

## YIN-YÜ AND TAI-YÜ CHINESE POETRY

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*Yin-yü* 隱語 and *tai-yü* 代語 are two interrelated terms. *Yin-yü*, enigmatic expression, serves its user's purpose of expressing his idea by what may be called camouflaged language. *Tai-yü*, substitute, serves its user's artistic demand on language. While both terms have each a distinctive function to serve, they have yet sometimes been loosely used that the one is made to stand for the other. The reason for this confusion lies in a fundamental inter-relation between the qualities of the two terms. To achieve his purpose, the user of *yin-yü* and *tai-yü* employs alike expressions other than the ones by which objects or ideas are usually designated. Take the following two lines from *Shih-ching* 詩經.

A gentle and debonair mate was sought,  
But a toad was what I found.<sup>(1)</sup>

The toad is clearly a metaphor for the ugly bride and as such it is a *tai-yü* pure and simple. But take these lines, also from *Shih-ching*:

In choosing a fish to eat, must it be a carp from the River?

In choosing a maid for wife, must she be a daughter of Sung?<sup>(2)</sup>

The use of the metaphors here is some what different. In as much as "fish" is a metaphor for conjugal relationship, it is a *tai-yü*; in as much as it is a vehicle the poet uses to express something which he does not want to say plainly, it is *yin-yü*. As a matter of fact, since *yin-yü* combines the conflicting motive of expression and concealment, it is predisposed to the employment of symbolical language, hence *tai-yü* may be taken as the natural tool of *yin-yü*. A *tai-yü* may stand alone as a rhetorical device, but it is almost inconceivable that *yin-yü* may be independent of *tai-yü*.

For this reason *yin-yü* and *tai-yü* are not readily distinguishable when they are isolated from their context, yet they each play a distinctive role in the Chinese language and are two corner stones underlying the Chinese poetic tradition. It is by detecting the purpose and the function that a figure of speech serves in its context that we may determine whether it is a *tai-yü* or *yin-yü*. A critical analysis of *yin-yü* and *tai-yü* would involve the entire body of Chinese poetry; the object of this paper is to do no more than take a preliminary step in their study, that of distinguishing the two types by tracing some of their origins and functions in

Chinese poetry.

*Yin-yü* and *tai-yü* constitute a part of the classical tradition of Chinese poetry. They are classical because they are conventions started from very ancient times and attained to a form through several stages of development. They are a tradition because they are all-enveloping and an almost inescapable influence. To understand what this tradition is we should trace separately the several stages of development from their appearances since the time of the *Shih-ching*.

The earliest incentive for the use of *yin-yü* was the ancient practice of *hsien-shih* 獻詩<sup>(3)</sup>, presentation of poems to the king, for purpose of furnishing him with public opinion. Whatever the manner of collecting and presenting the poems, there is ample evidence in historical records of such an undertaking. The poems of the officials, it seems, were composed and presented to the king by themselves, while those of the commoners were presented through official collectors. In *Shih-ching*, a number of poems of this nature state clearly the motives of composition. They are quite outspoken in praise as well as in satire, condemnation or remonstrance. Let us take three examples from *Shih-ching* in which the purpose of the poet is clearly stated:

Because he has a narrow mind,  
Therefore this poem serves as a satire.<sup>(4)</sup>

Chia-fu made this song,  
To inquire into the king's perversities.<sup>(5)</sup>

(I) have made this song,  
To investigate your fickleness.<sup>(6)</sup>

But at the same time expressions by means of symbolical language was already cultivated. The poem *Ch'ih-hsiao*<sup>(7)</sup> 鷗鷗 (The Owl), reputedly the work of Chou-kung 周公, develops one metaphor throughout the poem. Whoever the author was, he was successful in using the metaphor of the owl as a devious way of lodging a complaint. Thus it was not that good breeding alone required the use of veiled language as a means of remonstrance, but it was recognized that the use of veiled language, or *yin-yü*, was a more effective method to achieve one's end.

*Yin-yü* entered a second stage of development during the Spring and Autumn period. The decline of the Chou House and the rise of several powerful states brought about a delicate balance of power between the reigning house and the different vassal states. An extremely complex net of diplomatic relations held that balance of power. Singing of poems to the accompaniment of music played an important role in the ritual of entertaining diplomats. Soon the occasion of poetry recitation was utilized as an opportunity for suggesting or insinuating diplomatic intentions and responses. This was done by choosing lines from the poems

that expressed the purpose of the moment without reference to their context in the poem itself. The purpose of this practice, obviously, was to say through the poetic quotations which were used as *yin-yü*, what the diplomat was reluctant to say in plain language. This of course presupposed two things. The people of that time were thoroughly familiar with the odes and those engaged in the game had the quick wit to choose appropriate lines and understand the hint implied in them.

Let us take one example from *Tso-chuan* 左傳, which abounds in examples of this kind of diplomatic negotiations. In the 26th year of the Duke of Hsiang 襄 of Lu 魯,<sup>(8)</sup> the Marquis of Chin 晉 seized the Marquis of Wei 衛 and imprisoned him. In the 7th moon of the same year, the Marquis of Ch'i 齊 and the Earl of Cheng 鄭 visited the Marquis of Chin in behalf of the imprisoned marquis of Wei. At the banquet that the Marquis of Chin gave in honour of the two visitors, complements were exchanged by means of singing selected odes. Following that the officials attending the two visiting heads of states each sang an ode through which the impropriety of the imprisonment of the Marquis of Wei was hinted. On hearing these poetic quotations, the Marquis of Chin was persuaded and he promised to release the Marquis of Wei.

