

Liu Hsieh's View on Novelty and Russian Formalists' Concept of Defamiliarization

Chi Ch'iu-lang

In his *Blindness and Insight* Paul de Man regrets that the lack of a closer contact between American and European criticism resulted in the narrowness of the American New Critical approach (*BI*, 20-21). Admitting that American formalism needed the isolation to become full-fledged, we may still infer that its contact with Asian poetics such as Liu Hsieh's (劉勰, c. A.D. 464-522) might have rescued its one-sidedness. Liu's *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* (文心雕龍, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*) merits our attention because it is the most comprehensive theory of literature that lies at the fountainhead of the history of Chinese literary criticism. A difficult book to read in points of both its language and ideas, it has nevertheless earned its position as a towering landmark in Chinese criticism because of its penetrating insight into the nature of literary art. Sprung from a cultural background poles apart from that of modern Western formalistic criticism, the theoretical structure of *The Literary Mind* offers a sharp contrast to the basic concepts of formalists either Russian or Anglo-American.

The theories of both Liu Hsieh and formalists were formulated against contemporary literary practices. A traditionalist, Liu wrote to combat the growing Six-Dynasties (220-588) dilettante ornateness. Yet, he defended the legitimate use of literary embellishments (文采, *wen-ts'ai*) more effectively than his contemporaries because of the depth of his philosophical outlook and the soundness of his eclectic approach. As a result, his theories acquire an established reputation of having "broadness and comprehensiveness" (體大慮周). Formalism rose mainly as a reaction against the nineteenth-century "positivistic" tendencies to reduce literary works to historical, sociological, or philosophical documents. It asserts the intrinsic value of a

literary text over and against its "extra-literary" values. In the main, Liu speculates on how literature comes about, and how it assumes its significance in human society, and how it is to be written and properly evaluated. His *Literary Mind*, therefore, pleads that writers should make their products conform to established principles while seeking their necessary innovations. Formalists, on the other hand, generally concern themselves with the formal properties of literary texts. Their emphasis lies in how their textual interpretation can gain scientific exactitude, rather than in how a given text is related to its author and readers. The one is a theory of literature; the other a critical method.

Thus seen, it may seem improper or even unfair to compare Liu Hsieh with formalists, for it may be argued that one cannot compare a theory of literature with a critical method. We should point out, however, that a critical method not supported by theories can ever gain currency as wide as Russian or American formalism. When the formalists are accused of playing down the links between literature and social milieu and neglecting what they call non-esthetic values, they have invariably come up with the excuse that this is only a methodological expediency. Advocates of Russian formalism then gained their strength by their insistence on "literariness" and their theories of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) or qualities of differentiation (*diferenciál 'noe kačestvo*), which among other things means "a deviation from, or modification of, the prevailing artistic norm" (Erlich, 252). This they did just as American formalism later elevated their method of inquiry by fortifying themselves with their injunctions against "the heresy of paraphrase," and against intentional and affective fallacies.

Liu Hsieh's theories can be compared with Russian formalism, and incidentally its continuation in Czech structuralism, and its parallel development in Anglo-American New Criticism for several reasons. To begin with, both Liu Hsieh and the formalists are very much representative of their respective literary tradition. Although the activities of the Russians from about 1914 to 1930 have received much attention only recently from the rest of the Western world, many of their critical assumptions developed in parallel with German *Stilforschung* and Anglo-American New Criticism (Wellek in Erlich, 9). In this sense they form watersheds to modern Western criticism as Liu Hsieh does to traditional Chinese criticism. Secondly, to the extent that Russian Formalists pay their exclusive attention to "literariness" or problems of technique, they resemble the Avant-garde Group in the Six

Dynasties, and therefore offers comparative interest to Liu Hsieh's "eclectic" position. Thirdly, the Formalists' interest in problems of literary evolution is a useful reference for the study of Liu Hsieh's theory on tradition and change. This dichotomy is apparently a vantage point from which the binary structure of *The Literary Mind* can be seen in a proper perspective. For our purpose here, we will first examine their basic concepts of form and content, and then focus on Liu's view on novelty and Russian formalists' concept of defamiliarization.

Naturally we should be aware that what we lump together as formalists may bear more or less different colors. Yet they generally insist on regarding the formal properties as the proper, if not the only, concerns of the critic as well as the artist. Characteristically, they negate the traditional dichotomy of form and content, subsuming the latter in the former. Of all the formalists in the modern West, the Russian formalists are perhaps the most insistent on the primacy of form. Zhirmunsky gives their fundamental tenet in this way: "If by 'formal' we mean 'aesthetic,' all facts of content become in art formal phenomena" (Wellek, *Concepts*, 66). Shklovsky defines art as "pure form" and declares that the formalist "does not negate the ideological content of art, but considers the so-called content as one of the aspects of form" (Erich, 106). In such a statement it is clear that the formalist wants to be concerned with form — with art as art and not art as a handmaid to politics, philosophy, history, and so forth. Trotsky attacked this formalist position as the "superstition of the word" (Adams, 819), apparently ignoring the fact that the "form" of the formalists includes "content." His stricture nonetheless points to what critics of the formalists call the "formalistic fallacy" — one that encourages static analysis of the literary object to the neglect of the dynamic apprehension of the work in its totality.

Geoffrey Hartman defines formalism "simply as a method: that of revealing the human content of art by a study of its formal properties" (*BF*, 42). His definition of formalism shifts the emphasis of the formalists from form to content, and is therefore out of focus with the typically formalistic view. By his definition most modern critics would be formalists and, as we shall see in a moment, we may even count Liu Hsieh as another. As a matter of fact, we will not find too many thorough formalists who utterly negate the so-called "extra-esthetic" factors, nor many staunch antiformalists if formalists in general bear Hartman's color.

