of sound, and recognizing that all “things” have both aural and visual aspects, means that *ming* is neither more nor less real than visual forms). This is not to deny that there might be other reasons for early Chinese texts to object to *ming*—or to speech (*yan*), or, for that matter, to writing (*shu*)—but it is misleading to suggest they would do so on the grounds that *ming* is a mere supplementary to untainted reality.

61 – Because I do not think that *shi* 實 should be translated as “reality,” in saying that *ming* should be interpreted as “name” rather than “word” my point is that *ming* and *shi* have a very different function than “language and reality.” In other words, I am not making a claim here about what one might call a “theory of language” in early China. That subject seems to be complicated by a number of factors like the relationship of *ming* to a unit of *yan* (*yiyán* 一言), the function of *ming* as “pointing,” and its intersection with the function of *yan* 言 (speech) as “distinguishing.”

62 – Opinions differ vastly on the relevance to early Chinese texts of a nature/culture divide. At one extreme, Hansen’s theory of early Chinese thought takes its

- presence to be obvious. Nakatani's reference to "the proverbial indifference to the nature/culture divide characteristic of Chinese cosmological texts" is indicative of the other extreme that takes its absence for granted (Nakatani, "The Empire of Fame," p. 549.) Closer to the middle, Carine Defoort notes that "a sharp distinction between nature and culture" is something that the *Heguanzi* "curiously, but interestingly, does not make" (Carine Defoort, *He guan zi: A Rhetorical Reading* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997], p. 185).
- 63 – Wagner, *Language, Ontology, and Political Philosophy in China*; see esp. pp. 57 and 103.
- 64 – Wagner also locates both aural and visual "realms of entities" in the social: "the *xing* refers to the outward physical manifestations of social status, such as dress, or mutilation, while the *ming* refers to the 'renown' or even 'fame' associated with this social status" (Wagner, *Language, Ontology, and Political Philosophy in China*, p. 107).
- 65 – Ibid.
- 66 – See the section on music below.
- 67 – See Geaney, *On the Epistemology of the Senses*, pp. 109–135.
- 68 – In the case that Karine Chemla explains, one "modifies" (*ming* 命) some units of a certain quantity as a result of modifying others that are related. The term is *ming* 命, but Chemla's explanation of it indicates that it is read as "naming" (*ming* 名). Chemla also notes that Christopher Cullen takes this use of *ming* to mean "count off" (see Karine Chemla, "Documenting a Process of Abstraction," in *Studies in Chinese Language and Culture: Festschrift in Honour of Christoph Harbsmeier on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, ed. Christoph Anderl and Halvor Eifring [Oslo: Hermes Academic Publishing, 2006], pp. 169–194, at pp. 172–173 nn. 11 and 16. See also Christopher Cullen, *The Suan shu shu 算數書 'Writings on Reckoning': A Translation of a Chinese Mathematical Collection of the Second Century B.C. with Explanatory Commentary*, Needham Research Institute, Working Papers 1 [Cambridge: Needham Research Institute, 2004]).
- 69 – The line from the *Lingshujing* reads:
- 此天地之陰陽也，非四時五行之以次行也。且夫陰陽者，有名而無形，故數之可十，離之可百，散之可千，推之可萬，此之謂也。
- These are the *yin* and *yang* of heaven and earth, not the sequential processes of the four seasons and the five phases. Now *yin* and *yang* have names but lack physical form. "Hence, they can be enumerated ten ways, separated a hundred ways, distributed a thousand ways, deduced a myriad ways" refers to this. (*Lingshujing*, chap. 41.5, 陰陽繫日月)
- My translation is indebted to Nathan Sivin's translation of another version of this from the *Huangdi Neijing taisu*, in Kosoto Hiroshi, ed., *Tōyō igaku*

zenpon sōsho (Osaka: Tōyō Igaku Kenkyūkai, 1981), 5.1.1–3, 6–10. See Nathan Sivin, “State, Cosmos, and Body in China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55 (1) (1995): 19.