Should an envoy be dumb enough not to apprehend the meaning and make proper responses, he not only brought disgrace upon himself, but was sure to fail in his mission. On the other hand, if both sides matched in wit and understanding, the recitation could be carried on back and forth until the negotiation was brought to a successful end, such as a request for military aid, or doing the good offices of requesting the release of a captured head of state, as in the case of the Marquis of Wei. The whole business transaction was negotiated and concluded in an atmosphere of ceremony and music, while the appositeness of the quotations chosen for musical recitation afforded artistic enjoyment. Thus poetry was regarded as a means of investing one with skill in the use of language, and Confucius was contemptuous of the man, who, after having studied the three hundred odes, was unable to make use of his learning when given a government office and failed in diplomatic negotiations when sent out as an envoy. Confucius himself, as we learn from the *Analects*, was prone to the use of *yin-yü*. When Ju-pei 孺悲 desired to see him, he sent word that he was indisposed. No sooner had the messenger stepped out of his door than he took up the *se* and played on it to let Ju-pei know that his refusal to see him was not owing to illness but was deliberate.<sup>(9)</sup> The playing on the *se* was a form of *yin-yü* expressing his real reply. Thus it is by no accident that the most highly cultivated branch of the art of speech of the Spring and Autumn period was the delicate art of praise and censure.

A third factor in enhancing the development of *yin-yü* was the Confucian ethical

precept of *hui* 諱, which means avoiding the mentioning of something that is, taboo. The *Kung-yang-chuan* 公羊傳 sets forth the three needs of *hui*: for the highly honoured, for the one in close kinship and for the illustrious.<sup>(10)</sup> If mentioning must be made, *yin-yü* must be resorted to. In *Tso-chuan*, an entry in the 28th year of the Duke of Hsi 僖 reads: "The heavenly king inspected at Ho-yang 河陽."<sup>(11)</sup> What actually took place was that the king was summoned to Wen 溫 by the duke of Chin as if he had been the head of a vassal state. Because it was a disgrace for the king to be summoned by one of his own vassals, the historian used instead the word "inspect", which is the correct word for describing the king's movements and changed also the name of the place from Wen to Ho-yang. This kind of practice became an established rule not only for historians, but was generally observed by all.

A fourth factor which popularized the use of *yin-yü* was the vogue enjoyed by what was called *yin* 隱 or *sou-tz'u* 廋辭<sup>(12)</sup> during the periods of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States. The *yin* was most commonly a riddle (the word *mi-yü* riddle, had not yet been invented) contained in rhymed verses and the man to whom it was addressed was expected to unravel its meaning. Although *yin* was played as a game, examples of it that have come down in history show that they were chiefly aimed at pointing out to a ruler his weak points or correcting his policies. One of the best known instances *yin* preserved in history is the story of Ching Chuang-wang 荆莊王, who, for three years following his succession to the throne, completely neglected his state duties to indulge in the game of *yin*.<sup>(13)</sup> Ch'eng Kung-chia 成公賈, one of his ministers, finally put a stop to it by playing the game of *yin* with Chuang-wang. "A bird had alighted on a hill in the south", Ch'eng Kung-chia said, "but it hasn't been seen to move, or to fly, or to sing. What bird is this?" In answer Chuang-wang said: "Not to move is to set its will, not to fly is to allow its wings to grow, and not to sing is to observe the ways of the people. Although it hasn't been seen to fly, it will soar up to the sky once it does; although it hasn't been seen to sing, it will astonish the world once it does." And the very next day he gave audience and attended to his state affairs.

While this form of *yin* went out of fashion with time, yet the precedent it created enriched the already well established tradition of using *yin-yü* in poetry. More directly, its influence is seen in such word games as *she-fu* 射覆, to shoot and respond, *ts'ang-t'ou-shih* 藏頭詩, concealing initial word poems, and *shih-mi* 詩謎 poetic riddles.

A fifth factor that helped to develop the tradition of *yin-yü* is the *fu* 賦, a piece of rhythmical exhibitiv prose. Of the various types of *fu* given by Pan Ku 班固 in his *Han-shu i-wen-chih* 漢書藝文志,<sup>(14)</sup> the type whose purpose was to satirize by means of *yin-yü* was considered the one that carried on the poetic tradition of

*feng* 風, remonstrance by indirect means. The five *fu* of Hsün-tzu 荀子, the Confucian philosopher, whose life span roughly corresponded with the whole of the third century B. C., are usually regarded as the prototype of this kind. In all his five *fu*, which are on the rites, the intellect, the cloud, the silk worm, and the needle respectively, Hsün-tzu used the dialogue form in which the subject is described but whose name was withheld until the end. The sixth composition, which completes the volume, Hsün-tzu called *kuei-shih* 侘詩 and gives an explanatory note: "The world being in a state of disorder, may I be permitted to present poems in equivocal language." "Commenting on Hsün-tzu's *fu*, Liu Hsieh 劉勰, author of *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍, says that Hsün's *yin-yü* "runs through a circle of meanings."<sup>(15)</sup>

Thus Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju 司馬相如 wrote "Ta-jen-fu"<sup>(16)</sup> when the emperor Han Wu-ti 漢武帝 indulged in dreams of meeting with gods and attaining everlasting life. Although the elaborate *fu* of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju served rather to tantalize more the desires of the emperor than to suppress them, he was defended by Pan Ku, the historian, who maintained that Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju had achieved the purpose of *feng* like that in the *Shih-ching* despite the excesses of his language.<sup>(17)</sup>

Actually Ch'ü Yuan 屈原 was the first poet who wrote a descriptive poem which ostensibly bears as its title the object depicted, but which yields another meaning at closer examination. The *fu* on "Orange"<sup>(18)</sup> that Ch'ü Yuan wrote is a description of the virtues of the orange tree that tacitly suggests the integrity of Ch'ü Yuan's own character. This type of writing was later called *t'o-wu* 托物, which means to invest the description of an object with an ulterior meaning, which is the real theme. Thus a fashion started of seeking the real meaning of a poem not in the poem itself but in between lines or outside of the poetical utterance.