Unlike the one-sided formalists, Liu Hsieh maintains that form and

content should be organically related and that the ideal balance between the two insures literary excellence. He had inherited the Confucian insistence on the priority of substance to pattern (W 31/88/12-13, 31/89/4-5). On the other hand, he confronted squarely the general tendency toward pattern-emphasis, and to a considerable extent, he actually offered a rationale for such a tendency (W 31/88/1). Thus he resolved the opposition by stressing the interdependence of form and content, or pattern and substance (W 31/89/9-10).

His theory on the dichotomy of substance and pattern should be understood in the context of his concept of the Tao, and the binary oppositions derived from this central idea. The first chapter of his *Literary Mind* may yield the following simplified statements. *Wen*, both in its broad meaning of culture and its narrower sense of literature, is the expression of man's nature. Just as the Tao manifests itself in the beautiful phenomena in nature, man's mind, being the mind of nature, naturally expresses itself in beautiful patterns. And, like all the patterns of nature, the pattern in literary works is the concrete expression of the metaphysical Tao. In so far as the pattern is expressive of the Tao, the work is said to have substance. Otherwise, its pattern, if it still deserves to be called by that name, is mere ornament. Thus, in the same way as the Tao governs nature, substance weighs over pattern.

In Liu's view, the ideal style is one in which substance and pattern are properly blended in a unified whole. The works of the Sages exemplify this ideal style because they are "full of both flowers and fruits" (S 16; W 2/5/2). Of the Six Benefits to be gained from imitating the Classics — "deep feeling untainted by artificiality," "empirical truth untarnished by falsehood," and "moral ideas uninvolved in perversity" concern the substance, and the remaining — "unmixed purity of form," "simple style free from verbosity," and "literary beauty unmarred by excesses" — relate to the pattern (S 20; W 2/9/2-4). Furthermore, he offers in the chapter "Organization" a biological analogy of "feeling and ideas as the soul," "facts and meaning as the bone and marrow," "linguistic patterns as the musculature and integument," and "the resonance of the language as its voice and breath" (S 226; W 43/112/11). Quite obviously, the former two belong to substance, and the latter two to pattern. Similarly, Liu wants an understanding critic to examine a literary work on its Six Aspects — "its genre and style, its rhetoric, its application of the principle of flexible adaptability, its conformity or

nonconformity to orthodox principle, its factual and intellectual content, and its musical pattern" (S 262; W 48/125/3-4). Thus Liu manifests his readiness to see the literary work in its totality. The unity of pattern and substance, therefore, is one of his basic theories. The substance is defined by pattern, and pattern is conditioned by substance. He differs from the Formalists, however, in not entirely subsuming substance in pattern.

The Formalists' emphasis on form originated partly from a reaction against the extreme of the traditional historical criticism, partly from an objection against the tendency to extract ideas from literary works so that literature as art was forgotten, and partly from a desire to assert independence from pure science by asserting their own methodology. Whatever might have given rise to modern formalism in art, not even the most radical formalist can dispense with meaning (Erich, 185). The Formalists' concern with the "literariness" of literature ought not to be to negate human implications. To sever literature from meaning is to cut literature from life and enclose it within an ivory tower. Based on this conviction, Liu Hsieh is highly critical of the general trend toward novelty. In his *Literary Mind* Liu uses the word *ch'i* (奇) mostly in the derogative sense of "eccentric" or "unorthodox," and is therefore synonymous with *kuei* (詭, strange) or *kuei-i* (詭異, erratic). With Chung Hung (鍾嶸, 469? -518?), on the other hand, *ch'i* usually means "originality" without the bad connotation of "abnormal," or "eccentric." Liu's most straightforward opinion on novelty is found in the chapter "Style and Nature." "The fresh and extraordinary," he says, "shuns the hackneyed and competes for success in the vogue of the moment, devoting itself to the unconsidered, the biased, the diverting and the strange" (S 160; W 27/82/3-4).

It is interesting to observe that the expression *ai-ch'i* (愛奇, love of novelty) can be viewed quite differently either as plus or minus value. Yang Hsiung (揚雄, 53 B.C.-A.D. 18), for instance, criticized Ssu-ma Ch'ien (司馬遷, 145 B.C.-86? B.C.) for *ai-ch'i* (*Fa-yen*, XII). In *The Literary Mind*, *ai-ch'i* almost invariably leads to something bad. Some examples are: "However, people in general love what is strange, and pay no attention either to facts or to what ought to be" (S 92; W 16/50/8). "Thus we know that love for the strange is a weakness common to all writers, both present and past" (S 214; W 39/104/12-13). In contrast Chiang Yen (江淹, 444-505) professed his "love of the novel and the strange" in his autobiography (Chi Yung, 22-23). With Chung Hung, *ai-ch'i* is an important criterion meaning a

propensity for originality. He commends Liu Cheng (劉楨, ?-217) for "following his vigorous poetic spirit and pursuing originality" (Ch'en Yen-chieh, 14). And since *ch'i* means originality, not to love *ch'i*, as in Jen Fang (任昉, 460-508) and Wang Jung (王融, 468-494) who loved to use allusions instead, is for Chung a sure sign of mediocrity (Ch'en Yen-chieh, 7, 29).

To avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, we must add that Chung of course does not condone eccentricity. Eccentricity is in fact one of the main reasons why he rates Pao Chao (鮑照, 405-466) as a B grade poet (Ch'en Yen-chieh, 27). Instead of the word *ch'i* or *hsin* (新, new), he uses *ch'ü-kuei* (詼詼, queer), *wei-tse* (危仄, precarious), and *hsien-su* (險俗, grotesque).

