

# Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *Fu* and John Lyly's Euphuism

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## Introduction

Since the time when Western genre theory, especially the study of "epic" as a genre, began to be used for the examination of Chinese literature, most Chinese scholars as well as some Western sinologists from Wang Kuo-wei (王國維) on down to James Robert Hightower have pointed out regretfully that there was no such thing as an "epic" in Chinese literary history.<sup>1</sup>

In the history of Western literature, the epic was ranked by Aristotle as second only to tragedy in the hierarchy of genres, and by Renaissance critics as the highest form of all. According to modern European and American scholars, the epic can be described as follows: 1) Form: The epic, being a long narrative poem, is more purely a form of speech in an elevated style employing conventions such as *in medias res*, epic questions and epic similes. It is a ceremonial performance and is deliberately given a ceremonial style appropriate to its great subject and architecture. As for the reaction of the narrator to the action, the poet may fully externalize his narrative procedure with "foreground" and make moral comments on the action described.<sup>2</sup> 2) Content: The epic is a heroic poem on a serious subject centred about a heroic figure upon whose actions depends to some degree the fate of a nation or a race. The "traditional," or "primary" epics were shaped from legends that developed in a heroic age, when nations were on the move in military conquest and expansion. The "literary" or "secondary" epics were written by sophisticated craftsmen in deliberate imitation of the earlier form. They commonly share the following characteristics: a) The hero is a figure of great national or international importance. b) The setting is ample in scale, sometimes world-wide, or even larger. c) The action involves heroic

deeds in battle, such as the Trojan War, or a long and arduous journey intrepidly accomplished. d) In these great actions the gods and other supernatural beings themselves take an interest and an active part. In short, for the convenience of our discussion, we can summarize the main features of a Western epic as objective narrative in elevated style, with epic heroes and of a heroic age.

In the quest for a Chinese epic, it would be fallacious to apply the above mentioned criteria as the only standards to decide whether or not there exists a Chinese literary genre similar to the Western epic. As a matter of fact, we can even claim that there is no need to apologize or feel regret if we can not find any equivalent in Chinese literature. However, it will not prove trivial for us to enquire into the criteria of the Western epic poetry, using them as a foil to illuminate some unique qualities of Chinese literature and to point out differences.

With the feature of Western epic poetry in mind, we are reminded that in Chinese literary history there were many periods likely to be epic-producing eras. Two of the most promising ones were the Warring States period and the period beginning in 211 B.C., the unification of China by the Emperor Ch'in Shih Huang (秦始皇), the first ruler of the Ch'in Dynasty to time of the death of the author of the *Shih Chi* (史記), Ssu-ma Ch'ien (司馬遷), circa 86 B.C.

As we know, in the pre-Ch'in period, the development of Chinese lyrical poetry had already reached its peak: the *Shih Ching* (詩經, about 600 B.C.) and the *Li Sao* (離騷, about 300 B.C.) are the two well-known representatives, and of them we may note that there are many more narrative elements in the *Li Sao* than in the *Shih Ching*. Then shortly after the Ch'in Dynasty was founded, there was a great possibility of an epic being written to praise the great deeds of the founding father of the empire, Emperor Ch'in Shih Huang: the long heroic struggles and triumphant adventures in uniting the principalities of the Warring States period.

As soon as Ch'in Shih Huang subdued all of China, he set about consolidating his conquests. Under his power, Chinese were sent *en masse* to colonize the south as far as present Canton. He was the first ruler in China who tried to simplify Chinese writing and make it uniform. He constructed and unified the road system, principally as military highways for his chariots and foot army. Unfortunately, the surprisingly short but eventful duration of the empire which lasted only fourteen years was too brief to allow any

literary creation to descend either from the *Shih Ching* or from the *Li Sao* traditions. We are not sure if there were any Ch'in poets. However, it is not surprising to see that no genre such as "epic" was forthcoming to celebrate the heroic past of the empire. The period following the collapse of the newly founded empire is called the *Ch'u-Han* interregnum (楚漢之際), a chaotic time of wars among gallant generals and revolutionaries, warriors and rebels, lasting three years. It is what Chadwick would call a "heroic age," one of the most important factors supporting an epic tradition. The dramatic account of the struggle between the founder of the Han Dynasty, Liu Pang (劉邦) and his rival Hsiang Yu (項羽), a general of the state of Ch'u who worked to overthrow the Ch'in Dynasty and for a time made himself ruler of the empire, has been vividly preserved in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Shih Chi* and becomes one of the most popular heroic stories in Chinese literature.

The Han Dynasty was founded through years of war and became the first empire in Chinese history to last more than four hundred years. Han poets had inherited the *sao* (騷) style of writing and developed it into a new genre entitled *fu* (賦), which possessed both the narrative elements of prose and the lyrical qualities of poetry. This would have been a most proper time for a poet to have enlarged the realm of the *fu* style of writing which was more qualified than any other genre existent in Chinese literature to serve the epical materials of the *Ch'u-Han* interregnum. But curiously enough, nothing of the sort happened. Han poets missed the greatest chance in Chinese literary history of producing an epic and it seems that once the opportunity had passed, it was lost forever.

Why did the Han, or rather Chinese poets, not produce an epic or a long narrative poem? This has puzzled both Chinese and Western scholars who have been trying very hard to solve the mystery from the literary as well as the cultural standpoint. Although the mystery so far is not completely solved, two crucial reasons have been offered. They may be summarized as follows: a) The first is the dominance of the lyric. "Everyone is wonder-struck by the great Homeric epics and the tragic and comic drama, which marked the first full flowering of Greek literature," observed Chen Shih-hsiang (陳世驥):

But equally striking by contrast is the conspicuous absence of anything like an epic, when Chinese creative literature arose, in its own way no less impressive, we'd like to think, and matured contemporaneously with the Greek since about the 10th century B.C. and there was no drama to speak

of until more than 2000 years later. Its glory lay elsewhere, in lyrical poetry. Its origin is exemplified by the *Shih Ching*, *Book of Songs*, which, with music and with its pervading personal tone, its common human concern and immediate appeal, fitted in every way the entire essence of the lyric, long since acclaimed.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, he continued by defining the term "lyric": "song, or word-music, in formal structure, and subjectivity and self expression in content, are by definition, the two basic components of the lyric."<sup>4</sup> Under the overwhelming influence of the canonized *Shih Ching* tradition, the growth of the objectivistic narrative in Chinese poetry was inevitably checked. b) The second reason is the position of historical writing. "Poetry and history, it is generally agreed, are the two glories of Chinese literature," Burton Watson pointed out in his *Early Chinese Literature*. They "appear among the earliest extant writings in Chinese letters up to our own day."<sup>5</sup> Since lyricism predominated in poetry writing in the very beginning of Chinese literary history, it was natural for the writers to satisfy their thirst for narrative at the well of history. So we see the main obstacles in the Han poets' way towards developing an epic were first the dominance of subjectivistic lyricism and second the highly developed historical sense.