A seventh factor which contributed to the tradition of *yin-yü* was the *ch'an* 讖 which flourished in the later Han Dynasty. In explaining this term the *Ssu-k'u ti-yao* 四庫提要 says that they are writings which "by means of speciously contrived *yin-yü*, professed to predict fortune and calamity."<sup>(19)</sup> Although *ch'an* was merely a device to explore the credulity of the people in a superstitious age and although it was never revived after it was banned in the Sui Dynasty, it had a tremendous influence while it lasted. Wang Mang 王莽 proclaimed himself emperor and changed the Han Dynasty to Hsin 新 by claiming himself as having answered to the *ch'an*.<sup>(20)</sup> Using the same strategy, the emperor Kuang-wu 光武 defeated Wang and changed the Hsin back to Han also by claiming himself as fulfilling the *ch'an*.<sup>(21)</sup> Although *ch'an*, as a kind of special writing, was never revived, yet the belief in *ch'an* persisted and various forms of it may be detected to this day. For us whose interest is in its linguistic aspect, it is noticeable that the technique used in *ch'an* is perpetuated in the various forms of *yin-yü* that employ punning and *fan-ch'ieh* 反切.

Finally, we must not discount the contribution to the development of *yin-yü* brought by Buddhism. A typical Buddhist method of education is *chi-feng* 機鋒, which may be rendered as point counter point. The teacher wraps his point as it were in a succinct *yin-yü* and throws it at his disciple who is expected to have the wit to comprehend it and give the proper retort. We need only remember how many Chinese literary men were steeped in Buddhist doctrine ever since the Han-Wei periods and how many famous friendships there had been between monks and literary men to realize the inevitability of the influence of this Buddhist method of argument on Chinese poetic expression,

Thus *yin-yü* received enrichment from various sources in different periods so that by the time of the Han-Wei periods it had become a firmly established tradition. But we have yet to take into account the strongest force that helped to perpetuate this firmly established tradition, and that is, the pressure of the tyrannical power of the sovereign of an absolute monarchy. If we recall the tragic fate suffered by many men of letters because of indiscretion in writing, we can fully realize the exigent function of *yin-yü* in poetry. It is not that *yin-yü* was a sure protective measure in reality, as to a suspicious emperor any expression might be suspected as being a veiled form of subversive expression, but it was that the convention of using *yin-yü* as a means of *feng* (satire) had the sanction of weightiest authority so that poets who were brought up in that tradition easily persuaded themselves that they had justification to write in *yin-yü*. Added to this there was of course the natural urge for expression that even an obviously hazardous measure of protection would be wishfully taken to satisfy that demand. It is true that *yin-yü* was used for other purposes than that of voicing discontent of the reigning regime, but to voice political criticism, political discontent, frustration of political ambition or nostalgia for a lost dynasty were by far the subjects that most frequently employed *yin-yü*.

While factors mentioned above either induced the poets to use *yin-yü* or set an example for its use, its chief justification for use is to be found in the precedent of *feng*, which must be regarded as the main stream of influence. The consummation of the *feng* tradition is found in an exposition of the characteristics of *Shih-ching*, a work of the late Han period, and known as the *Shih ta-hsü* 詩大序, the Great Preface,<sup>(22)</sup> to *Shih-ching*. While few readers of the odes now share with the Preface the ideas advanced in it, the fact remains that it has exerted an incalculable influence on the writing and interpretation of poetry until very recent times. The following passage in it justifies the use of *yin-yü*:

The highly placed use the *feng* (influence like the wind) to transform the lowly; the lowly use the *feng* (satire), [by means of *yin-yü*] to satirize the highly

placed. Its style is to be elegant and it remonstrates by means of equivocal language. The one who utters it is free from incrimination; the one who hears it is warned thereby.

Arguments like these evolved what is known as poetic education: "The cultivation of poetry is to be gentle and genuine."<sup>(23)</sup> Gentleness demands that the language used should be *wan* 婉, graciously courteous, which rules out blunt outspokenness. Genuineness implies a trusting nature which is prone to construing intentions and acts in the best possible sense even if they have been proved to be dishonest or treacherous. This poetic education, formulated in the time of Han, became the orthodox Confucian criterion of poetry. It presupposed the use of *yin-yü* as a means of achieving the purpose of gentle and genuine and it earned for the poet the appellation of *feng-jen* 風人.<sup>(24)</sup> In later ages, poets who were regarded as being able to carry on this tradition were usually applauded as having achieved the "gist of *feng-jen*". Shen Te-ch'ien 沈德潛 put it in a nutshell when he said that what was hard to express in plain language should be expressed by means of *yin-yü*, which was the proper style of poetry.<sup>(25)</sup> Making use of this device, a poet might use *yin-yü* in a limited way in a poem or he might use it as the language of a whole series of poems which ostensibly have one subject but which have a real theme concealed in the language used. This is the use of symbolism on an extended basis and have its prototype in the *Li-sao* 離騷, about which there is no space to treat of here.

The term *tai-yü* first appeared in Yang Hsiung's 揚雄 *Fang-yen*, 方言<sup>(26)</sup> in a letter to him from Liu Hsin 劉歆. Liu speaks there of the institution in ancient times of officials appointed to make regular tours in search of "*tai-yü*", children's rhymes, songs and plays. As it was used by Liu, *tai-yü* was a term for the variants of terms and words that existed in the different dialects of that time. It had no rhetorical implication. Later, the term *tai-tzu* 代字, along with such terms as *li-shih* 隸事, or *jung-shih* 用事, allusion, *huan-tzu* 換字, substitute, *yen-yung pu-yen-ming* 言用不言名 name the function but not the object, *hu-wen* 互文, exchange of words, *chia-chieh* 假借, borrowings or *hui-pi* 迴避, avoidance of repetition, were used as figures of speech for rhetorical purposes. During the Ch'ing Dynasty, literary critics favored the term *tai-tzu*. Poets like Wang Fu-chih 王夫之<sup>(27)</sup> and Yüan Mei 袁枚<sup>(28)</sup> used *tai-tzu* or *tai-t'i-tzu* 代替字, and after them Liu Shih-pei 劉師培<sup>(29)</sup> also used *tai-tzu*, so did Wang Kuo-wei 王國維<sup>(30)</sup> in his famous attack of these rhetorical devices in his *Jen-chien t'zu-hua* 人間詞話<sup>(31)</sup>. Now, however, since the distinction between *tzu* 字, character, or a syllabic unit, and *t'zu* 詞, word, has come to be a conscientiously maintained point, critics of today favor the use of *tai-yü*. Whether or not *tai-yü* is an adequate term for figures of speech in general is not a point to be

discussed here, but since a *tai-yü* is a substituting expression comprising of a word or phrase, *tai-yü* and not *tai-tzu*, is the correct term to use.