70 – The dating of the use of the graph *yi* 義 for the “meaning of a word” is tied to questions of when a Chinese term like “word” came to exist, and thus is probably linked to the development of the use of *zi* to mean “graph.” In early Chinese texts, in addition to its more common use as “rightness,” *yi* sometimes functions as “model,” “example,” “sign,” or “significance.” Not surprisingly, *yi* is not used with *ming*, except in the sense of the portent implied by someone’s name (i.e., an inauspicious name).

71 – The *Nanjing* says:

二十五難曰：有十二經，五藏六府十一耳，其一經者，何等經也？

然：一經者，手少陰與心主別脈也。心主與三焦為表裏，俱有名而無形，故言經有十二也。

The twenty-fifth difficult case: There are twelve conduits, but the [body’s] five depots and six palaces [add up to only] eleven. Of what nature is the one [missing] conduit?

It is like this. One of the conduits encompasses the hand-minor-*yin* [vessel] and the heart-master [vessel] as separate vessels. The heart-master and the Triple Burner represent outside and inside. Both have a name but no form. Hence one speaks of the twelve conduits. (*Nanjing*, chap. 2.1 經絡大數; Paul Unschuld trans., *Nan-Ching: The Classic of Difficult Issues* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986], p. 310)

72 – Peter Boodberg, “Philological Notes on Chapter One of The *Lao Tzu*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 20 (3/4) (1957): 604.

73 – *Ibid.*, pp. 604–6055. For a more detailed account of the development of the graph *ming* 名, see Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, pp. 63–72, 103–105.

74 – Bernhard Karlgren might imply something similar by not including “graph” as a meaning for *ming* (Bernhard Karlgren, *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese*, rev. ed. [1923; reprint, New York: Dover, 1991], p. 199).

75 – In its definition of *ming*, the *Liushugu* cites part of a passage from the *Zhouli*, chap. 4.1, 夏官司馬, that describes the method by which the military organized its forces at night by distinguishing the use of ordinary names and titles—naming soldiers and officers by district, gates of the capital, administrative areas, etc., depending on their rank. The *Liushugu* then adds that because this was done late at night, flags and banners could not be used to make distinctions. Therefore they had to be attentive to names and appellations. The *Liushugu* uses this to justify why *ming* comes from “evening” (*Liushugu*, vol. 2, p. 111). Interestingly, the *Liji* glosses *ming* 銘 “inscription” as a “bright flag” that it says is useful because the dead can no longer be distinguished (明旌也，以死者為不可別已) (*Liji* 4.15, 檀弓下). Hence, in a similar context of undifferentiation, the same paronomastic gloss can be used, on the one hand,

- to say that inscriptions are like bright flags and, on the other, that names differentiate where flags cannot be seen.
- 76 – There is one reference to listening to a name in *Guanzi* 9.3, 聞第二十四. Another is repeated in *Guoyu* 1.25, 單襄公論晉將有亂; *Hanshu* 2.7, 五行志; and *Jiayi xinshu* 10.2 禮容語下. Daoan (314–385) also uses the phrase 聽其名 in the *Erjiaolun*.
- 77 – *Wenming* 聞名 occurs in the *Liji*, chap. 17.1, 少儀, and chap. 21.13, 雜記下, as well as in *Baihu tongyi*, chap. 33, 姓名.
- 78 – The translation is uncertain. Each of the items could be read as two nouns or as a binomial with the first as an adjective, in which case it would not say “written names.” *Shuming* as “written names” is not common, although it occurs another time in the *Zhouli*, chap. 3.62, 春官宗伯. For another possible example, see *Wenxuan*, chap. 40, 楊德祖荅臨淄侯牋. For the *Zhouli* passage, Martha Cheung offers an interesting reading of the activities of the seventh month, inflected by the context of translation: “One way by which the King ensures that the princes and other states remain content with his rule is to attend to the proper training of the *xiangxu* [interpreting-functionaries]. . . . Every seven years, the *xiangxu* are gathered together to receive training in foreign languages and in the proper use of diplomatic language” (Martha P. Y. Cheung, ed., *An Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation*, vol. 1 [Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing Co., 2006], p. 43).
- 79 – On the tradition of court musicians being blind, see Lewis Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 155, 161.
- 80 – For example, a Mawangdui passage from the *Juyan*, chap. 20, reads: 見署名籍 “See and observe the name register” (194.3, 194.13). Also a *Xunzi* passage that uses *jian* 見 with names says:

