

## Problems of Translating Descriptive Binomes in the *Fu*

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Among the numerous genres of classical Chinese literature, the *fu* 賦 has the most ornate, elaborate, and difficult language. Arthur Waley once described the *fu* as working a kind of "word magic" that achieves its effect by "a purely sensuous intoxication of rhythm and language."<sup>1</sup> The *fu* is notorious for its long catalogues of animal, plant, fish, and mineral names, many of which are often only vaguely identified even by the most learned commentators. Nevertheless, there is usually enough information on these terms to allow the translator to produce a Western language equivalent that approximates the original. The most difficult problem the *fu* translator faces is how to understand and render the descriptive words that are even more imperfectly understood than the catalogue names. In recent months I have been carefully studying some of these words, and I would like to take this opportunity to discuss some of the problems that I have found in trying to put them into English.

The most troublesome words in the *fu* are the descriptives that either alliterate or rhyme. In modern Chinese these words are customarily called *lien-mien tzŭ* 聯綿字.<sup>2</sup> In earlier periods, if they were designated at all, they were called *shuang-shêng* 雙聲 (alliterations) or *tieh-yŭn* 疊韻 (rhyming compounds).<sup>3</sup> Although descriptive binomes are common in earlier poetry, especially the *Shih ching* 詩經 and the *Ch'u tzŭ* 楚辭, writers of the *fu* delighted in using as many of these expressions as they could, and the rarer the word, the better. Unlike earlier poets, they also did not hesitate to string six, eight, ten, even a dozen descriptive binomes together in a single series.

To understand these words, one naturally consults the commentaries. Invariably, the commentators give what appears to the modern readers as frustratingly imprecise explanations. They tell us that an expression is "*kao mao* 高貌 (descriptive of height)," or *luan mao* 亂貌 (descriptive of disorder)," or if they really wish to be exact, "*liu shui shêng mao* 流水聲貌 (descriptive of the sound of flowing water)." Given this state of affairs,

some scholars have claimed that these expressions make the *fu* impossible to translate. In the 1920's, Arthur Waley said the following about translating Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju 司馬相如 (179 B.C.-117 B.C.), who is arguably "the greatest creator of these expressions in Chinese literature and also, proportionate to the brevity of his work, one of the principal users"<sup>4</sup>: "I do not think that anyone who has read Hsiang-ju's poems will blame me for not attempting to translate them. Such a glittering torrent of words has never since poured from the pen of any writer in the world. Beside him Euphues seems timid and Apuleius cold. He sports with language as a dolphin sports with the sea. Such eloquence cannot be described, much less translated."<sup>5</sup>

Although Dr. Waley aptly characterizes Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju's style, I believe he was wrong in suggesting that his *fu* are untranslatable. Indeed, since Waley made his pronouncement, there have been three Western language translations of Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju most difficult composition, the "Shang-lin fu" 上林賦 or "Rhapsody on the Imperial Park": one in German by Erwin von Zach, one in English by Burton Watson, and one in French by Yves Hervouet.<sup>6</sup>

Although Zach did not make a special study of these words, he was aware of the problems in trying to translate them. In explaining why the *fu* was such a neglected genre in Western Sinology as of the 1920's, Zach comments: "Der Grund dieser Vernachlässigung dürfte darin liegen, dass sich diese Literaturgattung durch eine gehäufte Anwendung seltener, sonst nicht oder wenig gebrauchter Worte resp. Wortcombinationen auszeichnet. Ob nun diese Binome Ellipsen vorstellen aus seinerzeit allgemein bekannten Versen oder dialektischen Ursprunges sind oder endlich als reine Kunstprodukte anzusehen sind, wage ich nicht zu entscheiden. Sicher ist, dass sie der Übersetzung grosse Schwierigkeiten entgegenstellen, besonders auch dadurch, dass die chinesischen Kommentatoren dieselben gar nicht oder nur sehr unbefriedigend erklären. Gewöhnlich begnügen sie sich damit, eine allgemeine Umschreibung zu geben, sie sagen z. B. 相視貌 'eine Art, sich gegenseitig anzusehen', ohne aber nähere Bestimmungen hinzuzufügen (z. B. sich starr oder wild oder schweigend oder erstaunt etc. ansehen), was dem Leser aus dem Kontext zu schliessen überlassen bleibt. Bei vielen dieser Binome kann die damit verknüpfte Bedeutung erst aus deren Gebrauch in der späteren Literatur deduziert werden; er verbleibt dann aber immer noch eine nicht unbeträchtliche Anzahl von Doppelausdrücken, die – soweit wir des wenigstens einstweilen mit unserem sehr beschränkten Rustzeug feststellen konnten – *hapax legomena* geblieben sind, offenbar weil sie dem

Chinesen selbst nicht ganz verstandlich waren und daher ihre neuerliche Verwendung nicht empfehlenswert schien."<sup>7</sup>

Like Zach, Watson shows an awareness for the difficulties the descriptive binomes pose to translators: "Though common enough in other types of poetry and prose, they are particularly numerous in the *fu*, helping to give them their musical, rhapsodic air. Here again commentators are often less than [sic]helpful, perhaps because they themselves were at a loss, offering only the vaguest glosses such as 'descriptive of high mountains' or 'the aspect of rushing water'. And again one wonders if such a wealth of epithets would have been easily intelligible to men of the Han; certainly they are hardly so today. Reading a Han *fu* is rather like reading 'Jabberwocky'. In most cases the characters themselves, with their water, wood, wind, or stone radicals, give the reader enough of a clue to their meaning that he may follow the general contour of the description. But even so, he would, without the aid of commentaries, be hard put at many points to say exactly what is going on. All this dazzling verbiage and ambiguity must, of course, disappear in translation, and the elusive, musical binomes must be reduced to explicit adjectives and adverbs."<sup>8</sup>