By the same token, Liu Hsieh is far from forbidding innovation. There is no denying that because of his confrontation with his contemporary literature, *The Literary Mind* appears to stress tradition at the expense of innovation. Nevertheless, he is well aware that literary creativity involves a continual search for new possibilities, which are to be found in a delicate balance between tradition and change.

Quite the contrary to Liu Hsieh's emphasis of tradition, Russian Formalists lay their stress on novelty with their theory of "defamiliarization." This theory forms the thesis of Shklovsky's "Art As Technique" (1917). He wrote:

In studying poetic speech in its phonetic and lexical structure as well as in its characteristic distribution of words and in the characteristic thought structures compounded from the words, we find everywhere the artistic trademark — that is, we find material obviously created to remove the automatism of perception; the author's purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatized perception. (Lemon and Reis, 21-22)

To the Russian Formalists a literary work is seen to be a sum total of all the stylistic devices in it, and any number of devices may be used to promote such perception (Erlich, 90). Because of this constant necessity to renew and sharpen the reader's perception, the writers are incessantly compelled to make their art new.

The theory of "defamiliarization" was made prominent by the Russian Formalists, but, as Robert Scholes has pointed out, it had already gained a place in the Romantic poetics (Scholes, 173-75). Coleridge says that Wordsworth intended "to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to

excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awaking the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand" (*BL*, XIV). Shelley also says that poetry makes "familiar objects be as if they were not familiar," and "it creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration" (Adams, 503, 512). At any rate, the continuity from Romantic poetics to formalism is in evidence in this important subject of "defamiliarization." Among other things, it offers a powerful defense of imaginative literature in an age when it is losing its ground to other humane concerns. As Max Eastman reasserts this view later, the primary function of an imaginative writer is to "defamiliarize" things so as to heighten the reader's awareness of life, rather than to discover or communicate knowledge (Wellek and Warren, *TL*, 33), which literature may hand over to sciences, history, or philosophy. We may also say that it justifies our preoccupation with literary technique, if we bear in mind that technique not only subsumes substance but constitutes a means for "discovering" the substance.

Yet, for all this, the theory of "defamiliarization" does not seem to take into account why some works, such as we call "classics," may stay comparatively fresh or perennially long, while others may attract popular attention for a while, but are soon to be replaced by still others that contain newer devices. Viewed in this way, the pursuit of novelty can be a vicious circle that never has an end. That is why in his chapter "The Nourishing of Vitality" Liu warns against it as "an exhausting waste of mental effort" (S 222; W 42/111/7).

In Liu Hsieh's theory, pattern can be abused, and the consequences are either that the substance is overshadowed, or that the unity is jeopardized. In Russian Formalism, the idea of the abuse of "form" has probably never occurred to anyone. To the formalists "form" nearly always includes content or substance, and that is why "form" cannot be abused. In their theory the thing that can be abused must be this idea of "defamiliarization."

It should be clear by now that Liu's opposition is not directed against pattern in itself, but pattern without the corresponding substance, or form without, or with little, content. At the end of the "Emotion and Literary Expression" chapter, he says: "Flowery rhetoric, when lacking in genuine

feeling./Soon dulls our taste" (S 179; W 31/89/12). Although such an instance of "defamiliarization" may stay fresh for a while, it is really inconsequential by Liu Hsieh's standard. In other words, it is the fabrication of emotion to fit literary forms, or as the Chinese saying goes, "groaning without illness" that Liu finds fault with.

As a practicing critic Liu Hsieh wrote polemically, voicing his strong sentiments against the general run of writers who hankered after novel embellishments, and forgot the substance which alone justifies the existence of the pattern. As a theorist, however, Liu's opinion is much more balanced. Thus he concedes: "For although the extraordinary and orthodox contradicts each other, both have to be mastered. . . . If one loves the simple and rejects the ornate, one will be one-sided" (W 30/86/9-10). Moreover, Liu readily admits that literature changes dynamically with the tastes of different writers and different ages. Liu Hsieh says, "Although this tendency to embellishment gradually grew throughout the period of the Three Dynasties and the Spring and Autumn period, it remained always in perfect accord with the inner feeling of the writers, showing no sign of labor forcing the natural bounds of talent" (S 222, W 42/111/5-6). In such a statement, Liu is paradoxically admitting that it is also the way of nature for literary art to change toward more and more embellishment. The test for its validity finally lies in its relevancy to man's nature.

Liu Hsieh differs significantly from the Russian Formalists in his effort to search for a way of literary change that may be acceptable not just for his time, but for all ages. Adopting a prescriptive stance, Liu Hsieh advises the writers as to how to write. In *The Literary Mind* Liu has nearly always two kinds of change in mind — one that changes for the better and the other for the worse. In the fifth chapter he has about the warmest praise for the Sao (騷), or the works of Ch'ü Yuan (屈原, 343 B.C.? -283? B.C.), yet not without reservation for those points which deviate from the Classics. And the ensuing three chapters suffice to illustrate what in his opinion the right kind of change should be.