書其名，置于其重，則名不見而柩獨明矣。

When one writes the [deceased’s] name and sets it on his *chong*-tablet, the name is not to be seen, and only the inscription (*jiu* 柩) is visible. (*Xunzi*, chap. 19, 禮論; K. E. Brashier, “Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Stelae,” in Kern, *Text and Ritual in Early China*, p. 272)

Brashier makes a good case that *jiu* 柩 here should be read as “inscription” rather than “coffin,” and notes a fluidity in terminology that allowed objects that were associated with each other to share labels, including an inscription of a name (銘) being called a “name” (名). He also suggests that the name may be invisible because the banner faced inward (Brashier, “Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Stelae,” p. 283 n. 102).

As a counterargument, there is a case from the *Guanzi* that misleadingly suggests that a *ming* can be looked at directly, but the standard edition by Guo Moruo emends it with good reason. The passage describes a pronouncement about fair taxation. It indicates the pronouncement should be made on all highways, and then, regarding foreign emissaries, it says:

外事謹，則聽其名，（視其名），視其色 (*Guanzi*, chap. 9.3, 問第二十四)

This can be read without emendation as “Listen to their names, look at their names, and look at their faces,” or emended as “Listen to their names and look at their faces.” But attention to aural/visual patterns signals an immediate problem with the first option. It is *always* the case that only one visual reference follows one aural reference, thereby creating an aural/visual balance. Moreover, in these aural/visual balances, it is also *always* the case that the visual and aural terms never apply to the same aspect of the same thing (i.e., they might apply to the same individual, but one looks at her face and hears her voice; one does not look at her person and hear her person). Thus, both the typical operations of sense perception and consideration of style in early Chinese texts justify the emendation (Guo Moruo, *Guanzi ji jiao* [Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1956], vol. 2, p. 76). Rickett also emends it, saying he is following Igai and Wang Yinzhi (Rickett, *Guanzi*, p. 377). I realize that positing copy mistakes also requires explanation, but I have no theory for why this mistake appears other than careless copying. However, I do think it is more likely to be a mistake than an interpolation.

81 – For example:

吾子為司徒，實書名；夫子為司馬，與工正書服；孟孫為司空以書勳
[Re recording information about Shushun, a minister]. You were minister of Instruction, and wrote the name. My master was minister of War, and made the chief of his subordinate officers write the royal gifts. Mang-sun was minister of Works, and recorded [my master's] service. (*Chunqui zuozhuan*, chap 10.4.8, 昭公四年傳; James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics: The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen* [Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960], p. 599)

82 – A *xing* and a *hao* are visible in this example:

今皇帝姓號見于圖書
Now the imperial surname and appellation appear in diagrams and books. (*Quan Hou Han wen*, chap. 97.1.31, 歸漢議)

83 – Brashier observes that what is thereby recorded is one's “social identity” (K. E. Brashier, “Han Thanatology,” *Early China* 21 (1996): 151).

84 – Egan also argues that the *Liji* stresses a distinction between human music and animal sound, but that does not preclude a shared cosmic origin. See Ronald Egan, “Nature and Higher Ideals in Texts on Calligraphy, Music, and Painting,” in *Chinese Aesthetics: the Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, ed. Cai Zong-qi (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), pp. 277–309, at 293–299).

85 – The line reads:

故... 帝軒聞鳳鳴而調律，倉頡視鳥跡而作書。
This is why... Emperor Xuan was able to harmonize pitch pipes only after hearing the song of the phoenix; and why Cangjie was able to create writing only after observing

the prints of birds. (*Zhonglun*, chap. 1, 治學; John Makeham, *Balanced Discourses* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press and Foreign Languages Press, 2002], p. 11)

86 – Cited by Robin Yates, who himself does not support this reading and thinks that Cao Cao is reading *ming* 名 as the homophone *ming* 鳴 (Robin Yates, “New Light on Ancient Chinese Military Texts,” *T’oung Pao* 74 [1988]: 220).