Although both Zach and Watson chide the commentators for the vagueness of their explanations, neither made an effort to achieve a more precise understanding of them. The first to undertake this task was Hervouet, who in his 1964 study of Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju devoted a twenty-two page chapter to Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju's "descriptive vocabulary."<sup>9</sup> In his copiously annotated translation of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *Shih chi* 史記 biography, published in 1972, Hervouet presents a detailed explanation of each of the binomial descriptives found in Ssu-ma's *fu*. According to Hervouet, these words are a type of "vocal gesture," in which certain speech sounds, "like a gesture or mimicry, describe above all movements, but also sounds, odors, tastes, tactile impressions or 'accompany the expression of colors, plenitude, degree, sadness, well-being, etc.'"<sup>10</sup> Hervouet especially emphasizes the "impressionistic" aspect of these words, which evoke "by the direct impression produced in the ear an action, a scene, or a feeling." Because of their impressionistic nature, these "impressifs," as Hervouet calls them, are highly ambiguous and difficult to define precisely.

Given this vagueness and imprecision, how does one determine what an impressif means? According to Hervouet, it is possible to find "in most cases a signific substratum" which lends the impressif "its consistency." In other words, the binome has a general sense that is determined by the

component graphs. There are various possible combinations: "Tantôt l'un des deux caractères seulement donne un sens à l'expression totale, l'autre n'étant qu'une adjonction phonétique. Tantôt, et c'est le plus fréquent, les deux caractères apportent chacun leur signification propre et sur des voies qui peuvent être plus ou moins divergentes: la signification de l'ensemble est cependant une, même s'il est difficile de trouver dans la traduction un mot ou une expression qui corresponde à lui seul aux nuances distinctes du sens global. Le sens que l'on peut ainsi déterminer ne suffit pas à remplir la place que tient l'impressif dans la phrase, car il reste ce rôle de geste vocal qui est donné par l'homophonie, partielle ou totale, des deux éléments. Mais ce dernier emploi n'est pas traduisible et peut seulement être rendu de façon très approximative par un jeu de sonorités, qu'il est d'une part difficile de trouver dans le système phonétique de la langue française et qui n'auront de toute façon pas cette valeur précise de mimique vocale."<sup>11</sup> Hervouet thus finds in Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju examples of impressifs composed of nearly synonymous elements (e.g., *chao-chê* 昭晰, Old Chinese \**tiog-tiad*, a which both elements mean *ming* 明 'brilliant'), impressifs with only one significant component (e.g., *lei-lo* 磊珂, Old Chinese \**lwəd-la*, in which only the first graph seems related to the meaning "piled up"), "purely phonetic" expressions in which the component graphs have no apparent relationship to the general sense (*po-su* 勃窣, Old Chinese \**b'wət-siet*, 'lame and limp'), and finally some expressions in which the component graphs do not exist independently (e.g., *han-hsia* 豁牙, Old Chinese \**Xəm-Xa*, 'gaping wide').

Hervouet's study of specific words, presented in the notes to his translation of Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju's biography, is the most detailed analysis of these words in a Western language and offers a useful corrective to the at times forced interpretations of the Ching philologists. In spite of his thoroughness, Hervouet's conclusion is not particularly encouraging for the translator: "Aussi souvent ne reste dans la traduction que la signification donnée par les caractères de l'impressif, qui est en même temps durcie, matérialisée par la précision que lui donne son expression en une autre langue. Nous sommes loin de la façon dont doivent être compris ces impressifs, qui sont proprement intraduisibles . . . Dans la traduction de descriptions ainsi composées, il est bien évident que les limitations grammaticales et l'inguistiques ne permettent pas de rendre ces impressifs d'une façon qui corresponde à leur valeur propre."<sup>12</sup> What Hervouet seems to be saying here is that since we cannot really understand the precise meanings of these words, we might as well devise a translation based on the meaning of the component graphs. As

James Robert Hightower rightly has pointed out in his review of Hervouet's translation, many of Hervouet's formulations are "only a *pis aller*, a translator's convention."<sup>13</sup> By following this practice, Hervouet produces a number of ingenious, but linguistically unsupportable interpretations. As an example, Hightower cites Hervouet's explanation of *yi-yi* 裔裔, which Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju uses twice. The first, in the "Rhapsody of Master Vacuous" "Tzu hsu fu" 子虛賦, describes the movement of chariots and riders returning from the hunt:

纒乎淫淫  
般乎裔裔

Hervouet's translation reads:

Ils vont en rangs serrés, comme une eau qui s'écoule  
et se dispersent, ourlant au loin l'horizon.<sup>14</sup>

Hervouet faults the Chinese commentators for seeing in the term *yi-yi* "only a description of the march of soldiers," and argues that the meaning of *yi-yi* must be derived from the graph *yi* 裔, which means "the hem of a garment" and also has the sense of "edge" and "distant." Thus, *yi-yi* is "an impressif that describes the soldiers who scatter afar to the limits of the horizon."<sup>15</sup> The second occurrence of *yi-yi* is in the following "Shang-lin fu" line, in which Hervouet similarly reads into *yi-yi* the "hem of the garment" metaphor:

淫淫裔裔  
緣陵流澤

"Comme l'écoulement de l'eau, comme l'ourlet de la robe,  
ils bordent les collines et s'écoulent dans les marais."