Although *tai-yü* in Yang Hsiung's *Fang-yen* had no rhetorical implication, yet the collection of variants in different dialects in ancient times provided a favorite foundation for using them as substitutes in order to avoid repetition. Actually, the device of using substitutes started very early. Readers of *Tso-chuan* may have felt that one of the difficulties of reading that work is the confusion created by calling the same person by more than one name, indeed, sometimes by as many as four names.<sup>(32)</sup> In *Shih-ching*, there are the lines:

By the order of heaven the sable bird descends and gives birth to Shang,  
Making its home in the vast vast land of Yin<sup>(33)</sup>

Commenting on this ode Yen Jo-chü 閻若璩<sup>(34)</sup> says that because Shang has been used in the line above, it may not be used again in the next line. The change of Shang for Yin is appropriate to the demand of literary style.

These examples serve to show that *tai-yü* was from ancient times regarded as a rhetorical necessity and used both in prose and poetry. However, its development into a poetic tradition must be attributed to several literary trends during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, to the Han Dynasty, the Six dynasties, the early decades of the T'ang Dynasty and the Sung Dynasty.

The earliest and most influential poet in the use of *tai-yü* was Ch'ü Yüan 屈原, author of *Li-sao* and other poems. *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, which devotes a whole chapter to *Li-sao*,<sup>(35)</sup> calls attention to the fact that it was a model taken by great poets of later periods. The most prominent characteristic of *Li-sao*, as readers of that work will agree, is the symbolism it employs throughout the poem, and that symbolism very soon became the source of inspiration for both *yin-yü* and *tai-yü* users. On this firm foundation laid for *yin-yü* and *tai-yü*, the *fu* writers of the Han Dynasty developed their technique of weaving literary compositions of exceeding splendour. Earlier in the article the type of *fu* which carried on the tradition of *feng* has been pointed out. Another type of *fu*, such as those written by Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju 司馬相如 and Pan Ku 班固, the "Ch'ang-yang fu" 長楊賦 of the former and "Liang-tu fu", 兩都賦 of the latter, for instance, must be regarded as corner stones laid down for the development of *tai-yü*. In order to display erudition and wide knowledge, writers of *fu* plunged deep into all kinds of records and books to search for information of every kind; and in order to make use of all the cumulated store of their intense search, they developed such rhetorical devices as parallelism, anti-thesis, balanced lines of short and long length, so that an unweildy store of raw materials of every kind are laid out in a beautiful form whose essence is symmetry, a symmetry in which every historical allusion, every poetical name, every *tai-yü*



plays its allotted role in a subtly balanced relation to one another. The wealth of *tai-yü* used in such compositions established not only a convention but was itself a large body of material to perpetuate that convention.

The Six Dynasties was great not only in literature but in the fact that it was the first great period of literary criticism. The master piece of literary criticism of this time, *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, formulated the concept of literature and defended the employment of rhetorical devices to achieve literary excellence. The term *tai-yü* is not employed in *Wen-hsin tiao-lung*, but in all the chapters that deal with the technique of writing, various forms of *tai-yü* are discussed. Speaking of the difficulty of avoiding repetition, it says: "Therefore the one skilled in writing may easily boast of producing ten thousand compositions and yet be poverty-stricken for the want of a single word. It is not that words are lacking, but that it is hard to avoid repetition."<sup>(36)</sup> While *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* set up a standard for literary writing, *Wen-hsuan* 文選, an anthology of master pieces of literature, compiled by Prince Hsiao T'ung 蕭統 of Liang, set up models of literary writing and is the greatest monumental work for all kinds of *tai-yü*. Indeed, the use of *tai-yü* in the selected pieces is so prominent that it came to signify to many people as the only characteristic of *Wen Hsuan* and came to be known as *hsuan-t'i* 選體, a term which, in the hands of most critics, received a depreciative sense.

With the model set by the *fu* and the *Wen-hsuan* there arose a natural demand for compilations of information of every kind: history, geography, literature, astronomy, local customs and dialects were searched in order to place at the elbow of the writer a rich store of rare names and *tai-yü*. The precedent of collecting all kinds of information and classifying them started in the Six Dynasties, but it was not until the first decades of T'ang that great encyclopaedias like *Pei-t'ang lei-ch'ao* 北堂類鈔 and *I-wen lei-chü* 藝文類聚 were compiled and published. An examination of the *Hsin T'ang-shu* 新唐書 and *Chiu T'ang-shu* 舊唐書 and the *T'ang hui-yao* 唐會要 will reveal many more titles of encyclopaedias of the same voluminous content. Some of them, it may be noted, are a combination of encyclopaedia and anthology. Ou-yang Hsün 歐陽詢, editor in chief of *I-wen lei-chü*, speaks of the disadvantage of *Wen-hsuan*, which included only literary pieces while *Huang-lan* 皇覽, an encyclopaedia of earlier days, recorded only anecdotes and allusions; therefore, he and his staff adopted the method of including both anecdotes and literary pieces. Thus, his compilation is a strange blend of literature and information and shows incidentally that the compiler saw little difference between an encyclopaedia and an anthology.

An astounding fact about these compilations is that some of the best minds and busiest statesmen of the day were appointed by the emperor as editors in chief.