Wang Ching-hsien (王靖獻) in his "Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism" tried to define a group of short poems in the *Shih Ching* centered about King Wen, the father of the founder of the Chou Dynasty, as the very first Chinese epic. This he entitled as "The Weniad." His argument ran thus: a) The spirit of "The Weniad" should be characterized as the praising of *wen* (文, cultural arts), the abandoning of the idea of *wu* (武, martial arts), and the forsaking of heroism based on military power. b) This anti-*wu* attitude led ancient Chinese poets to develop the technique of "ellipsis of battle" in poetry writing, a précis of a battle hinging on one or two profoundly unmilitary images.<sup>6</sup>

Viewed as poetic device, "ellipsis" should be regarded as one of the major merits of lyrical poetry. From the point of view of epic, if it is justified to call "The Weniad" a Chinese epic, it happens to be the only example so far we can find. "Ellipsis" does not necessarily explain why the Han poets failed to continue the Weniad tradition or to create something similar to a Western epic in a period, especially during the reign of Emperor Wu, when the idea of *wu* and the *wu* type of heroism were not only encouraged but also obviously overemphasized.

Heroic age and epic heroes, either in the sense of *wen* or *wu*, indeed should not be considered as the only indispensable elements in the shaping and the formation of an epic.<sup>7</sup> Epochs that abound with heroic feats sometimes produce no epics at all. Take Tudor England for example, when the power of Queen Elizabeth the first (1558-1603) reached its peak, when England attained a prosperity at home and an importance abroad and defeated the gigantic Spanish Armada, and when the English flag flew in all corners of the world—that is, when England established a supremacy on the seas which made possible the British Empire. During such a heroic age, the only attempt at an epic, that made by one of the greatest English poets, Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), was abortive, while other genres such as lyric poetry, euphuistic prose and drama were all flowering brilliantly. Most scholars agree that Spenser's unfinished work *The Faerie Queene* could only be loosely called a "literary" or "secondary" epic.

This paper by no means attempts to trace the causes of Spenser's failure to complete his ambitious long narrative poem. But one matter relevant to our subject is that, as some critics have felt, the stanzaic form in which *The Faerie Queene* is written, with eight lines of iambic pentameter and a final Alexandrine, rhyming *a b a b b c b c c c*, has too strong a lyrical element. Especially so is the final Alexandrine; "so definite a pause at the end of each stanza causes the form to be inappropriate to a narrative poem."<sup>8</sup> This observation is reminiscent of the great success of John Milton (1608-1674) in his "literary epic" *Paradise Lost* composed some six decades after Spenser's death. Milton vigorously defended his "bold innovation" in the preface of his poem: the use of blank verse for an heroic verse. He asserted:

The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek and of Virgil in Latin, rhyme being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame meter—graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them. . . . This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage rhyming.<sup>9</sup>

Once rhyme, one of the crucial elements of lyrical poetry, can be ignored, the writing of a long narrative poem becomes possible.

Since the narrative element is so vital to the writing of an epic, one inevitable question emerges in the reader's mind, if he has come across the works of the euphuists, Spenser's contemporaries: Why did John Lyly (1554-1606), the inventor of euphuistic prose, not create an epic? John Lyly, a fellow of the Magdalen College, Oxford, one of the most ambitious writers of his time, tried very hard to win Queen Elizabeth's favor by praising her with a long narrative work, *Euphues and His England* (1580), written after the success of his first book, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578). With these two books, he made Euphuism a very popular style of writing in the sixteenth century.

*Euphues and His England* gives a very vivid picture of England and the English court. The central figure in it is of course Queen Elizabeth. The book is not only considered one of the best explanations of the nature of English loyalty to Elizabeth but also a "serious and important historical analysis" of the age.<sup>10</sup> "One who understands this document of 1580 will be able to see why the triumph over Spain," observed Roy Lamson, "produced the fervent patriotism and self-confident unity of spirit that inspires the glorious literature of the last fifteen years of the reign."<sup>11</sup> However, from the artistic point of view, Lyly's works are criticized as being "very thin in plot, and indeed their purpose was less that of entertaining by a well-built narrative, than of laying down in their long-drawn-out conversations and letters the precepts to be followed by a well-bred young gentleman."<sup>12</sup>

The wants of well-built narrative and well constructed plot are due to Lyly's overuse of literary conventions such as parallelism, anti-thesis, natural history, classical mythology, etc. And similar applications of these conventions can also be found in Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's (司馬相如) *fu*. Since both Euphuism and Han *Fu* shared similar historical backgrounds as well as a set of seemingly homogeneous devices which might be regarded disadvantageous to the writing of a long narrative poem or an epic, it is necessary for us to do some cross examination on both the works of the Han *fu* writers and the Euphuists with the criteria of epic poetry as a touchstone. For convenience of discussion, it will be proper to limit my examination by concentrating on Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and his major works: "Sir Fantasy and the Imperial Garden" (子虛上林賦); and on John Lyly and his representa-

tive works: *Euphuës: The Anatomy of Wit* and *Euphuës and His England*. My study will be confined to the following three views:

- 1) Background: The evolution of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu* and *Euphuism* which may be regarded as disadvantageous for the writing of a long narrative poem or an epic.
- 2) Convention: The similarities between the *fu* and *Euphuism* which could be regarded as disadvantageous for the writing of a long narrative poem or an epic.
- 3) Difference: "Rhetorical Action," the unique characteristic of *fu*, which could be regarded as the crucial element leading Chinese poets away from the writing of a long narrative poem or an epic, and its relationship with the Homeric narrative procedure which is demonstrated in the description of the shield of Achilles.

It is by no means necessary for us to regret that Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and John Lyly did not produce anything similar to an epic. However, through a comparative study of their works with the criteria of epic poetry in mind, the unique characteristics of both the Han *fu* and the *Euphuism* will fully emerge.

## I. Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and John Lyly

Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (179-117 B.C.) lived in Emperor Wu's (武帝) time, thirty years after the chaotic period of the Ch'u-Han interregnum, when both the civilization and the power of the Han Dynasty were reaching their peak. Within sixty years (200-140 B.C.) the Han rulers had established a prosperous and powerful China that extended in all directions. During the reign of Emperor Wu, through trade and warfare new land and territory having been conquered and new prefectures and counties established, foreign envoys were striving to come to China with exotic animals and rare treasures, together with valuable information and strange stories. Most of the princes of that time lived a splendid and luxurious life which comes down to us through beautifully painted lacy tomb tiles, picture slabs, elaborately carved bas-reliefs and wall-paintings. A new spirit was flourishing and it brought the second great empire of China to a summit. It was during this time that Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju began his literary career and came to the court of the Emperor Wu. This was indeed very much like the period in which John Lyly

lived the glorious Elizabethan Age.

After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the English marine power astonished the whole of Europe. Under the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First, England flourished both in civilization and in military power. Elizabeth was a patron of the arts and in turn was celebrated by poets and prose writers, musicians, scholars, and painters. The Shakespearean drama would not have existed, against the opposition of the London authorities, if it had not been for her protection. During such a period, John Lyly, a brilliant Oxford graduate, was bound to succeed and to soar to fame.

John Lyly gained his popularity through the publication of his first novel *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* and became the most fashionable English writer of the 1580's. At that time, English national pride was maturing rapidly and a need was felt for "a new English," independent from the influences of other European languages. There were a good many euphuistic works before *Euphues in England* of varying degrees of similarity to Lyly's such as George Pettie's "Pygmalion's Friend, and His Image," John Grange's novel *The Golden Aphroditis*, Queen Elizabeth's letters, some sermons, and the translations by Geoffrey Fenton which may have been Lyly's immediate inspiration. Lyly, more than any other writer, tried to use the exact arrangement and selection of words with balance, antithesis and alliteration to show that the English language could be developed into a flexible vehicle capable of competing on equal terms with Latin and Greek. He succeeded. In 1632, twenty-six years after Lyly's death, his first editor, Edward Blount, praised him as the "Creator of a New English."<sup>13</sup>

If we look closely we can find that in the Han Dynasty the need for a new language was also widely felt. According to the *Shih Chi*: "Biography of Li Ssu" (李斯列傳), four years after the Ch'in had united China, Emperor Shih-huang who dreamed of preserving his empire forever by means of burning all the Confucian books, decided to unify the writing of Chinese characters. From then on the written Chinese language was uniform. This was one of the greatest deeds of Emperor Shih-huang, and it gave China the opportunity to produce a new literature. Five years later (209 B.C.) the revolution against the Ch'in completely wiped out his dream and put an end to his empire.