The question that Hightower rightly raises about his interpretation is how relevant is the meaning of *yi* 'hem of a garment' to the meaning of the binome *yi-yi*. The best way to show the inappropriateness of Hervouet's rendering of *yi-yi* as "ourlant au loin l'horizon" or "l'ourlet de la robe" is to look at other usages of *yi-yi*. The other examples, all drawn from the *fu*, occur in contexts descriptive of dancing, walking, or flying:

Tsuo Ssü 左思 (ca. 250-ca. 305), "Shu tu fu" 蜀都賦 (Rhapsody on the Shu Capital):

紆長袖而屢舞  
翩躚躚而裔裔

"Twirling their long sleeves, they dance again and again,  
Lightly wheeling and turning, gracefully flowing."<sup>16</sup>

Sun Ch'uo 孫綽 (fl. 330-365), "Yu T'ien-t'ai-shan fu" 遊天台山賦 (Rhapsody on Roaming the T'ien-t'ai Mountains):

覩翔鸞之裔裔

"I watch the soaring *luan* in graceful flight."<sup>17</sup>

Sung Yü 宋玉, "Shên-nü fu" 神女賦 (Rhapsody on the Goddess):

步裔裔兮曜殿堂

"Wenn sie in ihrer Würde dahin schritt, hohe Hall wie von Licht  
übergossen."<sup>18</sup>

As Hightower observes, nowhere in these lines is the meaning *yi-yi* 'hem of a garment' "even a subdued connotation."<sup>19</sup>

It should be clear from the examples above that the graphs used to write the word *yi-yi* have no apparent connection with its meaning, which, depending upon the context, commentators variously gloss as *hsing mao* 行貌 (descriptive of movement), *fei mao* 飛貌 (descriptive of flying), and *wuu mao* 舞貌 (descriptive of dancing). They undoubtedly were aware that *yi* by itself means 'hem', but they did not choose to explain the expression by invoking the common meaning of the components. This fact suggests that the graphs used to write the word \**djad-djad*, which is Karlgren's Old Chinese reconstruction for *yi-yi*, have only a phonetic value and are irrelevant to the basic meaning of the word. Thus, it is a dubious practice to seek the meaning of many binomes by dissecting the component parts. Long before George Kennedy wrote about his famous "butterfly case" and doublets in the *Shih ching*, Chinese scholars have remarked on the indivisibility of certain bisyllabic expressions.<sup>20</sup> For example, Kuo p'u 郭璞 (276-324) criticized an earlier commentator for his erroneous splitting of a binome to determine the meaning.<sup>21</sup> More recently, Kao Pu-ying 高步瀛 (1873-1940) has noted with disapproval Wang Hsien-ch'ien's 王先謙 (1842-1918) penchant for dissecting binomes: "Generally, both parts of a *lien-mien tzü* from a single meaning and cannot be explained separately. In explaining such words,

Wang often seeks a meaning for each part, and then tries to link them together. Thus, he misses the basic meaning of the term."<sup>22</sup>

There are of course many binomial descriptives in which the meaning of one or even both graphs is relevant to the general meaning of the word. However, the existence of numerous variants for even these types of expressions suggests that we be wary of assigning precise semantic values to these component elements. This caveat should be particularly observed for the Former Han period, when there was no standard way of writing many of the new expressions used by *fu* poets. For example, the *Shih chi* and *Han shu* versions of Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu* contain numerous variant forms of the same word. The following variants are all from the "Shang-lin fu":<sup>23</sup>

<i>Shih chi</i>	<i>Han shu</i>
滂潰	彭湃
澤淳	澤弗
濞汨	宓汨
蜿澶	宛渾
湛湛	沈沈
玦鑠	的鑠

Although it is possible that such variants are simply corrections by well-intentioned scribes, many of them may owe their existence to the fact that the written forms for these words were not yet fixed in Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju's time.<sup>24</sup> One must remember that recitation was the primary medium of presentation for the *fu* throughout the entire Former Han period, and thus when transcribing their texts, *fu* poets primarily were concerned with the sounds of the words. The extensive use of loan graphs not only confuses the modern reader, but apparently posed difficulties even for ancient readers. The sixth century literary critic, Liu Hsieh, aptly describes the problem:

Furthermore, when rhapsodizing on capitals and parks, most (*fu* writers) used loan graphs and phonetic compounds, and for this reason the philological studies of the Former Han were largely devoted to precious words. This was not only because (the writers) created so many unusual expressions, but also because they were difficult for most people to understand.... By the Wey dynasty when writers began to compose works of elegance, graphs had a common standard. When (the Wey writers) looked back on the Han writings, they suddenly found

them difficult and abstruse. Thus, Ch'ên Ssŭ (Tsao chih), in referring to the writings of Yang Hsiung and Ssŭ-ma Hsiang-ju, said that their aim was hidden and their purpose was deep. Without a teacher the reader was unable to decipher the language, and without broad learning, he cannot comprehend their principles. It was not only because their talent was far-reaching, but also because the graphs they used were obscure.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of Liu Hsieh's sobering comments, which confirm what Waley, Watson, and Hervouet have said about the difficulties of understanding these "precious words," I am foolish enough to suggest that we attempt to produce English equivalents that represent as closely as possible the function and meaning of these words in the Chinese original. In order to understand the meaning of a word, we must consult the earliest commentaries. However, it is not enough simply to translate into English what the commentary says, for in many cases, the commentator is not explaining the precise meaning of the term, but rather what the term connotes in a particular context. For example, Mei Ch'êng's 枚乘 (d. 140 B. C.) "Ch'i fa" 七發 (Seven Stimuli) has the following line, which describes the condition of an ailing prince:<sup>26</sup>