87 – My translation, admittedly tentative, is based on that of Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po Hu T’ung: The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Westport CT: Hyperion Press, 1952), vol. 2, p. 579. The CHANT database supplies the graph *zheng* 正 on the basis of the *Taiping yulan*, but I have omitted it from my translation.

88 – In other passages that address the origins of personal names, the process is also aural. When the *Baihu tongyi* (first century?) explains why a *ming* is necessary at all, it uses a metaphor involving the mouth: a *ming* enables people to “*tuqing*”—cough up their *qing*:

人必有名何？所以吐情自紀，尊事人者也。

Why must people have personal names? To spew forth their feelings/natures (*qing* 情) for the reverential service of others. (*Baihu tongyi*, chap. 33, 姓名)

Michael Loewe notes that scholars debate whether the *Baihu tongyi* belongs to the first or third century (Michael Loewe, “*Pai hu t’ung*,” in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, pp. 347–350).

There are cases where babies are born with marks written on their hands from which they are named, but the writing itself is not *ming* 名. When the *Zuozhuan* discusses babies who are born with wrinkles/marks on their hands, which are taken to foretell their names, the marks are referred to as *wen* in every case (see, for instance, chap. 昭公 B 10.32.4., chap. 閔公 B 4.2.4, and chap. 昭公 B 10.1.12). It seems that when babies are named, only the vocal articulation counts as *ming*. That is, in a passage from the *Liji* concerning naming babies, the text emphasizes that sound is emitted with the naming. It says that in certain naming ceremonies, as the ruler places his hand on the child, he names it with a vocal articulation—a soft voice (*hai* 咳 or *ke* 咳: a cough or the sound of sighing):

適子庶子見於外寢，撫其首，咳而名之

A (second) son or any other son by the wife proper was presented in the outer chamber, when (the ruler) laid his hand on its head, and with gentle voice named it. (*Liji*, chap. 12.46, 內則; James Legge, trans., *Li Chi: Book of Rites* [New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1967], vol. 1, pp. 474–475)

Another discussion in the *Zuozhuan* of being born with a *ming* (*yiming-sheng* 以名生) concerns rules for choosing names. There is a category for being named “by birth,” but it does not include naming by baby wrinkles, which might fall under being named by *xiang* 象, because that seems to have something to do with resemblance by “kind.” The “kind” involved in naming by *xiang* is likely to be based on some sort of visual resemblance, given other

associations with *xiang* (it is not about paternal relation, since that belongs to a different category). The passage says:

名有五，有信，有義，有象，有假，有類。以名生為信，[variant reverses *sheng* and *ming*] 以德命 [variant名] 為義，以類命為象，取於物為假，取於父為類。

Names have five [sources?]: reliability, rightness, *xiang*, borrowing, and type. To name from birth is by reliability; to name from power/virtue is by rightness; to name from type is by *xiang*; to pick [a name] from a thing is by borrowing; to pick [a name] from the father is by type. (*Zuozhuan*, 桓公 B 2.6.6)

- 89 – The idea of experts piping out names bothers Forke. He says, “In the encyclopedia of surnames one of the Five Sounds is attached to each name. I fail to understand how they were determined by the so-called experts. There is another tradition that Huang Ti blew the flute to fix the surnames” (Alfred Forke, *Lun-Heng*, part 2 [1907; reprint, New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962], p. 413).
- 90 – It says: “The *shang* officer harmonizes the surnames of the people” (司商協民姓) (*Guoyu* 1.9, 仲山公諫宣王料民).
- 91 – The line says: 孔子吹律，自知殷後 (*Lunheng*, chap. 15, 奇怪) (Kenneth J. DeWoskin, *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1982], p. 79). In Forke’s reading surnames are not being piped; he thinks it is just that the Yin people were musically adept—a trait that Confucius inherited.
- 92 – The *Liji* says Huang Di corrected the names of the hundred things (黃帝正名百物) (*Liji*, chap. 24, 祭法), and in the *Yantielun* he emits *de* tones (發德音) (*Yantielun* 10.4, 詔聖).
- 93 – Francoise Bottero, “Cang Jie and the Invention of Writing,” in Anderl, *Studies in Chinese Language and Culture*, pp. 135–155.
- 94 – For the context of that threat, see Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, pp. 168–177.
- 95 – *Ibid.*, p. 168. Interestingly, the development in the use of *zi* 字 is such that, by the time of the writing of the *Liushugu* in the thirteenth century, there seems to be no terminology to describe an “excess of meaningful sound.” The *Liushugu* refers to scholars who memorize the sounds in a text without learning graphs (and who therefore use the similar graphs for different but homophonous words) as using one “word” for multiple “words” (一字而假借者數字). See Hopkins, *The Six Scripts or The Principles of Chinese Writing by Tai T’ung*, p. 56.
- 96 – Indeed, if Bottero is correct, for Xu Shen *zi* 字 even signified glottic writing in particular.
- 97 – Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 176.

