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I Les poèmes fleurissant sur les arbres morts
—Remarque sur un type d'image poétique

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L'arbre sert généralement à symboliser, en Chine ou en occident, la vie en évolution perpétuelle ou le dynamisme de croissance. Mais dans la poésie classique chinoise, on découvre souvent des arbres morts qui, contrairement aux images d'arbre plus répandues, vont épuiser leur dernière source de vie.

C'est Mei Sheng 枚乘 (?-140 av. J.-C), poète des Han Antérieurs, qui introduisit en premier lieu cette sorte d'image d'arbres morts dans l'oeuvre littéraire. Dans un chapitre des *Sept leçons* 七發, il représente un paulownia, vivant au fond d'une haute montagne, exposé aux sévères épreuves de la nature, et toujours menacé de mort. De cet arbre abattu, on fabrique un luth dont la mélodie pathétique émeut même le coeur des oiseaux et des animaux. L'auteur décrit en détail la situation tragique du paulownia pour insister sur l'origine de ce jeu émouvant du luth. Il offrit, en effet, aux poètes postérieurs ce modèle d'arbre mort.

Yu Xin 庾信 (513-581), poète des Six Dynasties, qui vécut 700 ans

après Mei Sheng, invente à nouveau un type d'arbre mort. Il dépeint dans le *Fu sur un arbre mort* 枯樹賦 ainsi que dans d'autres oeuvres poétiques beaucoup d'arbres sans vie, évoquant la peine de l'auteur lui-même. En effet, Yu Xin, originairement sujet des Liang 梁, une des Dynasties du Sud, passa malgré lui la dernière moitié de sa vie sous la souveraineté des Zhou 周, pays nordique et vieil ennemi. Tout en imitant l'image de l'arbre mort de Mei Sheng, il y ajoute l'action de symboliser son coeur. Les poètes postérieurs reprirent certainement son image de l'arbre ainsi que celle de Mei Sheng.

Dans les oeuvres de Lu Zhao-lin 盧照鄰 (637?-689?), poète des Tang, né un demi siècle après la mort de Yu Xin, on peut trouver un autre type d'arbre mort. Quelques arbres aux branches et aux feuilles peu nombreuses, représentés dans le *Fu sur poirier malade* 病梨樹賦 et dans d'autres ouvrages, semblent épuisés et misérables, évoquant ainsi l'auteur alors frappé par une paralysie bien grave. Le poète déplore par les images de l'arbre mort l'affaiblissement de son corps et de son esprit.

Le quatrième et le dernier poète qu'on traite ici, c'est Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), né 30 ans après le décès de Lu Zhao-lin. Parmi les poèmes qu'il composa lors de son séjour à Cheng-du 成都, 4 oeuvres traitent des 4 catégories d'arbres suivants : le cyprès, l'oranger, le trachycarpus et le camphrier, menacés également par la mort. Ces poèmes, tout en étant postérieurs à ceux de l'arbre mort déjà vu chez Mei Sheng, Yu Xin et Lu Zhao-lin, n'en sont pas moins innovateurs. Tandis que les arbres de Yu Xin et de Lu Zhao-lin reflètent la douleur des poètes eux-mêmes, ceux de Du Fu expriment plutôt sa critique envers la politique ou la société de son époque.

Une image poétique, une fois produite par un poète, peut régler la pensée de sa postérité, mais en même temps il peut s'y ajouter par la suite quelque autre sens pour établir un nouveau type d'image.

II *P'ai-huai* 徘徊 and *Shao-yao* 逍遙

—a study of Juan Chi 阮籍's *Yung-huai-shih* 詠懷詩

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Juan Chi's *Yung-huai-shih*, a series of eighty-two poems, has remained enigmatic to many readers and critics who try to find out what the poet really intends in these poems. Granting the difficulty in locating the author's real intention, I shall not concern myself with such an attempt.

What I shall study is the difference between *p'ai-huai* and *shao-yao* in these poems. No doubt these two terms do not have entirely the same meaning, but we often cannot tell the subtle difference between them.

P'ai-huai appears in four poems of the *Yung-huai-shih*, three of which are anthologized into *Wên-hsüan* 文選. The first one (夜中不能寐, 起坐彈鳴琴) is obviously the most well known as it has always been placed at the beginning of his work. The word *p'ai-huai* depicts a solitary and dispassionate Juan Chi who continues to *p'ai-huai* eternally. It allows the readers to see the blockage between the real world and the authour out of which he can never escape.