After a series of wars, nine years in duration, the Han Dynasty was founded in 206 B.C. From the time of Emperor Kao-tsu (高祖) (206-200 B.C.) through to that of Emperor Wu (140-101 B.C.), there were no battles or

cultural disruptions and the old texts were verified and re-edited; collections of classics and encyclopedias were composed and compiled. The written characters made uniform in the Ch'in Dynasty had been translated into a more simple form, the official *li-shu* (隸書), which became the most practical and popular way of writing during the Han Dynasty. A new language was shaped and used widely in the writing of history, philosophy, poetry and prose, including the newly developed poetic genre known as *fu*, in part derived from the *Ch'u Ts'u* (楚辭) or the *sao* poems of the Warring States period. With the *sao*, the *fu* "had in common several characteristics: the long (six-or seven-word) line, the use of caesura, rhyme, and balanced paralleled phrases. It differs from the *sao* in being used for a wider range of subjects, with a tendency toward description and exposition rather than subjective lyricism."<sup>14</sup> The prosody of the *fu* of the Han period notably is freer than that of the *sao*. It uses relatively fewer "empty words" (虛字, grammatical particles) and pronouns and allows a rhyme pattern which is not restricted to couplets. On the other hand, parallelism, elaborate description, dialogue, and extensive cataloguing are also employed abundantly. Usually, the Han *fu* poet will begin with an introduction in prose dialogue which draws out the subjects and events that will be treated excessively in his composition. The length of the *fu* varies from ten or twenty lines to several hundred lines, although most of the famous pieces are long ones.

Another important characteristic of the Han *fu* was its close relationship with recitation and chanting. The word "*fu*" throughout the pre-Han period was used almost exclusively as a verb to describe the recitation of a poem. This usage is identical to that of the English word "declamation." Since "declamation" is not a literary term, David R. Knechtges, in his study *The Han Rhapsody*, suggested that the term "rhapsody" should be used as the most appropriate translation of *fu*. He argues:

In the Han Dynasty poets began writing pieces with the word *fu* in the title, and apparently the reason these poems were called *fu* is that they were often chanted . . . The rhapsody in ancient Greece was an epic poem recited or extemporized by a minstrel or court poet, known as a rhapsode. The *fu*, of course was not exclusively an epic poem, although some *fu* exhibit epic features, but its medium of presentation makes it akin to the rhapsody. The *fu* poet in many ways is a kind of rhapsode, and the poems he composed often display the ecstasy, grandeur, and emotional intensity associated with the rhapsody.<sup>15</sup>

The declamatory element of the Han *fu* makes the poet tend to write with homemade onomatopoeic words or nonce words accompanied by euphonic changes. Sometimes, a single *fu*, with its piling up of novel words, terms and descriptive synonyms, will simply exhaust the resources of the dictionary. Thus it is no surprise to see that the Han poets started with their lately acquired language to explore new possibilities in literature and to treat new materials by making experiments in their newly invented genre. This also explains why most of the Han *fu* poets, such as Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Yang Hsiung (揚雄) and Pan Ku (班固), are simultaneously philologists and lexicographers.

According to *Shih Chi* 117, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's biography, he was fond of reading and fencing in his youth much like the university wits in Elizabethan times. At first he served as a body-guard: *wu-ch'i-ch'ang-shih* (武騎常侍) for Emperor Hsiao-ching (孝景, 151-141 B.C.) who paid no attention to *fu* writing. Thus, the service gave him no chance to show his talent. Later he had learned that King Hsiao of Liang (梁孝王) was extremely fond of *fu* writing and he went over to his fief to serve him. While there, he wrote a *fu* entitled "Tsu-hsü" (子虛, "Sir Fantasy"). After the death of King Hsiao, the poet's declining fortunes made him live in poverty. His miserable situation was changed, when he eloped with a rich widow Tsuo Wen-chün (卓文君). Years later, Emperor Wu learned the poet's name by reading his "Sir Fantasy" and said that he would like to have lived as a contemporary of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju. Surprised to know that the *fu* writer he admired so much was still alive, the Emperor summoned him immediately to the court and ordered him to produce more *fu*. This was indeed an extremely good chance for the ambitious poet to use his talent. Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju thereupon wrote another piece of *fu* entitled "Shang-lin" (上林, "Imperial Garden") as a tribute to his master. The emperor was greatly pleased and gave him the position of Lang (郎, Gentleman). From then on, as an official in the court, the poet progressed rapidly and continuously. With many a *fu* he made Emperor Wu feel that he seemed to soar into heaven and become immortal.<sup>16</sup> Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju spent his late years as a diplomat and a fighter on the western border of the Han territory, and after a series of heroic deeds, he died a rich man, ten times more fortunate than John Lyly.

The evening of John Lyly's life was poor and pathetic. After *Euphues*, he abandoned narrative writing and devoted himself almost entirely to play-writing. Depending upon his patron for his livelihood, he worked with Paul's

Boys successfully for a while. He married in 1583 and received a grant of £30 a year from his patron in 1584. He served the first of his four terms as a Member of Parliament in 1589 and in the same year he wrote a pamphlet called "Pappe with an Hatche," a tract in defense of the bishop in the Marprelate controversy.<sup>17</sup> All these years, Lyly was waiting hopefully to return to the office of Master of the Revels. However he suffered the common disappointment of courtiers and was never reappointed. After the inhibition of Paul's Boys in 1590, his fortunes rapidly declined. He suffered a disastrous loss of popularity caused by the rise of Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare. His income was so meagre that he boldly addressed to Queen Elizabeth two bitter petitions in poverty and despair. In this, he resembled Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju who served at court and hoped that his art would get him court favor and a good job with a fat salary: in the first, he complained of having wasted ten years hanging about the court in hope of preferment; in the second, he wrote: "thirteene years your Highnes servant, but yet nothinge . . . A thousand hopes but all nothinge, a hundred promises, but yet nothings."<sup>18</sup> This explains how it is due to financial difficulties, that he gave up novel writing and became a playwright, Elizabeth rewarded him with some money, but that did not help much. He died shortly thereafter in London.

From the above brief biographical sketches of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and John Lyly, we can see that both of them were court poets, and the major purpose of their works was to offer intellectual entertainment for the royal family and their patrons; in return, they hoped for fame and political advancement. Both of them were philologists and rhetoricians. They opened new possibilities for their respective languages and new frontiers for writers to follow.

## II. Hsiang-ju's *Fu* and Lyly's Euphuism

"Once we think of a poem in relation to other poems, as a unit of poetry," Northrop Fry observed, "We can see that the study of genres has to be founded on the study of conventions."<sup>19</sup> This is true, also in comparisons between Euphuism and the *fu*. According to K. Danzinger and W. Stacy Johnson, the term "convention" indicates literary devices, rules, customs and habits.<sup>20</sup> In this paper I intend to use Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's work as a background while using the study of literary conventions to point out the

similarities and differences between “*Tsu-hsü and Shang-lin fu*” (*TSF*) and *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* and the sequel *Euphues and His England* (*UAE*).