The compilations of these encyclopaedias and the importance the emperor attached to them testify to the literary trends of the day, which regarded literary splendor derived from an exhibition of cullings of all kinds as the goal of achievement for the writer. The emperor T'ai-tsung 太宗, under whose auspices these works were completed, may be regarded as representing the literary taste of his period. Hence, during the early decades of T'ang, the use of *tai-yü* in literary work had already become inescapable for any writer. Wang Fu-chih 王夫之, who attacked the use of *tai-yü* claimed that it was a practice beneath the notice of such poets as Li Po 李白, Tu Fu 杜甫, Ts'en Shen 岑參 and Kao Shih 高適, was speaking only from the total impression their poetry gave him. The freshness of their poetry gives to one the impression that they did not use *tai-yü*, yet they all did. Take one example each from Li Po and Tu Fu. Li's poem to "Meng Hao-jan" 孟浩然<sup>(37)</sup> contains the line

Enraptured in the moonlight I often slip into *sheng*

in which *sheng* 聖 (saint, sainthood) is a *tai-yü* for wine and is used instead of wine

so that it may form a counter part of *chün* 君 (the king), in the following line. Tu Fu has the famous couplet which a number of critics have remarked on:

The allotted place where only yesterday the jade fish was buried,

All too soon the gold bowl has reappeared in the world.<sup>(38)</sup>

Here Tu is speaking of the uncertain fate of imperial graves which all too soon were robbed and their contents reappeared in the world. He uses here not only jade fish and gold bowl as *tai-yü*, but changed the jade bowl in the original story into gold so that it might balance with the jade fish of the first line.

The Sung Dynasty is better known for its discourses on poetry and less for poetic creation. During this time, attempts were made to lay down rules for the technique of writing poetry and spread them among the public by publishing books of this type for students of poetry and school boys. *Yüeh-fu chih-mi* 樂府指迷, *Shih-jen yü-hsieh* 詩人玉屑, and *Lü-shih t'ung-meng hsün* 呂氏童蒙訓, to name some of the most popular of them, crystallized poetic theories of the earlier periods into hard and fast rules for the student. *Tai-yü*, a loose term for figures of speech, played an important part in these writings. *Yüeh-fu chih-mi*, a short but influential work, stresses the use of *tai-yü*. For peach blossoms, it says, the name peach blossom must not be used; it should be substituted by "pink rain" or "liu-lang" 劉郎. For the willow such expressions as "chang-t'ai" 章臺 or "pa-an" 灞岸 might be used. "Green clouds coiled", it says, vividly hints the coiffure and "to retire on the Hsiang bamboo" is plainly the mat.<sup>(39)</sup> A phrase, *yen-jung pu yen-ming* 言用不言名 (to name the function and not the object) was created. Says *Shih-jen yü-hsieh*, "The secret of the excellence of using allusions and to carve the line is to name the function

and not the object. Ching-kung 荆公, Tung-p'ò 東坡 and Shan-ku 山谷 were the only three men who knew how to handle it."<sup>(40)</sup>

As may be expected, the search for obscure terms to use as *tai-yü*, which had already had its initiation a long time ago, intensified. Unapt and grotesque specimens of *tai-yü* appeared and in turn brought about the condemnation of such a great poet like Lu Yu 陸游, who attributed the excessive use of *tai-yü* to the intensive study of *Wen-hsuan*.<sup>(41)</sup> In the early years of the Dynasty, he said, literary men made *Wen-hsuan* the object of concentrated study. As a result of that grass must be referred to as *wang-sun* 王孫 (prince), plum trees as *i-shih* 驛使 (courier), the moon as *wang-shu* 望舒 (charioteer of the moon), and landscape as *ch'ing-hui* 清輝 (serene atmosphere). By the time he wrote, Lu said, things had become even worse than before, and he gave such absurd specimens of *tai-yü* as *Ch'ing-chou ts'ung-shih* 青州從事 for wine and *pai-shui chen-jen* 白水真人 for money, and yet, Lu went on to say, men like Leng-chai 冷齋<sup>(42)</sup> and Man-sou 漫叟<sup>(43)</sup> were so pleased with them that they made it their sole pursuit. Liu Ch'en-wong 劉辰翁, another noted writer of the Sung Dynasty, also deplored the use of *tai-yü* and even went so far as to say that the appearance of *Wen-hsuan* was a calamity for the development of poetry.<sup>(44)</sup>

Other strong objectors to the use of *tai-yü* since the Sung period include such a great poet like Yüan Mei 袁枚,<sup>(45)</sup> such a great scholar like Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武,<sup>(46)</sup> and men who were both poet and scholar like Wang Fu-chih<sup>(47)</sup> and Wang Kuo-wei.<sup>(48)</sup> But while the arguments advanced by these writers might have served to curb the hunt for fantastic terms to use as *tai-yü*, they in no way deterred the general use of *tai-yü* in poetry, a use in which even the attackers themselves shared. In this connection, we find that a *tai-yü* may either serve the purpose of avoiding a defective rhyme, repetition of the same expression, or a defective tonal cadence; it may also be used as a euphemism, a means to maintain symmetrical construction, or it may be a new imagery created by the poet to enrich the content of a poem. Let us now take an example or two of each kind.

First, *tai-yü* used to avoid a defective rhyme. Kao Shih 高適, the T'ang poet, has the line that the emperor

Decreed the invasion of the southeastern barbarians.<sup>(49)</sup>

For "barbarians" Kao Shih used *jung* 戎 while the proper term should be *i* 夷. Both *Shih-chi* 史記 and *Han-shu* 漢書 have biographies of the Southwestern *i* and in the poem Kao Shih used *i*. But since the rhyme scheme he used did not permit the use of *i* he used *jung* as a *tai-yü*.

Liu Tsung-yüan 柳宗元, another T'ang poet, has the lines:

In the glowing air birds turn somersaults on high,

And the deep light shines upon the patterned scales<sup>(50)</sup>

What the poet wants to say in the second line is "fish", but since the rhymes he used forbade the use of *yü* 魚 (fish), he used *wen-lin* 文鱗 (patterned scales) as a *tai-yü*.