On the other hand, the word *shao-yao* appears in six poems, even though only one of which is included in *Wênhsüan*. This word signifies a higher world above the mundane human space—the 'lower world'. It is a realm created in the poet's imagination.

The poet who is in the state of *shao-yao* sometimes looks up to this 'higher imaginative world' and sometimes the poet himself becomes part of this 'higher world'. But in the case of *p'ai-huai*, the poet is always looking at himself who continues to *p'ai-huai*, and the readers who witness this may eventually be led to such a state of mind unnoticedly.

III Comparison between Han Yü 韓愈 and Pai Chu-i 白居易

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Han Yü and Pai Chu-i rank among the most important literati in the the T'ang dynasty. Both of them are free from traditional fixed forms and create new styles which have significant influence on Song literature. Yet they differ in many aspects.

Han Yü can best be characterized as one seeking "opposition", while Pai Chu-i resolves to "reconciliation". Such contrast manifests itself in many ways. On the whole, they are both contemptuous and aloof to public opinions about their works, and resort mainly to their own judgements. The works which they value most are generally disregarded, and those they disregard generally valued. Their reactions, however, are completely different. While Han Yü stands firm against his times, and tries to live up to the principles of "returning to antiquity", Pai Chu-i accepts such disregard and is contended that his poems be enjoyed only by himself and his intimate friends.

Han Yü looks up to Yang Hsiung 揚雄 as his ideal, because Yang Hsiung does not allow himself to be sullied by the world and carries through his convictions in solitude. Yang Hsiung has in fact been portrayed as typical of the solitary philosopher in the poems written by Tso Ssü 左思 and Pao Chao 鮑照. Pao Chao has written "He renounces the world and the world deserts him" 身世兩相棄. Paraphrasing this famous phrase, Pai Chu-i often says, "I have forgot the world and the world has forgot me" 身世兩相忘. Changing only one word, he brings out very precisely the indifference he feels between himself and the world. He remains rather composed despite such opposition, and proclaims himself satisfied and independent of the world.

Han Yü is much more self-conscious than Pai Chu-i and he often caricatures himself in his poetry. Such self-caricature and humourous tone which are absent in Pai Chu-i's poetry is very much a result of Han's characteristic spirit of "opposition". Pai Chu-i avoids such opposition and prefers the "middle". He tries to satisfy himself in

the middle of every situation. There are many phrases of "neither A nor B", for example, "neither young nor old", "neither high position nor low position". This suggests that he prefers to accept his situation and is pleased with the present. A "Middle-seclusion" 中隱 between officialdom and seclusion is the typical attitude of his reconciliation.

Comparison between Han Yü and Pai Chu-i sets off the characteristics of their literature from each other, illustrating the powerfulness of Han Yü and the gentleness of Pai Chu-i.

IV Li Chieh-jên 李劫人's description of Ch'eng-tu 成都

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Among writers born in Ssü-ch'uan 四川, Li Chieh-jên's works definitely carry a lot of more local colours unique to his home town than the others. Between 1936 and 1937, he has published three historical novels, namely *Ssü shui wei lan* 死水微瀾, *Pao feng yu ch'ien* 暴風雨前 and *Ta po* 大波. In these novels, he does not describe the way of life of his characters in detail as Lao She 老舍 does. He concentrates rather on describing the background of the stories.

To avoid monotonous description of the background, Li Chieh-jên resorts to the following devices. First, even though he devotes much space to describing background scenes in his stories, for example, within the length of 140,000 words in *Ssü shui wei lan*, there are six paragraphs of more than a thousand words about Ch'eng-tu, Li Chieh-jên has always been skilful in including many objects seen from different perspectives in his rather detailed description. Second, there are always a rich variety of objects and events such as famous places and historic sites, unknown streets, restaurants, teahouses, markets, marriage ceremony, funeral and so on. Third, he sometimes describes them from a distance, and sometimes at a close-up, thus allowing many different angles from which the readers can look at the events.

There are two factors, I think, which allow him to describe Ch'eng-tu vividly. One reason is that Li Chieh-jên has lived for a long time

in Ch'eng-tu. While other famous Ssü-ch'uan writers leave their home in their youth, Li Chieh-jên has spent most of his life there. He diligently studies the history, customs, and ways of life in his home town, thus allowing himself much intimacy with the objects he describes.

The other reason is that he has been deeply influenced by the 19th French literary trend which, among other things, emphasized very much the use of detailed and accurate background descriptions. He has studied in France from 1919 to 1924 and translated many French literary works into Chinese. He is in fact regarded as a translator of French literature in the beginning of his literary career. We can find obvious traces of such influence in his novels.

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