The first thing a reader will notice in *TSF* is the continuous use of the devices of parallelism and antithesis similar to euphuistic prose. For example, in the opening conversation of *TSF*, between Master No-such and Sir Fantasy:

His men ranked all over the waterland, with their nets and snares covered all the hills; they caught the hares by nets, broke the deer on wheels, discharged the tailed-deer and seized the feet of unicorns; they galloped recklessly into the briny covers, and ate what they caught. Their shots were accurate and the catch was abundant. The king became proud and bragged of his achievements.<sup>21</sup>

列卒滿澤，罟罔彌山，  
揜兔轉鹿，射麋脚麟，  
驚於塩浦，割鮮染輪，  
射中獲多，矜而自功。

The above quotation shows that there are four words to each of the parallel lines in which the words and ideas are not only balanced against each other but also parallel in position and in grammatical function. Examples of such balanced ideas are: waterlands to hills, men to animals; and animals easy to catch to animals difficult to catch etc. Examples of the parallel grammatical functions are: adjective to adjective, verb to verb, and adverb to adverb etc. These conventions used by Han *fu* poets are identical to those in euphuistic prose as characterized by R.W. Bond: “ideas and words are always paralleled in position and grammatical function: adjective to adjective, verb to verb, adverb to adverb.”<sup>22</sup> This phenomenon is called by Landmann and Child “parison” or “parisonity”: succeeding clauses or phrases identical in structure.<sup>23</sup> As a matter of fact, sentence structure like this is similar to the classical and medieval schemata of “isocolon” and “paromoion,” the former a succession of clauses or phrases equal in length; the latter a succession of clauses or phrases, or corresponding syllables, alike in sound. In the *Anatomy of Wit* examples of this type can be found:

Though thou have eaten the seeds of Rockatte which breede incontinencie,  
yet have I chewed the leafe Cresse which maintaineth modestie. Though  
thou beare in thy bosome the hearbe araxa most moismo to verginitie,

yet have I ye stone yt groweth in the mounte Tmolus, the upholder of chastitie . . . <sup>24</sup>

“The character of sixteenth-century prose was, in large measure, the result of confused theories as to the border line between prose and verse and the role of the imagination in literature.” It has been observed, “Writers of prose fiction . . . felt it incumbent upon them to create a prose which should be comparable in quality with the poetry which was being produced under the impetus of the classical revival. The means by which they solved their problem were conditioned by their conviction that if prose were to be comparable to poetry, it ought to have as many of the characteristics of poetry as possible, with the exception of verse and rhyme.”<sup>25</sup> This conviction explains the excessively ornamental character and the extravagant use of “word schemes” in euphuistic prose which can be summed up by the following features: the strict balance and alliteration in simple or complex forms of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences; the presence of “scientific” allusions, the so called “unnatural natural history,” the proverbs and figures of speech, and rhetorical questions.

“Rhetorical questions abound throughout” *UAE*, as Bond showed with many examples like the following:

And canst thou, Lucilla, be so light of love in forsaking Philautus to flye to Euphues? Canst thou prefer a stranger before thy countryman? As tartar before thy companion? Why Euphues doth perhappes desyre my love, but Philautus hath deserved it. Why, Euphues feature is worthy as good as I, but Philautus his fayth is worthy a better. I, but Euphues hath greater perfection. I, but Philautus hath deeper affection . . . <sup>26</sup>

Here the function of the rhetorical question is purely expository. It is used not to reveal situation or character but to develop the author’s ideas. Sometimes such questions themselves are the answers or serve as leads to the discussion or the subject the author seeks to introduce. For instance, the conversation between Master No-such and Sir Fantasy:

Master No-such asked: “Did you enjoy your hunt?” Sir Fantasy replied: “Of course, I did.” “Did you have a large catch?” “Very little.” “Then, how could you possibly have enjoyed it?” “I enjoyed nothing but that when the King of Ch’i was trying to boast about how strong his carriages and horsemen are, I replied, telling of our hunt in Yun-ment.” “Would you please tell me about it?”<sup>27</sup>

烏有先生問曰：「今日田樂乎？」子虛曰：「樂。」「獲多乎？」曰「少。」「然則何樂？」曰「僕樂齊王之欲夸僕以車騎之衆而僕對以雲夢之事也。」曰「可得而聞乎？」

As soon as the last question was asked, the author brought forth long descriptive passages with lavish decorations which changed the prosaic conversation into a rhymed poetic narration that could no longer be regarded as a regular answer. These series of rhetorical questions enabled Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju to lead up to his extravagant descriptions of the hunt at Yun-meng (雲夢) and to display his elaborate literary techniques. The same device was used when Lord Not-real responded to Master No-such and Sir Fantasy by asking "Haven't you ever heard of the Shang-lin park of the Son of Heaven?" And then he started to give a verbose description of the park. Although rhetorical questions do not abound throughout *TSF*, from the structural point of view, they do link the whole *fu* together by refined and over-elaborated "answers" and become one of the most important conventions followed by the latter *fu* poets. The rhetorical questions asked by the *fu* poet are reminiscent of the epic question or invocation at the beginning of most epics, whereby the poet calls on the Muses for help and asks a key question which introduces the main subject and event of the poem. The only difference between them is that the answer offered by the epic poet is many times longer than the *fu* poet.

Another characteristic of Euphuism is repetition; as Bond described it, the "sense and form are perpetually repeated and sentiment driven home by reiterating its assertion. Repetition extends even to the subject matter: severally, or compared, the two parts exhibit a considerable amount of parallelism."<sup>28</sup> If we examine *TSF*, we can see it is a repetition of varied hunting scenes: from the smaller one of the king of Ch'i to the larger one of the Son of Heaven. As for word and sentence repetitions, there is no need for further illustration. By ending his masterpiece with a brief remonstrance on the folly of such an extravagant hunt, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju started a convention that the later *fu* poets followed closely. One would not fail to recognize that the major purpose of his *fu* is by no means didactic, but to offer delight and pleasure to the emperor. It is reminiscent of Lyly's flattery in his *Euphues and His England*, when he praised his Queen: "This Queen being deceased, Elizabeth, being of the age of twenty-two years, of more beauty than honor, and yet of more honor than any earthly creature, was called from a prisoner to be a prince, from the castle to the crown, from the fear of losing her head, to be supreme head."<sup>29</sup> In point of fact, however, Elizabeth was

really twenty-five when she was crowned in 1558.