Second, *tai-yü* used to avoid repetition of the same expression. In Ku-shih shih-chiu shou 古詩十九首, the one that begins with *T'ing-chung yu ch'i-shu* 庭中有奇樹 has the following lines:

A rare tree stands in the court yard,  
With luxuriant *hua* 華 (flowers) blooming among green leaves.  
I stretched up and picked the *jung* 榮 (flowers),

So that I might send them to the one I am thinking about.<sup>(51)</sup>

The word "flower" appears both in the second and the third line, but two different words are used for it. *Erh-ya* 爾雅 says the bloom of a tree is called *hua* and that of a grass is called *yung*. The proper word here then should be *hua* and not *jung*, but in order to avoid repetition the poet uses *jung* for *hua*. Ku-shih shih-chiu shou has another similar use of *tai-yü* in the poem which begins with *Meng-tung han-ch'i chih* 孟冬寒氣至:

On three and five the bright moon is full;

On four and five the *yen-t'u* (the moon rabbit) is indented.<sup>(52)</sup>

Here, *yen-t'u* 蟾兔 the rabbit that is said to inhabit the moon, is used as a *tai-yü* for moon in order to avoid repetition.

Third, *tai-yü* used to avoid defective cadence. The requirement of tonal harmony in a line of poetry is as important as rhymes are at the end of a line. In Wang Wei's 王維 "Chung-nan Shan" the first two lines read:

T'ai-i is near the heavenly capital;

Its hills stretch out right to the sea.<sup>(53)</sup>

A note to the poem explains that T'ai-i 太乙 is the name of a high mountain twenty *li* south of Chung-nan mountain and that Wang must have used it as a variant for Chung-nan, but it does not offer any reason why Wang used a variant. The reason, as we see it, is that the cadence of the line requires that the first two characters should either be both *che* 仄 (oblique) in tone or one *p'ing* 平 (even) and one *che*. As the characters *chung* and *nan* are both *p'ing* in tone, they might not be used, so the substitution of another mountain in its place.

Fourth, *tai-yü* used as euphemism. Things like death and disgrace are associated so unmistakably with the most unpleasant feelings that euphemistic expressions for them exist universally. In a monarchical government as China's was where everything relating to the monarch had to be couched in terms of praise and grandeur, it was doubly impossible to speak plainly of such things when they happened to the emperor. Thus since very ancient days the death of an emperor was termed *peng*

崩, meaning the sudden collapse of a mountain. In poetry, different stories of an emperor's attainment to the status of a god were used, depending upon the requirement of the couplet and the suitability to the particular instance of application. After reading a poem written by the emperor T'ang Hsuen-tsung 唐玄宗 the T'ang poet Liu Yü-hsi 劉禹錫 wrote one too in which we find the following couplet:

All of a sudden he ascended heaven riding on the white clouds,  
And the world is left only with his song of the autumn wind.<sup>(54)</sup>

Liu used the allusion "white clouds" as a euphemism for the death of Hsuen-tsung. The song of the autumn wind in the second line, incidentally, is another *tai-yü*. The title of Hsuen-tsung's poem was "Wang Nü-chi Shan" 望女几山 (Viewing Nü-chi mountain), but Liu used the more poetic title, "Ch'iu-feng tz'u" 秋風辭 (Song of the Autumn Wind) of the emperor Han Wu-ti 漢武帝 as a *tai-yü* so that it might balance with the "white clouds" of the first line.

As to *tai-yü* used in an instance of disgrace suffered by an emperor, we may take Tu Fu's line

Even the Supremely Honored was besmirched with dust,<sup>(55)</sup>

in his poem Pei-cheng 北征, where meng-ch'en 蒙塵 (besmirched with dust) is used as a *tai-yü* for the emperor's flight from his capital in a time of mutiny.

Fifth, *tai-yü* used to maintain symmetrical construction. This use of *tai-yü* may be said to be the most fundamental function of *tai-yü*. All the other uses may be dismissed as caused by exigency, but the use of *tai-yü* to maintain balance, to form counterparts of expression or antithesis is the greatest attraction of *tai-yü* and the use it most frequently serves. It is the stuff out of which traditional poetic diction is made of. To many it is that which imparts depth to a poem, enriches its content and endowers a poem with the typical atmosphere that the poet wants to create. In his famous poems of literary criticism, Tu Fu achieves his purpose of contrast by the contrasting *tai-yü* of a small bird and a large whale in

Or look at the jade birds sporting among the orchids,

There are no thoughts of pulling the whale in the deep blue sea.<sup>(56)</sup>

The jade birds here are a *tai-yü* for poets who concentrated on the niceties of poetic technique and pulling the whale in the sea stands for those who were chiefly concerned with the power of imagination.

In the following lines Meng Hao-jan 孟浩然 also uses *tai-yü* to bring out a vivid contrast:

White hair hastens on the arrival of old age,

The azure warmth speeds away the departing years.<sup>(57)</sup>

*Ch'ing-yang* 青陽 (azure warmth), a *tai-yü* for spring, provides the parallel which the couplet requires and the contrast of the colors of white and blue paints a more

vivid picture than the word spring can.

Lastly, often it is not a conventional *tai-yü* that the poet uses, but a metaphor that the poet creates such as the metaphors in Li Ho's 李賀 lines on the blazing sun of the sixth month of the year:

The fiery mirror flashes open in the east,

Its halo of a wheel quivers in suspense on its upward course.<sup>(58)</sup>

Li's use is what the Sung critics called name the function and not the object. It is, in simple language, a metaphor.