In the sixth chapter, he takes the function of poetry to be the expression of sentiments, the communication of reality, and the molding of character. He appreciates early masterpieces, especially those by the Ancient Poets, but shows his disapproval of most of the poetry after the Western Chin dynasty (265-316). He denounces Sung (420-478) poetry for its idle pursuit of the merely novel (W 6/18/9 f.). In the chapter "Musical Poetry" he is

concerned to see that sensuous language has so inundated the form that classic music can no longer emerge (W 7/21/2-4). In "Elucidation of Fu" he defines its function to be "arrangement of the patterns that give form to literature, and expresses the feelings that conform to objective things" (S 45; W 8/22/1). He emphasizes that the language used should be "delicate and closely knit," the metaphors should be "appropriate," but at all events the works should "express feelings aroused by external situations" (W 8/24/1 f.). Sung Yü (宋玉) is depreciated as beginning the affected patterns with his grandiloquent language (W 8/24/3), along with those who "run after the secondary and overlook the fundamentals." The result with such writers is that "profuse flowers would tend to ruin the branches and rich viands to damage the bone, offering neither the values necessary to maintain moral principles nor any aid in the form of admonition and warning" (S 49. W 8/25/3-4). Thus, it is clear that Liu Hsieh does not sanction all novelties or innovations. He approves only those which are rooted in the fundamentals and are conducive to the unified impact of the finished product.

The Russian formalists, on the other hand, speak mainly from the standpoint of readers. Generally speaking, their approach is descriptive rather than prescriptive. They pay their attention to how literature has changed and is changing rather than how it should change. They consider it an inevitable historical process for literary devices effective in their time to become common and hackneyed, or "automatized" (Wellek and Warren, *TL*, 266; Wellek, *Disc.*, 282; Fokkema, *PTL*, 166). In order to sharpen the reader's perception, therefore, it is necessary to "deautomatize," or in Shklovsky's term, to "defamiliarize" them, to make them appear new and strange again (Lemon and Reis, 12, 22). Shklovsky, who was instrumental in promoting the concept with his article "Art As Technique" (1917), sees "defamiliarization" not only as a necessary historical process, but as the chief technique of art. He considers its resultant sharpened awareness as the fundamental mission of poetic art (Erich, 76). According to Shklovsky, defamiliarization can be obtained by any number of devices, such as seeing things from a novel point of view, or new uses of figures of speech (Lemon and Reis, 5, 13). At any rate, the main thing is to "impede" or "remove the automatism of perception" so as to provoke the reader's intensified participation and to give to him the greatest possible awareness (Lemon and Reis, 22). Art then becomes a matter of "creative deformation" rather than "formation" of the material (cf. Erlich, 176; Fokkema, *PTL*, 165). As

Eichenbaum put it, "The literary work of art is always something made, shaped, invented — not only artful, but artificial in the good sense of the word" (Erich, 190).

Liu Hsieh does not discuss literary art in terms of defamiliarization, but numerous instances indicate that he would strongly disagree with defamiliarization as a chief technique of art or impeding the language as a chief means for enhancing perception. He recognizes ambiguity and profundity as an important style in chapters 2, 27, and 40. In chapter 46 he also affirms simplicity and suggestiveness as the means for promoting the exercise of imagination (S 248, 249). In all these chapters, however, he stresses the point that the adoption of style should follow its natural tendency (e.g., W 30/86/3-5, 30/87/12). In other words, he emphasizes mastery of all styles and flexible adaptability to different circumstances. In chapter 2 he discusses how the sages employ styles to suit various occasions. He distinguishes four styles — the use of brief language to convey thought, the employment of detailed description to present sentiments, the revealment of the subject by pointing out the pattern, and the concealment of the function through recondite expressions (W 2/3/12 ff.). It is characteristic of Liu Hsieh that later in the chapter he mentions the recondite style in particular, asserting that the sages are able to use it without succumbing to the love of the extraordinary and without jeopardizing the grasp of the essentials (W 2/4/8 ff.). Similarly, in chapter 40, where the recondite and the conspicuous are discussed together, Liu Hsieh says:

Some writers try to appear deep by being obscure; their work may have profundity, but not the quality described as the recondite. Others painstakingly engrave and carve to attain artistry; their work may have beauty, but not startling excellence. Natural beauty is like that of plants lit up in the splendor of their blossoms, and colorful adornment may be compared to silk dyed red and green. The red and green of dyed silks are deep and, indeed, rich and fresh; and the blossoms that brighten the trees, whose beauty is completely exhibited on the surface, glow in blazing glory. In the same manner, outstanding lines glow in the garden of literature. (S 215 f.; W 40/106/3 ff.)

From such a passage we may see clearly that Liu Hsieh values "natural beauty" above contrived, artificial beauty. Thus, although he recognizes man's common penchant for novelty (W 39/104/12), he does not believe in satisfying this demand at the expense of truthfulness and naturalness. In

chapter 37, for instance, he approves hyperbole as a form of creative deformation, but he takes care to "have exaggeration held within proper limits, and embellishment free from falsehood" (W 37/100/11).

By contrast, with their theory of deautomatization and defamiliarization, the Russian Formalists and many Prague structuralists devote most of their attention to novelties, or deviations from existing conventions. According to Tomashevsky, "Devices are perceptible for perhaps two reasons: their excessive age or their excessive newness" (Lemon and Reis, 93). Mukařovský pushes this theory to its logical conclusion when he says: "Any work appears as a positive value if it in some respect regrouped the structure of the preceding stage, it will appear as a negative value if it took over the structure without changes" (Wellek, *Disc.*, 288). Such a statement, taken in itself, can hardly be distinguished from the romantic notion that anything "original" or new is good.