- 98 – Ibid., p. 177.
- 99 – Ibid., p. 176. The quote is from Peter Boodberg, “The Chinese Script: An Essay on Nomenclature (The First Hecaton),” *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology* 29 (1957): 113–120. However, Boltz casts that desire for aural/visual balance as a concern about semantic meaning, which is Boodberg’s understanding of the graph *yi* 義. My sense is that, in the absence of a conception of “word,” texts in the third century B.C.E. were also not yet focused on the semantic meaning of “words,” and their use of the graph *yi* 義 in the context of “language” pointed to something more like the general gist, purport, or even portent of a phrase, text, unit of speech, or name. See note 70 above.
- 100 – Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, p. 176.
- 101 – Geaney, *On the Epistemology of the Senses*, pp. 67–80.
- 102 – In an argument about Ezra Pound’s use of Chinese writing, John Cayley and Yang Lian make a much stronger claim about the subversive potential of the use of aural and visual media in “irreducibly graphic poetics” (Cayley and Yang, “Hallucination and Coherence,” p. 782). This is Derrida’s term for Pound’s work, which Derrida calls “the first break in the most entrenched Western tradition” (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 92). They suggest that the “breakthrough” that Derrida invokes is possible when difference is “not reduced to a structure of differences in a single channel of perceptual media.” Such synesthesia is always present in writing, even in alphabetic writing, but it is more apparent, they argue, in translingual engagements. While still constrained to systems of differences, they suggest, the multiplicity of perceptual media can overturn hierarchy (Cayley and Yang, “Hallucination and Coherence,” p. 779).
- 103 – Haun Saussy, “Ritual Separates, Music Unites,” in *Recarving the Dragon: Understanding Chinese Poetics*, ed. Olga Lomova (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2003), pp. 9–25, at p. 16.
- 104 – Extrapolating on the importance of sound, Saussy proposes that early Chinese thinking itself is patterned on a musical-wave model in which waves emerge from within. This “vibratory ideology,” Saussy writes, “creates insurmountable difficulties for those who would describe East Asian culture as ‘developing outside of all logocentrism’ The power of musical theory in ancient China shows that you can have phonocentrism, and all its effects, without a phonetic alphabet or other appurtenances of a ‘logocentrism’” (Saussy, “Ritual Separates, Music Unites,” p. 21 n. 13).
- Using a different sense of “phonocentrism,” Nulty argues that Daoist literature is not phonocentric. Nulty’s argument takes phonocentrism to be the failure to recognize thought as “the internalized *difference* of speaking/hearing.” In Nulty’s sense, phonocentrism is the disavowal of internalized

speech—that is, it denies that thought is the result of linguistic exposure, and affirms mental concepts as pure unchanging ideas unmediated by language. Thus, for Nulty, speech being located “inside” represents internalized *difference*, and in his view Daoist texts are not phonocentric insofar as they seem to recognize that *difference* (Nulty, “A Critical Response to Zhang Longxi,” pp. 141–143).

If, as Derrida notes, phonocentrism is universal, but the sounds in the heartmind are more like cries yearning to be expressed, we have reason to reconsider Kates’ two-part definition of phonocentrism as “presence to a subject . . . and, with that, the privilege of speaking or oral discourse” (emphasis added). This topic should also cast early Chinese texts’ rankings of writing, speech, and “intentions” (*yi* 意 or *zhi* 志) in a new light. It merits a more full analysis than is possible here.

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