紛屯澹淡

The early T'ang commentator, Li Shan 李善 (?-689), explains the four-character line as *k'ui-mao fan-mên chih mao* 憤耄煩悶之貌 (descriptive of being muddled and woozy, annoyed and anxious). Translators of the line have more or less attempted to incorporate Li Shan's explanation into their translations:

Zach: "Dein Geist is benommen, Du bist niedergeschlagen  
..."<sup>27</sup>

John Scott: "You are pallid and afeared."<sup>28</sup>

Hans H. Frankel: "Listless and without a will of your own."<sup>29</sup>

The rhyming binome *fên-t'un* (Old Chinese \*p'wən-d'wən) is not otherwise attested. Li Shan obviously derives the sense of 'muddled' from *fên*, which is a common component in binomes describing a state of confusion (cf. *fên-lun* 紛綸, *fên-yin* 紛紜). It is more difficult to determine whether *tun* has any significant value.<sup>30</sup> Approximate English equivalents are "dazed and dizzy" or "wimply-wambly" (unsteady, dizzy).<sup>31</sup>

The alliterative and rhyming binome *tan-tan* 澹淡 (Old Chinese \*d'âm-d'âm) is a much more common word. It clearly is the same as *tan-tan* 澹澹, which the *Shuo-wen* glosses as *shei iao mao* 水搖貌 (descriptive of the agitation of water).<sup>32</sup> Mei Ch'êng uses *tan-tan* elsewhere in the "Ch'i fa" to describe the eddying waves that beat against the bank of a deep ravine:<sup>33</sup>

湍流遡波

又澹淡之

A turbulent flow and eddying waves

Also toss and tumble about it.

Other examples are:

Ssŭ-ma Hsiang-ju "Shang-lin fu," describing birds drifting with the current:<sup>34</sup>

群浮乎其上

汎淫泛濫

隨風澹淡

In flocks they swim on the surface,

Floating freely, wandering at will,

Tossed and tumbled by the wind.

Pan Ku 班固 (32-92), "Hsi-tu fu 西都賦 ("Western Capital Rhapsody"), describing boats on the water:

"Wafted by the gentle breeze,

Tossed and rocked, they sail across the water."<sup>35</sup>

Tsuo Ssŭ, "Shu-tu fu," describing waterfowl bobbing on the water:

澹淡隨波

"As they bob up and down with the waves."<sup>36</sup>

Chang hêng 張衡 (78-139), "Tung-ching fu" 東京賦 (Rhapsody on the Eastern Capital):

淥水澹澹

"Its green waters, pitching and rolling . . ."<sup>37</sup>

Cf. Pan Yueh 潘岳 (247-300), "Ching-ku chi tzuo shih" 金谷集作詩 (Poem Composed for the Golden Valley Gathering):

## 綠池汎淡淡

The green pond brimming full pitches and rolls.<sup>38</sup>

Although the English varies in each of these passages, in each case *tan-tan* describes a state of agitation. Thus, *tan-tan* in the first "Ch'i fa" line is no different from the other usages and should be translated accordingly. A good approximation for the context would be "shivering and shaking" or "nither-ty-notherty" (all of a tremble, from *nither* 'to shiver and shake').<sup>39</sup>

In translating the *fu*, one must pay particular attention to the sound glosses given by the commentators, for a sound gloss often provides an important clue to the meaning of the term. It also may help to distinguish between different binomes that are written with the same graphs. A case in point is a passage in Sung Yü's "Kao-tang fu" 高唐賦 (Rhapsody on the Kao-tang Mountain). The lines describe the surging flow of the numerous streams that converge around Mt. U 巫山 :<sup>40</sup>

湍洶洶其無聲  
潰淡淡其並入

The waters suddenly rise, surging and swelling, without a sound;  
They break forth calm and full, inflowing together.

Another translator has rendered these lines quite differently:

"The roar of the rushing waters is deafening  
As the torrents churn and race to their source."<sup>41</sup>

What this translator failed to notice was Li Shan's gloss on the graphs 淡淡, which he tells us should be pronounced 以冉 (Mandarin *jan-jan* Old Chinese \**djam-djam*?) and in this context describes the water "quietly flowing calm and full" 安流平滿貌. The word probably is related to *kan-tan/kan-jan* 泔淡 (Old Chinese \**kâm-d'âm /kam-djam*?), which describes a ladle brimming with sacrificial wine,<sup>42</sup> and *han-tan/ han-jan?* 函淡 (Old Chinese \**kâm-d'âm / \*kâm-djam*?), which describes an enveloping spate of water.<sup>43</sup>

The penchant for deciphering the graphs rather than identifying the word behind the graphs has resulted in ludicrous translations. For example, one translator renders the following line from Mei Ch'êng's "Ch'i fa" as follows:<sup>44</sup>

虹洞兮蒼天

“A rainbow vaulting the blue skies.”<sup>45</sup>

The line, which describes a view of a tidal bore as its waters blend with the blue sky, has nothing to do with rainbows. Li Shan, who surely knew a rainbow when he saw one, simply explains *hung-tung* 洞洞 (Old Chinese \*g'ung-d'ung) as “descriptive of being interjoined” 相連貌. It clearly is the same word as *hung-tung* 鴻洞 or 鴻洞, which is used in contexts describing a blending and joining of things. The *Huai-nan-tzū* 淮南子 uses it to describe a vast watery expanse:<sup>46</sup>

靡濫振蕩  
與天地鴻洞

(The waters) spread and spill forth, stirring and shaking,  
Chaotically conjoined with Heaven and Earth.