Ornamental devices such as the use of historical allusion, classical mythology and natural history are also important characteristics of *TSF* and of *UAE*. In *TSF*, when the poet wanted to describe the bravery of hunters facing fearful animals, instead of giving the reader a direct physical description of masculine power, he borrowed historical figures famous for their courage and gallantry, such as Chuan Chu (專諸) and Wei Kung (衛公).<sup>30</sup> The former was a well-known warrior in the Warring States period and the latter was a famous general of Emperor Wu's time. And instead of depicting how refined and precious the hunter's equipage was, the poet borrowed many mythological weapons, including the sword of Kan-chiang (干將) and the bow of Wu-hao (烏號). Above all, these descriptions give the reader an impression of how luxurious and excessive the hunt had been: all the best equipage and hunters are assembled to serve the poet's needs. Furthermore, many mythological animals and figures are mentioned in *TSF*: the *chiao-lung* (蛟龍, dragon), *ch'ih-chin* (赤鱗, hornless red dragon) and various gods, fairies and sylphs such as Hsien-o (織阿), Ling-yu (靈圉) and Wo-ch'uan (儼全).<sup>31</sup>

In the *Anatomy of Wit*, allusions to historical personages and classical mythology are also widely used. Especially the Greek and Graeco-Roman painters Romulus and Agesilaus. Sometimes, as Bond pointed out, "The personages seem wholly fictitious."<sup>32</sup> The figures of Asicrchus, Biarus and Theorrita and others were all created by Lyly. Most of Lyly's mythological allusions were drawn from Ovid, Virgil, Pettie and Hyginu, Syrter and Symplegades, Myrrha, Bylis and Phoedra for instance. Bond criticized the fact that some of Lyly's figures were simply "stolen from Pettie, or else invented" and his mythological allusions were often overused.<sup>33</sup>

As for the ornamental devices, John Lyly was above all extremely interested in using the famous "similes from natural history."<sup>34</sup> He employed numerous recondite names and facts such as "the stone abeston," "stone of sicilia," "the fish scolopidus," "dragons feeding on elephant's blood," and "stone in Mt Tmolus"<sup>35</sup> with other abstruse references and was bitterly criticized by Philip Sidney. The latter attacked Lyly saying these similes did not prove but only explained and they merely distracted the attention and confused the memory without assisting the judgment. Here is a typical passage from *Euphues and His England*:

This is that mighty eagle, that hath thrown dust into the eyes of the hart that went about to work destruction to her subjects, into whose wings although the blind beetle would have crept, and so being carried into her nest, destroyed her young ones, yet hath she with the virtue of her feathers, consumed that fly in his own fraud. She hath exiled the swallow that sought to spoil the grasshopper, and given bitter almonds to the ravenous wolves that endeavored to devour the silly lambs, burning even with the breath of her mouth like the princely stag, the serpents that were engendered by the breath of the huge elephant, so that now all her enemies are as whist as the bird Attagen, who never singeth any tune after she is taken, nor they being so overtaken.<sup>36</sup>

“Now for similitudes in certain printed discourses,” Sidney argued in his “Defense of Poesy,” “I think all herbarists, all stories of beasts, fowls, and fishes are rifled up, that they may come in multitudes to wait upon any of our conceits, which certainly is as absurd a surfeit to the ears as is possible.”<sup>37</sup>

“Natural history” is also used in *TSF*. When describing the mountains of Yun-meng, the poet gives a long name list of stones and plants as follows:

Its soil is sinnabar and malachite. Its stones are carnelians and garnets, amethysts, turquoises, and matrices of ore, chalcedony, beryl, and basalt for whetstones, onyx and figured agate. To the east, there are fields of gentian and fragrant orchids; iris, turmeric, and crow-fans, spikenard and sweet flag; selinea and angelica, sugar cane and ginger.<sup>38</sup>

其土則丹青赭堊，雌黃白垩，錫碧金銀，象色炫耀，照爛龍鱗，其石則赤玉玫瑰，琳滯琨瑀，璩功玄厲，瑛石武夫。其東則有蕙圃衡蘭，芷若射干，穹窮昌蒲，江離麋蕪，諸蔗薄且。

The function of Lyly's list is different from Hsiang-ju's in many respects. The former only intends to show off exotic knowledge. “The real fault of the similes, whether false or true,” Bond asserted “is that they are used in gross excess.”<sup>39</sup> Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, on the other hand, created poetic effect by contrasting different lists of names. Of this difference, a more detailed study will be made in my discussion of “rhetorical action.”

From the above examination, we can see that though declaring the intention of telling love or hunting stories, both Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's and Lyly's works were very thin in plot indeed, and their purposes, most of the time, were to display their rare knowledge with fancy literary techniques and long-drawn-out conversations. They might have achieved a greater narrative effect, if they had been able to do away with certain superfluous ornamental

devices. In spite of their affectations, their main influences were good, for Euphuism helped to teach English prose writers the advantages of balance and firmness of structure; and the authors of *Han fu* helped to teach Chinese poets the advantages of analysis, synthesis and rearrangement of themes and images.

### III. Rhetorical Action

An interesting question may be raised. Since *TSF* and *UAE* share approximately the same homogenous devices and conventions, do they produce the same result and effect? It is obvious that *UAE* are novels which have been crammed with opinions, comments and digressions by their author, and there is very little dramatic action and objectivistic narration in them. Both of the novels are less an organic whole or a self-subsisting entity than an excuse for the author to show off his rhetorical craftsmanship and to win favor from the court. The style of *UAE* is prosaic rather than poetic and the stories read like anecdotes and diaries that want a well organized structure as well as a well-built narrative. Nevertheless, to the reader, the attractive part of *UAE* is not their stories or characters but rather their rhetorical elements which give a freshness to the English language and a new sense of form to the English prose style.

Although Lyly was not the first to experiment with Euphuism, he brought the style to its highest point and made it a prevailing fashion of the 1580's. The defects and flaws of his works were attacked by the writers of following decades for their lack of true profundity and for being over-artificial. Thus from the artistic point of view, Euphuism was never widely used in the novel or prose, while it was used in Elizabethan drama and metaphysical poetry. Soon after Lyly's death, the shortlived Euphuism was quickly forgotten, while dramatists and poets extracted its essences to use as fertilizer for their own creative writing.

As far as composition is concerned, *TSF* is far more organically structured than *UAE*. *TSF* can be divided into two parts: "Sir Fantasy" and "Shang-lin Park" with twenty-six "sections."<sup>40</sup> In the very beginning of the first part, three characters are introduced: Sir Fantasy, Master No-such and Lord Not-real. The opening two sections are mainly debates between the envoy of Ch'i, Sir Fantasy and a courtier of Ch'u, Master No-such, on the

subject of the hunts of the kings of the feudal states. Sir Fantasy is trying to point out the inferiority of the King of Ch'i's hunting as compared to the King of Ch'u's, Lord Not-real maintaining silence while they are debating. In the second part, "Shang-lin Park," from section nine to twenty-four, after listening to the debate, Lord Not-real argues that the hunts of the feudal states are by no means to be compared with the hunts of the Son of Heaven.

The plot of *TSF* is very well organized and the subject of hunting is fully described and developed. The rhythm of *TSF* is also carefully arranged. In the beginning section, the passage from "The envoy of Ch'u went to Ch'i" (楚使子虛使於齊) to "May I hear about it?" (可得而聞乎) is purely a prose conversation. But in the second section, which serves as an answer to the preceding question, the narration and the language of Sir Fantasy gradually become complicated and elaborated with antitheses, rhetorical questions and a rhythm slightly faster than the preceding section. The following five sections, from "I have heard that in Ch'u there are seven waterlands" (臣聞楚有七澤) to "Then, the King fell silent and had no way to answer me" (於是齊王無以應僕也) is the body of the first part of "Sir Fantasy" in which all the conventions discussed above are employed. The prosaic elements disappear and are taken over by poetic descriptions in a varied tempo which reach a preclimax. The five sections are as follows: (1) Section three: the majestic panoramas of the mountains, the rivers, the stones, the soil, the dry-land and the aquatic plants, the animals and the fish of all four quarters. (2) Section four: the hunting scenes which assemble all the mythological heroes and weapons in hand-to-hand combat with the fierce animals. (3) Section five: Fair ladies like goddesses and dancing girls like nymphs are introduced to contrast with masculinity. (4) Section six: the mighty heroes and the charming females together join the hunt for water fowl, fish and other aquatic animals. (5) Section seven: the description of the hunt of the King of Ch'u ends and the King of Ch'i, who is overwhelmed by Sir Fantasy's words, falls silent.