The classical viewpoint on this crucial problem, as explained by Bate, can serve as a commentary on the Formalist position. He says:

To the classical writer, it would have been meaningless to hold up, as an end in itself, what the romantics later called "originality." For example, to react counter to the truth in every respect is, after all, a form of "originality." On the other hand, if "original" is equated with "unusual" or "rare," nothing is more "original" than really to react in accordance with the truth. The term, in fact, is meaningless as an ideal for which to strive. The end is awareness or insight; and whether the awareness is "original" is not even secondary but irrelevant. (Bate, *CMT*, 3)

To be sure, the Formalists consider the differential quality of a literary fact, its quality of divergence from reality for creative deformation, from current linguistic usage, and from the prevailing artistic norm: in other words, its aesthetic function (Tynjanov, *RRP*, 73, 77; Erlich, 252, 267; Fokkema, *PTL*, 166). Presumably, the aesthetic function is to enhance perception. The Formalists, however, are usually preoccupied with ascertaining whether a given literary phenomenon has novelty or has violated conventions in one way or another. Their concern lies in whether a work of art has changed the direction of literary evolution rather than in whether it has achieved literary excellence through its innovations (cf. Wellek, *Disc.*, 288).

The adequacy of Shklovsky's defamiliarization and the Formalists' correlated view of literary evolution is debatable. If not otherwise, the

problem can be resolved once the artificial barrier between aesthetic function and non-aesthetic functions of art is removed, and literature is once again seen in its entirety and in its multiple functions. Roman Jakobson, the former comrade-in-arms of the Formalists, took this line when he comments that Shklovsky's notion "misses the essence of poetic language" (Streidter, 440). He defines a poetic work as "a verbal message whose aesthetic function is its dominant," but instead of being exhausted by its aesthetic function, it has many other functions (*RRP*, 84, 83). We will recall that this is exactly Liu Hsieh's basic position as outlined in the first three chapters. Liu considers literature mainly from its aesthetic aspect, without neglecting its other functions, such as didactic or pragmatic ones. In any case, if novelty itself is irrelevant as a criterion of judgment, and if a literary fact is considered exclusively from the viewpoint of automatization-deautomatization dialectic or of its aesthetic function, evaluative criticism must be either suspended or end in historical relativism (cf. Erlich, 280; Pomorska, *RRP*, 275; Wellek, *Disc.*, 337).

However, if one can find some fundamental set of norms in tradition, as Liu Hsieh obviously does and the Formalists do not, one will be able to pass evaluative judgment on works of art. There may be two extremities of attitude towards tradition: one is to venerate it as absolute authority simply because it has been hallowed by time; the other to consider it as something essentially to be broken. Shklovsky and Mukařovský seem to have adhered to the latter attitude (cf. Erlich, 279). "A work is correlated," says Tynjanov, "with a particular literary system depending on its deviation, its 'difference' as compared with the literary system with which it is confronted" (*RRP*, 73). But again, if a work of art is examined with a view not only to finding its deviations, its differences from the prevailing conventions, but also to determining how it conforms to them or how it manages to present a tension between the familiar and the strange, one may be able to come to what Liu Hsieh has called "rounded view" (圓照, *yüan-chao*) of the work (W 48/125/1). In spite of Eliot's famous essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," we tend to forget that "the work of any poet exists by reason of its connection with past work, both in continuation and in divergence, and what we call his originality is simply his special relation to tradition" (Trilling in West, 292). Thus we may now turn to examine more closely how tradition and change coexist in his theory of literature, and what implications such a theory may have on his theory of creativity and of evaluation.

Several modern Western critics have also extensively discussed the polarity between the familiar and the novel, or sameness and variety (cf. Wellek and Warren, *TL*, 235; Jacobson, *RRP*, 87; Fowler, Weimann, and Iser in Cohen, 93, 44 and 61, 139 f. respectively). The mixture of the two is recognized, for example, by Warren and Lotman as forming a tension necessary for literary development (Warren in Stallman, 101 f.; Lotman, 347). Coleridge's discussion of this point is especially noteworthy. He maintains that

If in the midst of the variety there be not some fixed object for the attention, the unceasing succession of the variety will prevent the mind from observing the difference of the individual objects; and the only thing remaining will be the succession, which will then produce precisely the same effect as sameness. . . . In order to derive pleasure from the occupation of the mind, the principle of unity must always be present, so that in the midst of the multitude the centripetal force be never suspended, nor the sense be fatigued by the predominance of the centrifugal force. This unity in multitude I have elsewhere stated as the principle of beauty. It is equally the source of pleasure in variety, and in fact a higher term including both [beauty and pleasure]. (*BL*, II, 262)

Here we may notice three things. First, it is essential for variety (or novelty) to be compounded with sameness (or convention). Secondly, aesthetic unity, which is the source of beauty and pleasure, is comprised of the co-presence of the centripetal force (i.e., tradition) and centrifugal force (i.e., change). Lastly, the overabundance of multitude (or novelty) produces the same fatigue and boredom as that of sameness does. The Prague structuralists and the more recent reader-response critics also discuss the last mentioned point in a significant way. According to Mukařovský,

The function of poetic language consists in the maximum of foregrounding of the utterance. Foregrounding is the opposite of automatization, that is the deautomatization of an act; the more an act is automatized, the less it is consciously executed; the more it is foregrounded, the more completely conscious does it become. Objectively speaking: automatization schematizes an event; foregrounding means the violation of the scheme. (Garvin, 19)

Foregrounding thus achieves deautomatization, and places "in the foreground the act of expression." Yet, Mukařovský adds that the word "maximum" refers to its intensity, not its quantity, for "a simultaneous general

foregrounding would . . . bring all the components into the same plane and so become a new automatization (Garvin, 19-20). He might have meant that *excessive* foregrounding "schematizes" or "automatizes" the utterance, which therefore becomes boring, but he only mentioned "a simultaneous general foregrounding," which is of course a theoretical impossibility.