Another *Huai-nan-tzū* passage describes the primordial stage before the concrete forms of Heaven and Earth took shape:<sup>47</sup>

頃濛鴻洞

All was misty and murky, chaotically conjoined.

Yang Hsiung uses it to describe a long line of chariots in a procession:

鴻洞綰攢

They are chaotically conjoined, linked and locked together.<sup>48</sup>

Wang Pao 王褒 (fl. 58 B.C.) even uses *hung-tung* to describe the sound of panpipes echoing in the wind:<sup>49</sup>

風鴻洞而不絕

Continuously carried by the wind, it never ceases.

In some of the translations I have cited above, the binomes are represented by two English words. I use this method of translation not because I assume each word has a one to one equivalence with the graphs of the binome, but rather because I can provide through alliteration or repetition of synonyms something of the euphonic effect of the Chinese terms. The first scholar to suggest translating binomes in this way is Peter A. Boodberg.<sup>50</sup>

Although some of his neologisms like "clositered-coved" for *iao-t'iao* 窈窕 are poetically awkward and not applicable to most contexts, his practice of attempting to use alliteration to "echo" the original is worthy of emulation. As an experiment, I have made a translation of the most difficult section of the "Shang-lin fu." In these lines, Ssū-ma Hsiang-ju amasses an overwhelming host of strange binomes, all descriptive of the movement of water:<sup>51</sup>

HSIUNG	YUNG	P'ĒNG	PAI
xjung	djung	b'wāng	p'wād
洵	涌	彭	湃

Lifting and leaping, surging and swelling,

PI	FEI	MI	KU
piēt	piwət	miet	giwət
澤	弗	必	汨

Spurting and spouting, rushing and racing,

PI	CH'Ē	PI	CHIEH
piək	tsiət	piət	tsiət
偪	側	泌	滲

Pressing and pushing, clashing and colliding,

HĒNG	LIU	NI	CHĒ
g'wāng	liōg	ngiak	tiat
橫	流	逆	折

Thwartly flowing, bending back,

CHUAN	T'ĒNG	PI	LIEH
tiwan	d'əng	p'iat	liat
轉	騰	激	洌

Wheeling and rearing, beating and battering,

P'ANG	PI	HANG	KAI
p'wāng	p'iwəd	gang	g'əd
滂	溲	沆	漑

Swelling and surging, upset and unsettled,

CH'IUNG	LUNG	YÜN	NAO
k'jung	gliōng	giwan	nōg
穹	隆	雲	撓

Loftily arching, billowing like clouds,

WAN	SHAN	CHIAO	LI
iwǎn	əian	klôg	liəd
宛	潭	膠	盤

Sinuously snaking, closely cohering.

### Commentary

1. HSIUNG YUNG. Ssŭ-ma Piao 司馬彪 (d. 306) glosses it as “descriptive of leaping and rising” 跳起貌 (*Shih chi* 117.3019, n. 13). Yen Shih-ku (*Han shu* 57.2550, n. 18) repeats Ssu-ma Piao’s gloss. Wang Hsien-ch’ien (*Han shu Pu-chu* 57A. 21a) says approximately the same thing: “The upward leaping of the water” 水之上騰. Previous translators have “Heben” (Zach 1:109), “Leaping” (Watson, *Rhyme-Prose*, p. 38), and “En jaillissements” (Hervouet, p. 61). Hervouet (p. 61, n.3) treats it as a rhymed impressif “created by Ssŭ-ma Hsiang-ju.” According to Hervouet, the first graph conveys the idea of violence; the second describes “water that leaps.” The basic meaning probably is conveyed by *yung*, which means ‘to leap’ (see *Shuo-wên chieh-tzŭ chu* 11.A2. 511); cf. *yung* 踊 ‘to leap’, ‘to jump’. *Hsiung* does not seem to occur independently. *Shuo-wên* (11.A2.549) cites it in the reduplicative form *hsiung-hsiung* 洶洶 and glosses it as *yung* 涌. Thus *hsiung-hsiung* possibly is a synonym binome.

2. P’ENG PAI. The *Han shu* and Li Shan version of the *Wên hsüan* read 彭湃; most editions of the *Shih ching* read 滂瀆. These are obviously graphic variants of the same word, which is written many different ways: 滂湃, 澎湃, 滂瀆, 澎湃. Ssŭ-ma Piao (*Shih ching* 117.3019, n. 13) explains it as the waters’ “doing violence to one another” 相戾. Chang I 張揖 (2nd half 5th century) says it is “descriptive of massive abundance” 泉盛貌 (*Han shu* 57B. 2597, n. 3). Previous translators have “rauschend” (Zach, 1:109), “curling upward” (Watson, *Rhyme-Prose*, p. 38), and “sours grondements” (Hervouet, p. 61). Hervouet (p. 61, n. 3) treats it as an alliterative impressif, which in the form 滂湃 he construes as onomatopoeia, with the element *pang* evoking the noise of flowing water. Although Hervouet claims this word “does not seem to be earlier than Ssŭ-ma Hsiang-ju,” variants of the word appear both in Mei Ch’êng’s “Ch’i fa” and the *Huai-nan-tzŭ*. The “Ch’i fa” form is *P’ang-pê* 滂渤 (\*b’wâng-b’wət) is used to describe the surging waters of a tidal bore:

## 觀其兩旁則滂渤佛鬱

In Hans Frankel's translation (see *Flowering Plum*, p. 199), the line reads: "As you observe its two edges / They stir with wrath." In the *Huai-nan-tsu* (see *Sbby*, 2.6b), the form *P'êng-pi* 彭瀾 is used to describe rain clouds:

譬若周雲之龍蕊遼巢彭瀾而爲雨

"It can be compared to the close clustering, thick thronging, and swollen surging of dense clouds becoming rain."<sup>52</sup>

Although a signific element is difficult to identify, I suspect that the basic meaning is carried by \**b'wang*, which could convey the meaning of "swollen." Cf. *p'ang-kuang* 膀胱 'bladder', *p'êng-hêng* 彭亨 'swollen', *P'êng-p'o* 彭魄 'vastly swollen'.

