Man in Woman's Voice and Vice Versa: the Chinese and English Female-*Persona* Lyrics. A Response to Some Concepts in Feminist Criticism*

Tim-hung Ku

ABSTRACT

The female-persona lyric is a newly defined genre by the present study, although the "speaking on-behalf-of the other" mode (代言體) has been the significant form of the lyrics of boudoir complaint (閨怨詩) in classical Chinese poetry. The genre is located in the space between the male poet and the female *persona* he assumes and is take as an instance in which the boundary between the feminine and the masculine is crossed over. The main ideas exercised in my argument are the concept of androgyny in contemporary feminist criticism and the Chinese philosophy of *t'ai-chi* (太極) –the focus is the psychoanalytic modeling function of the genre. Form this psychoanalytic perspective, the female-*persona* lyric is viewed as a simultaneous presentation of different voices: the voice of human species (the voice of the pre-Oedipal and the imaginary), the voice of gender (the lack and the discontentment of the masculine in the patriarchal society), and the voice of sympathy and guilt, alienation, and social injustice –in short, the voice of an androgynous subject, which always yearns for going beyond the gender.

---

* An early version of the present paper was read to the 14th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Edmonton, Canada, August 1994.

KEY WORDS

Female-persona lyrics
lyrics of boudoir complaint
feminist criticism
androgyny
philosophy of t'ai-chi
psychoanalytic modeling function
Li Po
Shelley
Todorov
lyric genre

I. Preliminary Observation

Wisely or unwisely, we take it for granted that a dramatist should speak in different voices, assuming the roles of a beggar, a lawyer, a king, and a princess. Yet it may be astonishing, or at least rare, for a lyric poet of masculine gender to speak and express himself in the *persona* of a female. This crossing the boundary of gender may be considered as a form of androgyny, one of the focal points in contemporary feminist theory. This female-*persona* mode of lyrics is rather uncommon in English poetry, but it has been established as a significant form in Chinese boudoir lyrics. To be sure, if we include those lyrics sung in English plays, for example, those of Shakespeare's plays, the case would be different. We exclude them for the time being simply because they are bound up with the dramatic situations where they appear—they are the voice of a dramatist, not a lyricist. However, if one goes through some anthologies of English love poetry, one still can find a number of female-*persona* lyrics, for example, Robert Burn's "Song" ("O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad") and "John Anderson My Jo" (Stallworthy 52; 184), Robert Herrick's "The Mad Maid's Song" and Frances Cornford's "Two Poems" ("She Warns Him" and "All Souls' Night") (Betjeman and Taylor 55; 174-75).[1] Of course, we can recall some more famous ones, such as Marlowe's "Nymph's Reply to the Passionate Shepherd" and Shelley's "The Indian Girl's Song." In fact, the present study is up to the Romantic period in English poetry and up to the *T'ang* dynasty in Chinese poetry only. We do not know why female-*persona* lyrics are unpopular in English classical poetry, and in fact, little is done academically in this area. We do know about some conditions which may

account for the flourish of the lyrics of boudoir complaint, whose significant form is the *persona* or the *tai-yen* mode (代言體) (*tai-yen* means "speaking on behalf of the other"). According to a recent study of boudoir lyrics (Hsu 547-670), the fettering power of Confucianism, the civil system and yearly civil examination held in the capital, the commercial travelling, the palace system of emperor's concubines and ladies-in-waiting, and finally, the abundance of wars, all are the conditions which deprive a lot of women of their right to a proper family life with their men and therefore provide fertile soil for the flourish of the lyrics of boudoir complaint. It is true that the women in the female-*persona* lyrics are, in general, deprived women, most often the abandoned women, the lonely palace ladies, and the women whose husbands or lovers have gone to wars or have left home for commercial travelling. And the female-*persona* lyric is, in general, women's love and sorrow. This social reality may account for the flourish of the lyrics of boudoir complaint, but has no power to explain why the female-*persona* mode is chosen by the male poets. The general notion of sympathy is inadequate in explaining this literary phenomenon which involves the problem of gender. Some psychoanalytic levels behind the female-*persona* lyrics must be explored. The female-*persona* lyrics confront us with an ambiguity of gender, an ambiguity of the "I" and the "Other," which, needless to say, contributes itself significantly to the dispute over the problem of gender difference and its ramifications in cultural, social areas. we may ask: isn't it possible that human species is androgynous on the psychoanalytical level as revealed in the *female-persona* lyrics? Isn't possible that the dichotomy and the boundary of femininity and masculinity in personality and in writing are rather arbitrary and deceptive in front of the examples of female-*persona* lyrics, as we shall see in the case of Shelley and Li Po?