Iser considers the same point in the light of the phenomenology of reading. In the reading process, the reader tries to balance himself between involvement in the text and detachment from it in creating and observing his own illusions, or visions, or expectations (Cohen, 137). Defamiliarization of what the reader thought he recognized will intensify this tension. But the text may either not go far enough, or may go too far so that the reading of the text results in boredom or overstrain. In short, the right kind or degree of novelty brings pleasant surprise, too little novelty gives boredom, but overmuch novelty is bound to result in frustration and indignation, or even complete wreckage of the reading process (Cohen, 137, 139-40, 126, 130).

The above-mentioned modern theories are useful in illuminating Liu Hsieh's attitude toward novelty and literary embellishment in general. A passage in the chapter "Linguistic Parallelism" may serve as an example. In commenting on the parallelism found in the works of the Ancient Poets and in the lines chanted by Chou officials on diplomatic occasions, Liu says that "they contain both single elements and couplets, each appropriate for the situation at hand; and these come forth spontaneously with no trace of labor" (S 191; W 35/96/2). This is to say that the right degree of novelty brings beauty and pleasure. Then Liu Hsieh comments on the use of too much embellishment:

If a literary piece lacks wonderful spirit or vitality, or if its language is without extraordinary patterns, then even if it is full of beautiful parallel expressions, their mediocrity serves merely to make our ears and eyes drowsy and to put us to sleep. (S 194; W 35/97/2-3)

In other words, uniformly adorned language loses its novelty and becomes boring. In Coleridge's terminology, this may be an instance which has the centrifugal, but without the centripetal, force. And Mukařovský might say that this is a case in which automatization occurs because of excessive foregrounding. Although beautiful parallel expressions are meant to "place in the foreground the act of expression," excessive use of them ironically brings about automatization, which foregrounding seeks to destroy.

Mukařovský's "Standard Language and Poetic Language" (1932) may be said to have developed Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization into a much more sophisticated theory on the relationship between tradition and change. In comparing him with Shklovsky, we may notice that while Shklovsky considers the cause of literary change to be mainly a reaction towards an immediately preceding convention, Mukařovský's theory of foregrounding leaves it open as to what is to become dominant when a literary generation changes to another. In one important aspect, however, they remain the same. Shklovsky emphasizes the strange with his notion of defamiliarization; Mukařovský makes much of foregrounding, and what is made dominant usually strikes as novel. Thus, both of them can be contrasted with Liu Hsieh, who also stresses the importance of change, but is always on his guard against confusion resulting from excess (cf. W 28/84/5; S 164).

If we consider Mukařovský, Coleridge, and Liu Hsieh together, we may find that all three of them disapprove excess and sanction unity in variety, but they differ as to how this unity is obtained. Coleridge says that the unceasing succession of variety produces the same effect as sameness, and only a proper mixture of variety with sameness brings unity (*BL*, II, 262). According to Mukařovský, foregrounding has to be consistently and systematically handled to be effective, so that the dominant "creates the unity of the work of poetry" (Garvin, 20-21). Mukařovsky then adds:

It is, of course, a unity of its own kind, the nature of which in esthetics is usually designated as "unity in variety," a dynamic unity in which we at the same time perceive harmony and disharmony, convergence and divergence. The convergence is given by the trend towards the dominant, the divergence by the resistance of the unmoving background of unforegrounded components against this trend. (Garvin, 21)

This then is another version of Coleridge's "unity in multeity," with Mukařovský's convergence-divergence antinomy replacing Coleridge's centripetal and centrifugal forces. Yet, while Coleridge apparently thinks that the unity comes from a proper mixture, or at least the co-existence, of these two forces, Mukařovský claims that the dominant obtains this desired unity. Jakobson concurred with this view a few years later in his lecture "The Dominant" (1935), but did not give satisfactory explanation. As many things can be foregrounded, it is difficult to see why the dominant necessarily "guarantees the integrity of the structure" (Jakobson, *RRP*, 82). In the

choice between elevated and popular elements and in the selection of styles, Liu Hsieh advises the writers to exercise imaginative judgment (銓別, *ch'uan-pieh*), and to form a proper mixture of them (W 29/85/10 f., 30/86/9-17). He wants them to "hold on to the norm by which to harness the element of surprise" (S 173; W 30/87/10); in other words, "to move without losing the norm" (W 44/115/8). All this implies that Liu Hsieh not only considers the necessity of mixing convention and novelty, but more importantly, he also insists on harnessing elements of novelty under the norm.

By and large, the Formalist investigations on literary evolution are focused on the question of shifting dominant without positing any absolute norms. Tynjanov explains that after a literary element becomes automatized, its function turns to an auxiliary one as other elements become dominant (*RRP*, 69-70). Literary evolution is then seen as a reshuffling of the function of aesthetic devices (Jakobson, *RRP*, 85). Thus the Formalists developed a dialectical theory of literary change in which the automatized, obsolete devices are rendered absurd, or "laid bare," and new techniques are made dominant, or old devices renovated ("recanonicalized") with new functions and new meanings (Tomashevsky in Lemon and Reis, 94-95; Scholes, 85, 175). In the flux of change, moreover, it so turns out that an "inferior" genre may fulfill a great aesthetic function or that an extraliterary forms of writing may move from the periphery to the center of literary importance (Tynjanov, *RRP*, 69; Jakobson, *RRP*, 86).