3. PI FEI *Ssü-ma Piao* (see *Shih ching* 17.3019, n. 14) glosses it as "descriptive of abundance" 盛貌. Yen shih-ku (see *Han shu* 57A.2550, n. 19) repeats *Ssü-ma Piao*'s gloss without quoting him. Previous translators have "Hochgeschwollen" (Zach, 1:109), "Jostling" (Watson, *Rhyme-Prose*, p. 38), and "le torrent bondit" (Hervouet, p. 62). This word clearly is the same as *pi-fei* 霹沸 of *Mao Shih* 222/2:

霹沸檻泉

"Spurting and spouting is the bubbling spring."

in *Shuo-wên* 11A-2.15a, which reads 湔沸檻泉. Bernhard Karlgren construes *pi* as *pi* 彈 'to shoot' and understands the binome to mean "the rapid spurting (the 'shooting') of the spring water."<sup>53</sup> I have thus rendered it with the alliterative "spurting and spouting."

4. MI KU. *Ssü-ma Piao* (see *Shih ching* 117.3019, n. 14) glosses it as "going fast" 去疾. Yen Shih-ku gives the same explanation (see *Han shu* 57A.2550, n. 19, again without acknowledgement to *Ssü-ma Piao*). Previous translators have "wandern sie in Hast dahin" (Zach, 1:109), "eddying in great swells" (Watson, *Rhyme-Prose*, p. 38), and "rit en courant" (Hervouet, p. 62). Hervouet (p. 62, n. 4), who transcribes it as *mi-mi*, classifies it as an alliterative impressif, which he interprets as onomatopoeic rather than a descriptive expression, "for the characters do not seem to be significative in themselves." However, if Yeh Shih-ku's sound gloss of \**giwət* 于筆 for 汨 is correct, this word is a rhyming, not alliterative binome. The element

\**giwət* appears in the binome *chieh-ku* 湍汨 (\**tsjet giwət*), which also is used to describe rushing water. Mei ch'êng uses it in the "Ch'i fa" to describe a tidal bore (see *Wên hsüan* 34.12b):

湍汨潺湲

"(The waters) rushing and racing, plashing and splashing."

Chi kang 嵇康 (224-263) in his "Ch'in fu" 琴賦 (Rhapsody on the Zither) uses it together with *P'êng-pai* to describe a roaring mountain stream:

湍汨澎湃

"Rushing and racing, surging and swelling."

It is instructive to note that Li Shan glosses *chieh-ku* in the "Ch'in fu" passage as 去疾. Possibly *ku* conveys the sense of rapid movement.

5. PI CHIEH. The *Shih ching* reads 湍測 for 偪側 of the *Han shu* and *Wên Hsüan*. Ssu-ma Piao (see *Shih ching* 117.3019, n. 15) glosses it as "pressing one upon another" 相迫. The fact that *p'o* 迫 (\**pak*) is homophonous and synonymous with *pi* 偪 (\**piək*) may indicate that *pi* is the signific element. Basing himself on the *Han shu* and *Wên-hsüan* reading, Hervouet (p. 62, n. 5) concludes that the *pi*, which means "to press like a crowd," carries the primary meaning. He does not think that the second element has a precise meaning. Previous translators more or less see in the expression the idea of pressing and pushing: "Eine drängt und drückt die andere" (Zach, 1:109), "surge and batter against each other" (Watson, *Rhyme-Prose*, p. 38), and "Les vagues en rangs presses qui se heurtent" (Hervouet, p. 62).

6. PI CHIEH. This binome virtually echoes the preceding word. Both Ssu-ma piao (see *Shih ching* 117.3019, n. 15) and Yen Shih-ku (see *Han shu* 57A.2550, n. 20) gloss it as "to strike one another." *Hsieh* 楔 (\**siet*) is nearly homophonous with *chieh* 湍 (\**tsjet*). All commentators construe *hsieh* 楔 as a loan for *hsieh* 揆 'to strike'. I suspect that the meaning of "colliding and clashing" may be embedded in the term, but I can find no parallel examples.

7. PI LIEH. Meng Kang (see *Han shu* 57A.2550, n.21) glosses it as "to beat one against another" 相撇. Again, there seems to be an attempt by the commentator to gloss the word paranomastically. *Pi* 撇 (\**P'iwat*) 'to strike against' is virtually homophonous with *pi* 撇. Hu Shao-iêng 胡紹煥 (1791-

1860) construes *Pi-lieh* as an onomatopoeia that describes the sound made by an object striking the water.<sup>54</sup> Hervouet (p. 62, n. 6) who accepts this interpretation, renders it with the alliterative French phrase "claque et clapote."

8. P'ANG PI. The *Shih ching* reads 澎湃 for 滂滂 of *Han shu* and *Wên-hsüan*. I assume with Hervouet (pp. 62-63, n. 7) that this word is a variant of *P'êng-pai* that precedes. There is a lingering question that cannot be easily answered: If these are simply graphic variants of the same word, why did Ssü-ma Hsiang-ju use them in within a few lines of each other? Did he indeed think of them as different words?