Although a *tai-yü* that is a newly created metaphor delights the reader by the freshness of the imagery it conjures up, a *tai-yü* that has historical association enhances the reader's sensitivity to a notion through its association with the original allusion. So in Su Shih's 蘇軾 lines about leaving office and enjoying a free life with his younger brother Su Ch'e 蘇轍 he uses *tai-yü* in

Next year let me leave in the company of Shih-lung,

Two white ducks lost in ten thousand *mou* of waves.<sup>(59)</sup>

Shih-lung 士龍 was the gifted younger brother of Lu Chi 陸機.<sup>(60)</sup> By referring to Lu Shih-lung<sup>(61)</sup> when he spoke of his own brother, he added the literary gift with which Lu's name calls up to that of his own brother. The white ducks is a conventional *tai-yü* for that of a simple and free life, but a mere hope becomes concrete by his supplying a picture, conventional though it might be.

The tradition of using *yin-yü* and *tai-yü* manifests the age-old reliance on the building up of a poetic diction in order to avoid commonness of expression and to maintain the atmosphere of poetry with heavily invested associations. To the upholders of this tradition *yin-yü* and *tai-yü* were the most proper language for poetry. They recognize that poetry is an artifact and that its language is to be different from prose and daily speech, even to the extent of using a highly artificial language. In moments when the poet's imagination was kindled he drew freely from the poetry he had read, which in China used to mean what he could recite and was part of his mental storage. He would understand Keats' words that "poetry should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts and appear almost as a remembrance."<sup>(62)</sup> In China, more than in the West, great emphasis has always been placed on the intensely tenacious and deeply affectionate bonds between master and disciple, between an old scholar and a young scholar, between an old poet and a young poet, thus influence was transmitted from generation to generation, and united the oldest with the youngest. This explains the poeticalness of not only poetic diction, but of places, names of places, flowers, names of flowers, climates, the year and the month; in a word, all that heaven holds and that the earth grows are poetical to the poet because they are known to him

through poetry that for ages have invested them with poetical associations.

Up to very recent times, this poetic tradition was not the monopoly of only poets. It was an inalienable part of the Chinese culture which every educated man shared and used to the best of his ability. The poet, indeed, wrote poetry, but the established poetical conventions enabled the use of poetical form for celebration, lamentation, letter writing and other purposes. Taking advantage of such a tradition, a poet could press a great deal in a short poem. On the other hand, a man who did not have much to say might also take advantage of this tradition to say a great deal without meaning much.

In conclusion I would like to quote from the chapter "Yin-hsiu" 隱秀 from *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* to supplement what may have not been clearly enough said in the discussion. The chapter "Yin-hsiu" is a fragment but it contains passages that describe vividly these two different types. *Yin* may be identified with *yin-yü* and *hsiu* 秀 may be identified with *tai-yü*:

Therefore the flowers of literature are either *yin* or *hsiu*. *Yin* means an ulterior motive beyond the composition; *hsiu* means that which stands out in a composition. The skill of *yin* is testified by a double meaning; the excellence of *hsiu* is its outstandingness [in a composition].

Again: "When the idea is outside of the words it is *yin*; what overflows before the eyes in *hsiu*."

#### NOTES

- (1) *Shih-ching* 詩經, "Pei" 邶, "Hsin-t'ai" 新臺
- (2) *Ibid.* 詩經, "Ch'en" 陳, "Heng-men" 衡門
- (3) See Chu Tzu-ch'ing 朱自清, *Shih yen-chih pien* 詩言志辨, "Shih yeh-chih" 詩言志; Ku Chi-kang 顧頡剛 *Ku-shih-pien* 古史辨 v. 3, p. 327
- (4) *Shih-ching* 詩經, "Wei" 魏, "Ke-chü" 葛履
- (5) *Ibid.* 詩經, "Hsiao-ya" 小雅 "Chieh Nan-shan" 節南山
- (6) *Ibid.* 詩經, "Hsiao-ya" 小雅 "Ho-jen-szu" 何人斯
- (7) *Ibid.* 詩經, "Pin" 邠, "Ch'ih-hsiao" 鷓鴣
- (8) *Tso-chuan* 左傳, "Hsiang-kung" 26th year 襄公二十六年
- (9) *Lun-yü* 論語, "Yang-ho" 陽貨
- (10) *Kung-yang-chuan* 公羊傳, "Min-kung" 2nd year 閔公二年
- (11) *Tso-chuan* 左傳, "Hsi-kung" 28th year 僖公二十八年
- (12) See *Kuo-yü* 國語, "Chin-yü 5" 晉語五
- (13) See *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu* 呂氏春秋, "Ch'ung-yen p'ien" 重言篇
- (14) *Han-shu* 漢書 "I-wen-chih" 藝文志