The Formalist theory on literary evolution sheds light on Liu Hsieh's attitude towards the direction of literary change at his time. Unlike Liu Hsieh, who was at odds with his contemporary literary trend, the Formalists rode on the revolutionary tide of their time. Mukařovský, for instance, considers his time "a period which . . . tends towards a powerful foregrounding of linguistic components" (Garvin, 22). Characteristically, he rejects as "negative" and "conservative" the kind of criticism which "considers deliberate deviations from the canon errors against the very essence of poetry" (Garvin, 22). He arrived at this conclusion because he refused to accept the criterion of "truthfulness," which he says belongs to communicative speech or documentary literature but has no bearing on the artistic value (Garvin, 22-23). Such a view is acceptable only when the word "truthfulness" is taken to mean the opposite of "fiction," and when "fiction" has nothing to do with "truth" even in its sense of "sincerity" or "agreement with a standard or rule" (*OED*) (For "sincerity," see pp. 131 ff.). The Formalists' penchant for

novelty also finds its theoretical ground in Mukařovský's distinction between standard language and poetic language. He declared that "the distortion of the norm of the standard [language] is . . . of the very essence of poetry, and it is therefore improper to ask poetic language to abide by this norm" (Garvin, 27). He then quotes Ferdinand Brunot's 1913-article approvingly:

The laws governing the usual communication of thought must not, lest it be unbearable tyranny, be categorically imposed upon the poet who, beyond the bounds of the accepted forms of language, may find personalized forms of intuitive expression. It is up to him to use them in accord with his creative intuition and without other limits than those imposed by his own inspiration. (Garvin, 27)

There is no doubt that such a romantic notion of creative freedom is incompatible with Liu Hsieh's theory of literature. In his dualistic thinking, Liu Hsieh cannot conceive of freedom without having restraint in his mind. Likewise, he took cognizance of the fundamental nature of the literary art to be beautiful; yet, for a humanistic reason that is linked to a metaphysical one, he was opposed to the excessive rhetoricism of the time. His reaction took the form of "reanonizing" the classical norm found in the works by the sages, and many nonfictional genres such as philosophical and historical writings which were generally evaluated as extrapoetical and extraliterary. We have already seen what literary function Liu Hsieh expects these writings to have for his contemporary literature, and there is no need to repeat it here.

The Formalist theory of literary evolution, however, despite its significant contributions to the field, has its limitations. Critics have since pointed out that mere opposition between the new and the old or shift of aesthetic functions oversimplifies literary evolution; it fails to explain to what direction literature changes; innovation alone does not assure literary excellence; and it neglects the influence of social change (Jauss in Cohen, 29; Wellek, *Disc.*, 289; Striedter, 441-42). Literature develops in several other ways than through the opposition between past and present (or old and new). Lotman has discussed two more oppositions: those between own and other (influences of a new culture), and between top and bottom (i.e., elevated and popular) (Lotman, 355, 350). To this list we may add at least one more: the opposition between ideal and reality, which is a change guided by critical theories, or merely personal convictions. Liu Hsieh does not discuss all of

these at length, but from a reading of such chapters as 29, 45, 26-28, 30, and 5 of *The Literary Mind*, we may be sure that Liu Hsieh fully recognizes the complex nature of literary change, and is therefore free from the oversimplified unilinear, sequential concept of literary evolution. Thus when he says, "There is no definite principle for literary change; one must make allowances for new voices" (W 29/84/15), the "new voices" may be not only popular literature that crops up constantly, but anything that confronts the author's historical sense as "new."

The Formalists would have to suppose a pure artist who is singly motivated by the purpose of defamiliarizing or shifting the functions of literary devices. Actually, however, we will much more readily believe that an artist, like the ordinary run of men, has a complex personality, is subject to various influences, and is burdened with complicated motives. As Wellek has aptly put it, "His reaching out into the past for models or stimuli, abroad and at home, in art or in life, in another art or in thought, is a free decision, a choice of values which constitutes his own personal hierarchy of values, and will be reflected in the hierarchy of values implied in his works of art" (*Concepts*, 51).

Moreover, in spite of the importance the Formalists attached to novelty and originality, the newly introduced elements may not strike the reader as novel or original in the new product. In any case, the value of each literary device, including both old and new, has to be judged anew by dint of the function it plays in the new entity. Instead of forming a foregrounding, the newly injected material or technique may just be backgrounded only to make the conventional devices dominant. In short, literary change may involve a more complex interplay between elements of tradition and innovation than is found in the Formalist theorizing.

One of the basic differences between Liu Hsieh's theory of *t'ung-pien* (通變) and the Formalist theory of literary evolution is that of values. So far as literary devices go, the new and the old in both sets of theories may replace each other in the process of change. Literature is seen to go through a cyclic change in which old and new alternate like a pendulum. In Formalist terminology, what is new becomes automatized, so it has to be defamiliarized; what is old may be recanonized to play an important function in a new context. Liu Hsieh recognizes this when he says that the rules of literature undergo a cyclic change (W 29/86/1).

In critical evaluation the Formalists and the Prague Structuralists tend

to consider as of positive value whatever "defamiliarizes" or deviates from existing conventions to form a new structure. Yet to them aesthetic value is not a static concept, but is considered to be constantly evolving against the background of cultural tradition and the social condition of the time. Since it is the fate of every aesthetic norm to be violated sooner or later, conformity to the norm does not assure aesthetic value (Fokkema, *PTL*, 176). The Formalists and the Prague Structuralists therefore embraced a kind of historical relativism: their critical standards, if they have any, are rarely applicable to more than one literary generation. They exercised more of their historical sense than their critical sense.