9. HANG KAI. This word rhymes with *Pang-pai* that precedes. Both Hu Shao-iêng (see *Wên-hsüan chien-chêng* 10.3a-3b) and Wang Hsien-ch'ien (see *Han shu pu-chu* 57A.21b) consider *hang-kai* related to *kang-kai* 忼慨 (\*k'ang-kæd, which can have the meaning of "unsettled."

10. WAN SHAN. The *Han shu* and *Wên-hsüan* read 宛潭 for 蜿澗 of the *Shih ching*. This word poses no great difficulty. It clearly is a rhyming binome that describes turning and bending movement (see *Shih ching* 117.3019, n. 19). Other translators have "Stürzen rollend" (Zach, 108), "They dash to the left and right" (Watson, *Rhysme-Prose*, p. 38), and "elle tourne sur soi" (Hervouet, p. 63).

11. CHIAO LI. The *Shih ching* reads 戾 for 𪔐 in *Han shu* and *Wên hsüan*. 𪔐 is the ancient form of 戾. *Chiao-li* (\*klög-liəd) does not alliterate or rhyme, and thus Hervouet does not consider it a true impressif (p. 63, n. 9). However, none of the early commentators attempts to split the expression into its constituent parts. Ssü-ma Piao (see *Shih ching* 117.3019, n. 19) explains it as "perverse and crooked" 邪屈. Guo Pu (see *Han shu* 57A.2550, n. 24) explains it as "sullen and intertwined" 憤薄相糶. The *chüu* (\*kʷjog) of Kuo Pu's gloss might have been an attempt to call attention to *chiao* (\*klög) as the signific. I freely render it as "closely cohering."

This short paper is an experiment in translation rather than a full-fledged linguistic study of descriptive binomes. My main concern here has been to devise a method of gaining a more precise understanding of the terms and devising a way of translating them effectively into English. In the process of trying to translate the *Wên-hsüan*, I have learned much about these expressions. In subsequent volumes of my translation, I plan to provide notes on the more problematic expressions. I hope eventually to compile these notes into a lexicon, which will give information on phonology, etymology (if known), usages in the *fu* corpus, and relevant connotations.

## Notes

1. See *The Temple and Other Poems* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1923), p. 17.
2. The earliest known use of the term *lien-mien tzu* is by the late Southern Sung scholar Chang Yu 張有 in his *Fu-ku-pien* 復古編 (Sbek, C.la). However, it is not clear how he understood the term. Other names for the alliterative or rhyming binome include *lien-yü* 連語 (variant 謎語 or 聯語) or *P'ien-yü* 駢語. See Kan Ta-hsi 甘大昕, "shuang-shêng tieh-yün lien-mien tzu ián-chiu" 雙聲疊韻聯縣字研究, *Kuo-wên yüeh-k'an* 50 (Dec. 20, 1946), 1.
3. The terms *shuang-shêng* and *tieh-yün* achieve currency in the late Six Dynasties period. The *Nan Shih* 南史 biography of Hsieh Chuang 謝莊 (421-466) records an anecdote in which Wang Hsüan-mo 王玄謨 asks Hsieh what *shuang-shêng* and *tieh-yün* mean. He replied, Hsüan-hu 玄護 (\**aiwen-uo*) is *shuang-shêng*, and 稿礪 (\**k'iao-ngau*) is *tieh-yün* (Hsieh obliquely alludes here to the disastrous defeat of Wang Hsüan-mo and Huan Hu 桓護 at Chiauaaur.) Liu Hsieh 劉勰, (ca. 465-ca. 520) also uses the terms in his *Wên-hsin tiao-lung* 文心雕龍. See Fan Wên-lan 范文瀾, ed. and comm., *Wên-hsin tiao-lung chu* 文心雕龍注 (1936; rpt. Taipei: Wên-guang ch'u-pan-shê, 1973), 7.552-53.
4. See Yves Hervouet, *Un Poète de cour sous les Han: Sseu-ma Sigan-jou* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), p. 338.
5. *The Temple*, pp. 43-44.
6. Zach's translation first appeared in *De Chinesische Revue* 2 (Jan. 1928) and *Ostasiatische Rundschau* 10 (1929). It has been reprinted in *Die Chinesische Anthologie: Übersetzungen aus dem Wen hsüan*, ed. Hes Martin Fang, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 1:108-17. Watson's translation first appeared in *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 2: 307-21, and reprinted in *Chinese Rhyme Prose: Poems in the Fu Form from the Han and Six Dynasties Periods* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 37-51. Hervouet's translation appeared in *Le Chapitre 117 du Che-ki* (Biographie de Sseu-ma Siang-jou) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), pp. 55-142.
7. Erwin von Zach, "Das Lu-Ling-Kwang-Tien-Fu des Wang Wen-k'ao (Wên Hsüan C. 1113-21), AM 3 (1926), 467-68.
8. *Early Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 272.
9. *Un Poète de cour*, pp. 337-59.
10. *Un Poète de cour*, p. 346. The section in single quotation marks is from Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris: Alcan, 1912), p. 183.
11. *Un Poète de cour*, pp. 349-50.
12. *Un Poète de cour*, p. 350.
13. See "Ein Standardwerk über einen Han-Klassiker," *OLZ* 73.2 (March-April 1978), 122.
14. *Le Chapitre 117 du Che-ki*, p. 46.
15. *Le Chapitre 117 du Che-ki*, p. 122, n. 18.
16. *Wên-hsüan* (Taipei: Chung-chêng shu-wu, 1971), 4.23b; David R. Knechtges, *Wên-hsüan or Selections of Refined Literature*, Volume one, *Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 363.
17. Richard Mather, "The Mystical Ascent of the T'ien-t'ai Mountains: Sun Ch'o's *Yu-t'ien-t'ai-shan Fu* 遊天台山賦," *MS* 20 (1961), 241.