- (15) *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍 “Ch'üan-fu” 詮賦
- (16) *Han-shu* 漢書, “Yang Hsiung-chuan” 揚雄傳
- (17) *Han-shu* 漢書, “Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju-chuan” 司馬相如傳
- (18) *Ch'u-tz'u* 楚辭, “Chiu-chang” 九章, “Chü-sung” 橘頌
- (19) *Ssu-k'u Ch'üan-shu tsung-mu*, 四庫全書總目, chüan 6 卷六, p. 14a
- (20) *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 資治通鑑, Chüan 36 卷三十六, “Han-chi” 漢紀, 28
- (21) *Ibid.* 資治通鑑, Chüan 39 卷三十九, “Han-chi” 漢紀, 31
- (22) The authorship of the “Great Preface” remains a point of controversy. The old allegiance that it was the work of Tzu-hsia, disciple of Confucius, has been completely discredited.
- (23) *Li-chi* 禮記 “Ching-chieh-p'ien” 經解篇
- (24) *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍, “Ming-shih-p'ien” 明詩篇
- (25) Sheng Te-ch'ien 沈德潛, *Tu-shih ou-p'ing* 杜詩偶評
- (26) Yang Hsiung 揚雄, *Fang-yen* 方言, Chüan 13 卷十三, (*T'sung-shu chi-ch'eng* 叢書集成)
- (27) Wang Fu-chih 王夫之, 1619-1692 scholar and poet
- (28) Yüan Mei 袁枚, 1716-1797, poet
- (29) Liu Shih-p'ei 劉師培, 1884-1919, scholar
- (30) Wang Kuo-wei 王國維, 1876-1927
- (31) Wang Kuo-wei 王國維, *Jen-chien tz'u-hua* 人間詞話
- (32) *Tso-chuan* 左傳, “Hsüan-kung” 4th year 宣公四年
- (33) *Shih-ching* 詩經, “Shang-sung” 商頌, “hsüan-niao” 玄鳥
- (34) Yen Jo-chü 閻若璩, *Ku-wen shang-shu shu-cheng* 故尙書疏證, chüan 4 卷四
- (35) *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍, “Pien-sao-p'ien” 辨騷篇
- (36) *Ibid.* 文心雕龍, “Lien-tzu-p'ien” 練字篇
- (37) Li Po 李白, Tseng Meng Hao-jan 贈孟浩然
- (38) Tu Fu 杜甫, *Chu-chiang shih* 諸將詩
- (39) Shen Po-shih 沈伯時, (Sung) *Yüeh-fu chih-mi* 樂府指迷
- (40) Wei Ch'ing-chih 魏慶之, (Sung) *Shih-jen yü-hsieh* 詩人玉屑, chüan 10 卷十
- (41) Lu Yu 陸游, *Lao-hsüeh-an pi-chi* 老學庵筆記, chüan 8 卷八
- (42) Leng-chai 冷齋, pen name of Sung monk Hui-hung 惠洪, author of *Leng-chai yeh-hua* 冷齋夜話
- (43) Man-sou 漫叟, pen name of unidentified Sung writer, was author of “Man-sou shih-hua 漫叟詩話
- (44) Liu Ch'en-wong 劉辰翁, *Hsü-ch'i-chi* 須溪集, chüan 6 卷六 (*Yü-chang tsung-shu* 豫章叢書)
- (45) Yüan Mei 袁枚, *Sui-yüan shih-hua* 隨園詩話, chüan 9 卷九
- (46) Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武, *Jih-chih-lu* 日知錄, chüan 20 卷二十



- (47) Wang Fu-chih 王夫之, *Hsi-t'ang yung-jih hsü-lun* 夕堂永日緒論, (Ch'uan-shan i-shu, v. 73 船山遺書)
- (48) Wang Kuo-wei 王國維, *Jen-chien tz'u-hua*.
- (49) Kao Shih 高適, "Li-Yün-nan cheng-man-shih" 李雲南征蠻詩
- (50) Liu Tsung-yüan 柳宗元, "Teng P'u-chou shih-ch'eng" 登蒲州石城
- (51 52) See Ku-shih shih-chiu-shou 古詩十九首
- (53) Wang Wei 王維, "Chung-nan-shan" 終南山
- (54) Liu Yü-hsi 劉禹錫, "San-hsiang-i-lou fu-tu Hsüan-tsung "Wang Nü-chi-shan" shih, hsiao-ch'en fei-jan yu-kan" 三鄉驛樓伏睹玄宗望女几山詩小臣斐然有感
- (55) Tu Fu 杜甫, "Pei-cheng" 北征
- (56) Tu Fu 杜甫, "Hsi-wei lu-chüeh-chü" 戲爲六絕句
- (57) Meng Hao-jan 孟浩然, "Kuei Chung-nan-shan" 歸終南山
- (58) Li Ho 李賀, "Ho-nan fu-shih shih-erh-yüeh yüeh-tz'u" 河南府試十二月樂詞
- (59) Su Shih 蘇軾, "Tz'u-yün Tzu-yu shu Wang Chin-ch'ing hua shan-shui i-shou" 次韻子由書王晉卿畫山水一首
- (60) Lu Chi 陸機, 261-303, literary writer of the Chin Dynasty.
- (61) Lu Yün 陸雲, 262-303, brother of Lu Chi, also a literary writer.
- (62) John Keats, Letter to Taylor, 27, Feb., 1819.

# 中國詩中的隱語和代語

李 祁

“隱語”代語都是修辭的方法。用“隱語”的主要動機是避忌諱。既然有所忌諱，便只得採用比喻來暗示。用“代語”的主要動機是盡致的形容。平板的描寫不能喚起想像，因此往往採用比喻來烘托。“隱語”和“代語”都採用比喻，然而二者動機不同，收效也各異。它們是兩個不同的，不是兩個可以互相替代的術語。這篇文的目的，只是辨別這兩個術語在中國詩（廣義的）中不同的意義和作用。

遠在古代獻詩的時期，詩人便採用隱語來諷諫。其後，在春秋時代，賦詩常常成為各國間折衝樽俎之際的一種外交手段。在戰國時代，“讒”的遊戲盛行。有些國君喜歡作這遊戲，臣子也就利用它來作諷諫。到了漢代，鋪張的賦體為當時的文學主潮；為了擁護這種文體，文人標榜，以為“諷”是作賦的目的。同時，以溫柔敦厚為主旨的詩教也成立了。從此詩人托物寄懷，旨在言外，隱語便成了詩的正宗語言。正如沈德潛所說：“難顯言者，以隱語出之，此詩人之體”。

“代語”起源於一種表達的要求。凡因經驗之特異，情感之強烈，或事物之動人，使得詩人感於必須用卓越的語言以表出之者，往往採用比喻以求達到這目的。這些比喻，（即“代語”）初用時很新穎，可是沿用積累，便漸漸成了修辭的套語，給作詩的人以種種修辭上的便利。不過，舊的代語雖然變成了套語，新的仍不斷產生。

文心雕龍沒有提出“代語”這一名詞，但“隱秀篇”中所說的“秀”即包括了“代語”。“隱秀篇”殘缺不全，有兩句見於張戒著歲寒堂詩話而不見於今本的最簡明的辨別了“隱語”和“代語”，這兩句話是：“情在詞外者曰隱，狀溢目前者曰秀”。