Unlike the Formalists, Liu Hsieh makes it clear where his norm lies. To begin with, the norm is designated as *cheng* (正), which forms a polarity with *ch'i* (奇). *Cheng* generally means the norm and *ch'i* deviations from the norm. Thus the Classics are the norm, and the apocryphal writings are deviations from it (W 4/10/3). In *The Literary Mind*, although the word *ch'i* may be used as a laudatory term, as in chapter 5, it is in most cases used derogatively. The fact that it is frequently used as an antithesis to *chen* (眞, truthfulness/sincerity) (as in W 5/14/9), *hsin* (信, fidelity) (as in W 16/51/5), and *i* (義, normalcy) (as in W 39/104/13), and *ya* (雅, gracefulness) (as in W 27/82/4) implies that *ch'i*, instead of being "marvelous," or "surprising," is often a fault. His unflattering definition of the style of *hsin-ch'i* (新奇, "the fresh and extraordinary") as that which "shuns the hackneyed and competes for success in the vogue of the moment, devoting itself to the unconsidered, the biased, the diverting and the strange" (S 160; W 27/82/3) makes the point.

The literary values that are to be derived from the norm of the Classics can be variously described. The Six Benefits from valuing the Classics first come to our mind, but, as a matter of fact, literary values are mentioned, applied, and discussed throughout *The Literary Mind*. Gleaned together, they may be tentatively listed as follows: naturalness, sincerity, truthfulness, propriety, unity, clarity, simplicity, complexity, profundity, intensity, sublimity, suggestiveness, originality, and novelty. The plurality of literary values is such that no listing can really be exhaustive, nor is the order meant to be that of priority. I have listed, however, "naturalness" first and "novelty" last with a purpose. Having lived as he did at a time in which novelty was being pursued for its own sake, he must have felt the need to harness it under the criterion of naturalness or sincerity. Nevertheless, as a theoretician

prescribing to the writers how to exercise their creativity fruitfully in their effort to produce beauty in literature, Liu Hsieh would be the last person to look down on novelty or originality (cf. W 29/86/1-2).

In Liu Hsieh's *Literary Mind*, sincerity was a cardinal standard of poetic value as it was with the Romantics. The same thing may be said of naturalness, for by sincerity is meant the merging of the thinking subject with the external nature under his observation. To be sincere and to be natural mean almost the same thing. In Keats' words, "If Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all." And if, as Liu Hsieh says, it is natural for man to sing out his sentiments in response to objects (W 6/16/4), and if true beauty of words is based on man's natural feelings (W 31/88/12), it is certainly the business of a writer to express his sentiments beautifully and naturally.

List of Works Cited

- Adams, Hazard, ed. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. New York: Harcourt, 1971. Bate, Walter Jackson, ed. *Criticism: The Major Texts*. New York: Harcourt, 1952.
- Ch'en Yen-chieh (陳延傑), ed. *Shih-p'in chu* (詩品註). Taipei: K'ai-ming, 1958.
- Chi Yung (紀庸). "T'ang-shih chih 'yin' 'ke'" (唐詩之「因」「革」), *Kuo-wen yueh-k'an*, 73 (1948), 22-26.
- Cohen, Ralph, ed. *New Directions in Literary History*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins U P, 1974.
- Coleridge, S. T. *Biographia Literaria*. ed. J. Shawcross, 2 vols. London: Oxford U P, 1907.
- de Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. New York: Oxford U P, 1971.
- Erllich, Victor. *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine*, 3rd ed. The Hague: Mouton, 1969.
- Fan Wen-lan (范文瀾), ed. *Wen-hsin tiao-lung chu* (文心雕龍註), rev. ed. 1936; rpt. Taipei: Ming-jin, 1971. [F]
- Fokkema, D. W. "Continuity and Change in Russian Formalism, Czech Structuralism, and Soviet Semiotics," *PTL*, 1 (1976), 153-96.
- Garvin, Paul, ed. and trans. *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*. Washington: Georgetown U P, 1964.
- Hartman, Geoffrey H. *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958-1970*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1970.
- Jakobson, Roman. "The Dominant," in *RRP*, pp. 82-87.

- Jauss, Hans Robert. "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in Cohen, pp. 11-41.
- Lemon, Lee T., and Marion J. Reis, eds. and trans. *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Lincoln, Neb.: Univ. of Nebraska Pr., 1965.
- Lotman, Jurij. "The Content and Structure of the Concept of 'Literature,'" *PTL*, 1 (1976), 339-56.
- Matejka, Ladislav, and Krystyna Pomorska, eds. *Readings in Russian Poetics*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T., 1971. [RRP]
- Mukařovský, Jan. "Standard Language and Poetic Language," in Garvin, pp. 17-30.
- Scholes, Robert. *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1974.
- Schorer, Mark. "Technique As Discovery," in West, pp. 189-205.
- Shih, Vincent Y. C., trans. *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, by Liu Hsieh. New York: Columbia U P, 1950. [S]
- Shklovsky, Victor. "Art As Technique," in Lemon & Reis, pp. 3-24.
- Stallman, Robert Wooster, ed. *Critiques and Essays in Criticism 1920-1948*. New York: Ronald, 1949.
- Striedter, Jurij. "The Russian Formalist Theory of Prose," *PTL*, 3 (1977), 429-70.
- Tomashevsky, Boris. "Thematics," in Lemon and Reis, pp. 61-95.
- Trilling, Lionel. "The Sense of the Past," in West, pp. 290-301.
- Tynjanov, Jurij. "On Literary Evolution," in RRP, pp. 66-78.
- Wang Li-ki, ed. *Index du Wen Sin Tiao Long, avec texte critique*. 1952; rpt. Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1963. [W]
- Wellek, René. *Concepts of Criticism*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1963.
- . *Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1970.
- . *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950*. 4 vols. Princeton: Princeton U P, 1950-65.
- , and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*, 3rd ed. New York: Harcourt, 1963.
- West, Ray B., ed. *Essays in Modern Literary Criticism*. New York: Rinehart, 1960.
- Yang Hsiung (揚雄). *Yang-tzu Fa-yen (揚子法言)*. Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1955.