18. Zach, *Die Chinesische Anthologie*, 1:263.
19. "Ein Standardwerk," p. 122.
20. See *Selected Works of George Kennedy* (New Haven: Far Eastern Publications, Yale University, 1964), pp. 274-322, "The Butterfly Case (Part I)," pp. 274-322; pp. 463-76, "A Note on Ode 220."
21. See *Erh-ia i-shu* 爾雅義疏, *Ssü-pu Pieh-iao*, 1B. 17a: 弗離即彌離, 猶蒙籠耳, 孫叔然字別爲義失矣。
22. See *Wên-hsüan Li chu i-shu* 文選李注義疏 (1937; rpt. Taipei: Kuan-wên shu-chü, 1966), 8.8b.
23. For a complete list of the significant variants, see Chieh Tsung-wu 簡宗梧, *Han-fu üan-liu yü chia-chih chih shang-ch'ueh* 漢賦源流與價值之商榷 (Taipei: Wên shih ché ch'u-pan-shé, 1980), pp. 62-71.
24. Cf. Hervouet, *Un Poète de cour*, p. 351: "Mais il semble bien que le plus souvent ce sont des copistes bien intentionnés qui se sont permis des corrections de graphie: la plupart sont absentes du *Han chou* mais existent dans le *Che ki*. Les variantes peuvent également ne pas être du tout des adaptations à un emploi dans un contexte donné et ne s'expliquer par aucune considération de signification, mais seulement par l'imprécision d'une graphie qui, à l'époque des Han, n'était pas encore fixée."
25. *Wên-hsin tiao-lung chu*, 8.624.
26. *Wên-hsüan* 34.1b.
27. *Die Chinesische Anthologie*, 2:607.
28. *Love and Protest, Chinese Poems from the Sixth Century B. C. to the Seventeenth Century A. D.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 36.
29. *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 187.
30. It is possible that *tun* also means 'confused'. Cf. *tun* 屯 'stupid', 'confused' as in *Chuang-t'zu*, "Ch'i-wu-lun" 齊物論: "The Sage is stupid and muddled" 聖人愚屯. See *Chuang-tzu chi-ssu* 莊子集釋, Kuo Ch'ing-fuan 郭慶藩, comm. (Taipei: Shih-chieh Shu-chü, 1967), 2.48.
31. See Niles Thun, *Reduplicative Words in English, A Study of Formations of the Types Tick-tick, Hurly-burly, and Shilly-shally* (Uppsala, 1963), p. 82.
32. See *Shuo-wên chieh-tzu chu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi ch'u-pan-shé, 1981), 11.A2.551.
33. See *Wên-hsüan* 34.3b.
34. See *Wên-hsüan* 8.4a.
35. See *Wên-hsüan* 1.18a; Knechtges, *Wên hsüan*, p. 143.
36. *Wên-hsüan* 4.5b; Knechtges, *Wên-hsüan*, p. 321.
37. *Wên-hsüan* 3.10b; Knechtges, *Wên-hsüan*, p. 261.
38. *Wên-hsüan* 20.34a.
39. See Thun, p. 81.
40. *Wên-hsüan* 19.3a.
41. Lois Fusek, "The 'Kao-t'ang fu' 高唐賦," MS 30 (1972-73), 415.
42. See Yang Hsiung 揚雄 (53 B.C.-A.D. 18), "Kan-ch'üan fu" 甘泉賦 (Rhapsody on the Sweet Springs Palace) in *Wên-hsüan* 7.9a 秬鬯泔泔; "The millet-turmeric wine is brimming and bubbling."
43. See Ma Jung 馬融 (79-166), "Ch'ang ti fu" 長笛賦 in *Wên-hsüan* 18.2b: 颯淡滂流 Li Shan glosses it as "descriptive of the agitation of water" 水搖蕩貌, meaning that he probably considered it synonymous with *tan-tan* 澹澹. However, the

- connection with 泔淡 is unmistakable.
44. *Wên-hsüan* 34.10a.
  45. Scott, *Love and Protest*, p. 44.
  46. *Huai-nan-tzū*, *Sbby*, 1.10b.
  47. *Huai-nan-tzū* 7.1a.
  48. See "Yü-lieh fu" 羽獵賦 (Rhapsody on the Plume Hunt), *Wên-hsüan* 8.19a.
  49. See his "Tung-hsiao fu" 洞簫賦 (Rhapsody on the Panpipes) in *Wên-hsüan* 17.12b.
  50. See "Cedules from a Berkeley Workshop," *Ch'ing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, n.s. 7.2 (1969), 3-4 ("On the Translation of Chinese Binoms").
  51. See *Wên-hsüan* 8.2b.
  52. Wang Nan-Sun 王念孫 (1744-1832) notes that some texts of the *huai-nan-tzū* read *p'ang-po* 彭薄 (\*b'wang-bak for *p'êngpi* (\*b'wang-pjwəd). Although Wang claims *P'ang-po*, also written 彭魄, is the preferred reading, I would see them as graphic variants of the same word. For Wang's discussion, see *Tu-shu tsa-chi* 讀書雜誌 (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu chü, 1963), 9.2.5a-5b.
  53. See "Glosses on the Kuo Feng Odes," *BMFEA* 14 (1942), 232, # 366.
  54. See *Wên-hsüan chien-chêng* 文選箋證 (Taipei: Kuan Wên shu-chü, 1966), 10.3a.