The following two sections, which are often regarded as the opening of the "Shang-lin Park," are Master No-such's eloquent rebuttal against Sir Fantasy and Lord Not-real on the true meaning of hunting. He ridicules their debate by pointing out that their reasoning is fallacious. In these two sections, the tempo of the language is comparatively slower than Sir Fantasy's hunting descriptions. The prosaic element in the beginning two sections of the first part is reiterated to give some sort of respite or detente to the reader

after the tense extravagant hunting scenes, and to prepare for the following long ornamental description of the Son of Heaven's hunt. The second hunt, in comparison with the first one, is much longer in length and excessive in content. It can be regarded as a variation of the first: (1) Section ten: the majestic panoramas of geographical background, animals, fish . . . etc. (2) Section eleven: panoramas of peaks, gorges, forest, plants . . . etc. (3) Section twelve: monsters. (4) Section thirteen: palaces, deities and precious stones . . . etc. (5) Section fifteen: rare animals and birds. (7) Section sixteen: the conclusion of the above descriptions. (8) Section seventeen: the Son of Heaven starts his hunt with famous heroes, and the rain and clouds follow them. (9) Section nineteen: hunting for all kinds of birds. (11) Section twenty: on their return from the hunt they stay at the summer palace and review the catch. (12) Section twenty-one: the celebration of the hunt with music, songs, dances and shows. (13) Section twenty-two: the hunt for pretty women. Here, the hunt reaches its climax. (14) Section twenty-three, which can be regarded as the turning point in preparation for the following anti-climax, deals with the Son of Heaven's self-examination on the wastefulness and lavishness of his hunt. He reflects that one who once has been accustomed to luxury and has indulged in expensive habits will find it hard to live a frugal life again. "Surely" the Son of Heaven exclaimed: "This is no way for one who has inherited the throne to carry on the great task of his forebears and insure the rule of our imperial house."<sup>41</sup> Thus, an imperial decree is given that in the future this kind of hunting should be strictly prohibited. (15) Section twenty-four: the Son of Heaven keeps a fast for several days and starts his pursuit of the canonical classics, the highest form of hunting, offering the profoundest pleasure. (16) Section twenty-five: Lord Not-real accuses both the King of Ch'i and the King of Ch'u of neglecting affairs of state. He denies all the previous inferences and arguments about hunting by emphasizing that hunting for the canonical classics and performing good deeds are the essential things for a good ruler to learn and practice. (17) Section twenty-six: Sir Fantasy and Master No-such blush and stammer in their embarrassment and prostrate themselves before Lord Not-real's eloquence.

From the above summary of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu*, we can see clearly that sections one, two, eight, nine, twenty-five and twenty-six are debates and rhetorical exercises which can be called "persuasion by indirection." They are obviously derived from the writing of the *Chan-kuo ts'e* (戰國策,

*Intrigues of the Warring States*). As Hellmut Wilhelm observes, there is a close connection between "persuasion by indirection" and the "school of politics." He concludes that the Han *fu* develops "matured persuasion from a technique into an art."<sup>42</sup>

The rest of the sections are two hunting descriptions: the first one is from section three to seven; the second is from section ten to twenty-four. These sections cover vast landscapes, hunters' parades, hunting scenes, feasts and dances, music and celebrations reminiscent of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.<sup>43</sup> There might have been a great appeal in these sections for Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju to have treated his materials in a narrative way. However, he failed to break away from the dominant influence of *Ch'u-Ts'u*. David Hawkes in his "The Quest of the Goddess" sees that:

... the content of the *Ch'u-ts'u* poems is classifiable into two main categories. One, which I shall designate *tristia*, expresses the poet's sorrows, his resentments, his complaints against a deluded prince a cruel fate, a corrupt, malicious and uncomprehending society; the other, which I shall designate *itineraria*, describes the poet's journeys, occasionally real ones, but more often the imaginary, supernatural journeys.<sup>44</sup>

The *Ch'u tristia*, which can be regarded as an essential element of Chinese lyrical poetry has almost been eliminated in Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu*, but the *itineraria*, which is of shamanistic origin, is preserved in his writings. "If we apply the word 'narrative' to the *itineraria*, its absurd inappropriateness is at once apparent. Yet the *Li Sao*, *Yuan Yu*, *Ssu-hsüan fu* do in fact record movement, and events taking place in some sort of time." David Hawkes continues his observation:

The reason why the term "narrative" is so immediately unacceptable is that the development in these poems is conceived of as a spatial sequence. In the ritual circuit whose object is the accumulation of magic power, the actual passage between one power-nucleus and the next, though indispensable, is not of intrinsic interest.

In the morning I started my journey from Ts'ang-wu  
In the evening I arrived at the Garden of Paradise.

— This is not the narrative of a journey. The journey might have been a long and interesting one; but the poet's business is with the enumeration of significant places, not with the experience of reaching them. This becomes

more evident as the poet's cosmology becomes more defined. The perfunctory verbal expressions denoting transit between one point and another in the celestial circuit become mere connectives linking one passage and another. The all-important structural element is not temporal sequence but spatial order; the enumeration in correct order of fixed points in the cosmos.<sup>45</sup>

Hawkes elaborated his point in a long footnote: "Conversely, and for the same evolutionary reason, description of a static scene tends to become dramatized and filled with movement." He argues:

A *fu* writer does not say, "Across the lake is a little hill, at the top of which is a garden containing a high terrace with a stone staircase leading up to it" but "Rowing over the lake, climbing up a little hill, one passes through a garden. Reeling giddily, one ascends the stone steps of a lofty terrace." This may seem no more than is achieved nowadays by the writers of guidebooks, and can indeed be partly accounted for by the exigencies of Chinese idiom . . .<sup>46</sup>

Of course Hawkes is justified in asserting that the narrator of the *Han fu* takes the point of view of a tourist or a traveler who is having an imaginary, supernatural journey in which spatial order is emphasized while temporal sequence is not. However, the point of view of a tourist or a traveler does not necessarily prevent him from using objective narration. It is the vagueness of the temporal sequence in the *Han fu* which proves fatal to the build-up of a narrative procedure. The same weakness appears in Lyly's *Euphues and His England*: when he narrates the rising history of Queen Elizabeth, no temporal sequence can be traced. Everything he describes is as inanimated as a painting, no movement or action can be sensed. In fact, Lyly often uses a painter's point of view to describe Queen Elizabeth:

Touching the beauty of this prince, her countenance, her personage, her majesty, I cannot think that it may be sufficiently commended, when it cannot be too much marveled at; so that I am constrained to say as Praxitiles did, when he began to paint Venus and her son . . . In the like manner fareth it with me, for having all the ladies in Italy, more than fifty hundred, whereby to color Elizabeth, I must say with Zeuxis that as many more will not suffice, and therefore in as great an agony paint her court with her back towards you, for that I cannot by art portray her beauty, wherein, though I want the skill to do it as Zeuxis did . . .<sup>47</sup>

From this we can see that the trouble of both the Han *fu* poet and the euphuist is that they treat their material like appraisers viewing paintings or hand-scrolls. The euphuists are always trying to analyze the paintings with witty inferences and ornamental comments, while the Han *fu* poets are trying to animate the paintings or the hand scrolls by means of their literary techniques. Noting as an example the first hunt, the pre-climax of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu*, from "The mountain which winds and twists upward" (其山則盤行第鬱) to "Then, let the warriors who are as brave as Chuan Chu to fight against those animals," (乃使剽諸之倫，手格此獸) we can find that most of the things the poet has described are inanimate objects like mountains, rocks and plants, and yet we feel that there has been certain action involved. For instance, from a reading of "The mountain which winds and twists upward sticking up and rising high, varied with lofty peaks that half or completely blot out the sun and the moon," the reader will sense that the mountain seems to be moving from the ground towards the sky. What causes an inanimate mountain to become active like this? The answer is the use of the "action verb." It is that which makes the whole picture vivid and directs the reader's attention. Same examples can also be found in section three, Part I, B I and B II; Part II, A, B I and B II. By the quality of the selected imagery and the carefully chosen verbs, certain inner action and movement is created. In section three, Part I, after the description of the outlook of the mountain, the poet begins to describe the soft part of the mountain soil by emphasizing its colors. And then, from soft imagery, he turns to hard imagery such as rocks and stones. In contrast to the mountain, the rocks and the soil, sections B I and B II of Part I deal with plants, waterlands and plains. In Part II, after the descriptions of plants on high ground and low swamp, the poet starts to mix the animate things into those plants and waterlands. In Part II, A and B I, after the author depicts the exterior aspects of stones, sand turtles and other aquatic animals are introduced. Then in Part II, B II, from waterlands, the poet moves his subjects to the forests. Starting from huge trees to small trees, he shows animals, wandering around the roots. From the variation and the arrangement of the imagery, the reader can also feel that certain inner actions accompany waving movements which undulate up and down from the beginning to the end.

After the panoramic background is presented, mankind suddenly jumps in and starts hunting:

Then let the warriors who are as brave as Chun Chu fight against those animals

Here the reader should not have any feeling of abruptness as the previous sections already have established a hunting atmosphere. Even though the poet did not describe how those hunters start to march into Yun-meng and how they climb those mountains and hills, pass those waterlands and forests and find the animals, by the "seeming" action and movement which the poet creates with verbs and the carefully presented spatial order, one feels that the poet has led him through half of the Yun-meng and has prepared him for the hunt.

We might imagine that the action in a novel is like cinematography in that the lens is always following the main character or the main event. The major purpose of the lens is "movement." As when a horse jumps over a fence, the lens following the horse can merely capture the process from a single point of view. But Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's device is similar to using many lenses to describe a painting or a sculpture of a jumping horse. If the poet wants to make his readers feel that the jumping horse in the painting seems to be really moving, then he has to use his shooting technique by panning his lens skillfully in the opposite direction of the horse's "motion." By doing that he can stir the inner feelings of his reader with a sense of movement. That is the reason why the poet emphasizes the precision of the directional verbs and the quality of the imagery. Since the description of direction will tell the reader which way the horse is going to jump, the use of "action verbs" is like the use of lines the painter uses to tell us how the horse jumps. By the detailed specifications of the horse's body and its colors which the poet carefully portrays, we will comprehend what species of horse is jumping.

In the *Iliad*, Homer also has a chance to describe something similar to a painted picture when he comes to the introduction of the shield of Achilles in Book XVIII. Homer uses approximately one hundred and fifty lines to illustrate the scenery and stories on the shield as follows: (1) The earth, the heavens, the sea, the "unwearying" sun, the moon "waxing to the full" and the signs "every one wherewith the heavens are crowned," etc. (2) Two fair cities of mortal men, one containing espousals and marriage feasts, the other surrounded by two armies in siege. (3) A soft freshly ploughed field, clusters of grapes and vintagers playing music and singing merrily. (6) A herd of kine with upright horns and two lions among them. (7) White sheep, a farmstead,

and roofed huts and folds. (8) A dancing place crowded with youths and maidens. Lessing, in his essay "Laocoön" discussing the relationship between painting and poetry, pointed out that Homer "paints the shield not as a finished and complete thing, but as a thing in process. Here once more he has availed himself of the famous artifice, turning the *co-existing* of his design into a *consecutive*, and thereby making of the tedious painting of a physical object the living picture of an action."<sup>48</sup> He continued:

We see not the Shield, but the divine artificer at work upon it. He steps up with hammer and tongs to his anvil, and after he has forged the plates from the rough ore, the pictures which he has selected for its adornment stand out one after another before our eyes under his artistic chiseling. Nor do we lose sight of him again until all is finished. When it is complete, we are amazed at the work, but it is with the believing amazement of an eye-witness who has seen it in the making.<sup>49</sup>

Lessing's point shows us that Erich Auerbach is very penetrating in his observation of the importance of the use of externalization in Homeric procedure—that all the things described by Homer are presented with an objectivistic narration accompanying "foreground" only. From the above examination, we can clearly see the differences of narrative procedure between Homer and Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju. Homer does not use what I called "lens technique" to animate his painted objects at all. He simply makes his painted objects move into action with his poetic power.

Although Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's rhetorical devices are similar to John Lyly's, the former are used in a more organic way. With a different purpose in mind, the *fu* poet produces a different effect which I call the "Rhetorical Action." In the "climax," the hunting scene of the Son of Heaven, the "Rhetorical Action" is revealed most clearly. From section ten, "To the east of it lies Ts'ang-wu, to the west the land of Hsi-chi; on its south runs the Cinnabar River, on its north, the Purple Deeps" (左蒼梧，右西極，丹水更其南，紫淵徑其北，) up to section twelve, "Gazing about the expanse of the park . . . in the southern part of the park, where grasses grow in the dead of winter, . . . In the north, where in the midst of summer," (於是乎周覽泛觀…其南則隆冬生長…其北則盛夏含凍，) these three sections constitute the preclimax of the hunt of the Son of Heaven. Rather than simply beginning with the description of the mountains as in "Sir Fantasy," the poet starts with the water scenes first; after a detailed portrayal of the

land scenes are introduced, the movement is from hills to mountains and forests, from plain to grass and herbs, from the place of the sun's rising to the place of its setting, all giving the reader an impression of vast moving space. Following this, the poet begins to depict the warmth of the winter in the south and the cool of the north which offer a contrast between time and space.

From section thirteen, "Then there is the palace . . .," (於是乎離宮別館. . . . .) to section sixteen, "There are a thousand places like that . . .," (若此輩者，數千百處. . . . .) these four sections are, as a whole, in contrast to the previous sections ten to twelve. After the description of nature and wildlife, the poet starts to describe the achievements of mankind, the great palaces and constructions which, high as mountains, can even touch the sky. The carefully cultivated plants in the palaces are fruitful and edible. The monsters and the precious animals have all been tamed or caged. Beyond the physical enjoyment, there are spiritual entertainments such as music and literature.

After the extravagant descriptions of the natural and man-made worlds, the Son of Heaven appears suddenly in the middle of these two worlds to continue his hunt. This is reminiscent of the western epic device *in medias res*. The hunting scene covers three sections that total two hundred and ninety-five words of which one hundred verbs of action are employed. In order to strengthen the tension of the hunting action and the vigorous attack of the Son of Heaven, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju introduces sentences which start with verbs of action without any subject stated. Examples can be found as follows:

Take alive the leopards and panthers; strike down jackals and wolves; seize the black and tawny bears; down the wild sheep; wearing pheasant-tailed caps and breeches of white tiger skin under patterned tunics; sit astride the wild horses; clamber up the steep slopes of the Three Pikes and descend again to the river shoals; gallop over the hillsides and the narrow passes; through the valleys and across the rivers; fell the "dragon sparrows" and sport with the *chieh-ch'ih*; strike the *hsia-ko* and stab the little bears, . . .<sup>50</sup>  
生獾豹，搏豺狼，手熊羆，足野羊，蒙鷓蘇，絀白虎，被豳文，跨野馬。陵三麥之危，下磧歷之坻；徑險赴險，越壑厲水。推蜚廉，弄解豸，格瑕蛤，鋌猛氏……

Almost all the sentences in these three sections follow the above models.

The reader, through the poet's extensive use of verbs of action, sees and feels only the killing or the capturing of all kinds of animals without having specific knowledge of the identity of the actors. The movements discussed in the above sections are very much like the actions created out of a painting or a hand scroll of hunting by a movie director with pans and tilts. Using action verbs in such a manner, the poet skillfully avoids presenting the hunt in a long narrative which would be impossible within the limit of such a short passage.

The "Rhetorical Action" is brought to its peak in the anti-climax in section twenty-four. There, the Son of Heaven goes hunting in an abstract sense, among the canonical classics. Within this one hundred and forty-five word section, thirty-nine action verbs are used. Through these verbs the hunt of the Son of Heaven has been elevated into the metaphysical world which is full of vital forces and symbolic actions.

## Conclusion

We can see that the literary devices employed by both the Han *fu* poet and the euphuist have features which doubtlessly prevent the build-up of long narrative works. The life span of Euphuism was very short and declined rapidly after Lyly's death in 1606. Two years later, one of the greatest English epic poets, John Milton, was born. Milton abolished not only the euphuistic devices but also the stanzaic form together with its rhyme scheme.

In China, one of the fatal elements which prevented the shaping of a long narrative poem or an epic was the widely practiced "Rhetorical Action." The *fu* tradition has been carried on for almost two thousand years on the one hand; and on the other, a further development in the genre called *pien-wen* (駢文, parallel prose), which had begun to take shape in Han times, culminated in the anthology pieces of the Six Dynasties and the early T'ang period. This prose form used practically all the *fu* devices, especially "Rhetorical Action" and antithesis, to an extreme. After the T'ang Dynasty, "Parallel Prose" gradually transformed itself into *wen fu* (文賦, prose *fu*). It influenced a stereotype in composition called the *pa-gu* (八股) which came to be required in the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties in the imperial examinations.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the *pa-gu* examination was

abolished. The rise of the Vernacular Literature Movement, which was mainly influenced by Western literature, attracted the interest in and encouraged the quest for a Chinese epic. The quest launched in literary theories and in creative writing continues into our own day.

As the *fu* of the Han Dynasty is the Chinese literary genre that comes closest to a Western epic; so in English, John Lyly's Euphuism comes closest to the Han *fu* style. This comparative study of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu* and John Lyly's Euphuism not only shows the differences between them, but also from the aspect of literary theory throws light on the distinctions between their narrative procedure and the criteria and techniques employed by epic poets. The observation and examination offered in this paper have made the unique characteristics as well as the similarities, of both the Han *fu* and the Euphuism emerge, allowing us a better appreciation of these two non-epic forms.

There have been many reasons offered by Chinese and Western scholars to explain the absence of the epic in China, including the dominance of lyricism, the development of historical writing, and the emphasis on the idea of cultural arts. From the point of view of narration, the discovery of "Rhetorical Action" in Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu* which developed a writing style followed by almost all the *fu* poets, enables us to add one more reason for there being no such thing called an "epic" in Chinese literary history, especially that of the Han Dynasty.

## Notes

1. Wang Kuo-wui, *Wang Kuan-T'ang Hsian-sheng Ch'uan-Chi* (王觀堂先生全集) (Taipei, 1968), V. II, p. 1846; James Robert Hightower, "Chinese Literature in the Context of World Literature," *Comparative Literature*, (Oregon), V. 2 (1953), p.120.
2. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, translated by Willard R. Trask, (New Jersey, 1953), p. 7: "But any such subjectivistic-perspectivistic procedure, creating a foreground and background, resulting in the present lying open to the depths of the past, is entirely foreign to the Homeric style; the Homeric style knows only a foreground, only a uniformly illuminated; uniformly objective present."
3. Chen Shih-hsiang,, "On Chinese Lyrical Tradition," *Tamkang Review*, II, 2 & III, 1 (Oct., 1971-April, 1972), p. 18.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
5. Burton Watson, *Early Chinese Literature* (New York, 1962), p. 19.
6. Wang Ching-hsien, "Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism," *JAOS*, 95, 1 (1975), pp. 25-35.
7. Regarding the creation of an epic, content and form should receive equal consideration. The most important element with regard to the form of epic is narration. As E. Auerbach has suggested, the objectivistic-perspectivistic narrative procedure with a technique of externalization and the epic perception of reality are also crucial qualities in the formation of an epic. See *Mimesis* (New Jersey, 1953), pp. 2-23.
8. A. M. Witherspoon, general ed., *The College Survey of English Literature* (New York, 1951), pp. 234-235.
9. Douglas Bush, ed., *The Complete Poetical Works of John Milton* (Boston, 1965), p. 211.
10. Roy Lamson and Hallett Smith, ed., *Renaissance England* (New York, 1956), p. 206.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.
12. William A. Neilson and A. H. Thorndike, *A History of English Literature* (Oxford, 1960), p. 97.
13. Lamson and Smith, p. 206.
14. James Robert Hightower, *Topics in Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 26.
15. David R. Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 13-14.
16. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, *Shih Chih* (Peking, 1972), V. XI, pp. 2539-2541.
17. R. W. Bond, ed., *The Complete Works of John Lyly* (London, 1902), V. I, pp. 44-48.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-74.
19. Northrop Fry, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York, 1968), p. 96.
20. See Malies K. Dansinger and W. Stacy Johnson, *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, (Boston, 1965), pp. 66-67.
21. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, p. 3003.
22. Bond, V.I, p. 120.
23. Lamson and Smith, p. 207.
24. Bond, V.I, p. 121.
25. Witherspoon, p. 179.
26. Bond, V. I, pp. 122-123.
27. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, p. 2009.
28. Bond, V. I, p. 186.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 430.
30. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, pp. 3009-3033.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 3017.
32. Bond, V. I, p. 250.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

36. Ibid., p. 434.
37. Walter Jackson Bate, ed., *Criticism: The Major Texts*, (New York, 1952), pp. 104-105.
38. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, p. 3004.
39. Bond, V.I, P.222.
40. Since the fu style is between prose and verse, I use the term "section" to replace "paragraph" or "stanza." The division of "sections" is based on the annotated modern text of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Shih Chi*, published by Chung-hua-shu-chü, (Peking, 1972).
41. Cyril Birch, ed., *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York, 1965), p. 152.
42. See J. I. Crump, *Intrigues, Studies of the Chan-Kuo Ts'e* (Ann Arbor, 1964), p. 76.
43. There are many scenes of hunting and feasting in Homer's epics: see *The Iliad*, Book X, XIX, XXIII; and *The Odyssey*, Book I, III, IV, VII, VIII, X, XIX.
44. David Hawkes, "The Quest of the Goddess," *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, ed., by Cyril Birch (Berkeley, 1974), p. 54.
45. Ibid., pp. 62-63.
46. Ibid., p. 63.
47. Bond, p. 432.
48. G. E. Lessing, *Laocoön, Nathan the Wise, Minna Von Barnhelm*, ed. by W. A. Steel (New York, 1961), pp. 67-68.
49. Ibid., p. 68.
50. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, p. 3034.