Indeed, the androgynous subject has recently aroused a debate in feminist criticism. The debate begins with Showalter's attack against Woolf's androgynous vision of gender relation as a myth and retreat, an escape from a confrontation with her own painful femaleness while Toril Moi, coming from a French feminist background, relying

on Lacan's psychoanalysis and Derrida's deconstruction, defends Woolf's androgyny as a deconstruction of the falsifying metaphysics of gender difference. Elaine Showalter sees the androgynous subject as a "full balance and command of an emotional range that include male and female elements" but the concept is suspected and rejected by her as lacking "zest and energy" (263-64) whereas Toril Moi regards the androgynous subject not as "a flight from fixed gender identities, but a recognition of their falsifying metaphysical nature" and the concept is advocated by her as a genuine feminist position (13-14). What is at issue is: whether feminist theory should hold on a single sex identity or go beyond this position and arrive at an androgynous perspective.[2]

Ecriture feminine or feminine writing is a central point in French feminist criticism. Cixous may be its most comprehensive and eloquent exponent. For her, writing is by nature feminine, or bisexual as she sometimes calls it. Yet, on the lower level, feminine writing can be distinguished from its opposition, that is, the masculine writing: the latter is dominant in the patriarchal society, characterized by phallocentrism. What must be noted is that Cixous does not hold an essentialist view of femininity and masculinity, but regards their relation as an instance of the Derridean *differance*.

Hence androgyny and *ecriture feminine* shall set the tone for our investigation of female-*persona* lyrics in the coming sections. To put the cart before the horse, let me say in advance that the androgynous perspective will be in the process of the argument substantiated by Lacan's psychoanalysis, Kristeva's semiotic, Lotman's modeling function, the Chinese philosophy of *t'ai-chi* (the primordial whole combines the yin or feminine and the *yang* or the masculine), and above all, Peirce's mediative, semiotic model.

II. The Androgynous Subject

打起黃鶯兒
莫教枝上啼
啼時驚妾夢

不得到遼西
——金昌緒「春怨」

Drive the orioles off the branches,
So they can sing no more!
For their song will wake me up,
And forbid me to meet my dear afar in my dream.
—Chin Ch'ang-Hsu, "Spring Complaint"
(Yu 281)

玉階生白露
夜久侵羅襪
卻下水精簾
玲瓏望秋月
——李白「玉階怨」

Upon jade steps the white dew-drops grow,
Which moisten my gauze stockings in the deep night.
I pull down the crystal blind
And watch the autumn moon clear and bright.
—Li Po, "Jade-Steps Complaint"
(Li 374)

Why did a Chinese classical poet of masculine gender have to speak in the person of a feminine gender and thus give rise to female-*persona* lyrics? To what extent, could the female *persona* be taken as the Peircean icon of the poet himself? Icon refers to the sign which bears a resemblance to its object: "An icon is a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence" (Peirce 2: 304), or "A possibility alone is an Icon purely by virtue of its qualify; and its object can only be a First," Peirce says (2: 276). Meanwhile, what kind of psychological identification and modeling function may be involved? Modeling function is a concept developed in Russian semiotics: Ivanov, from a cybernetic

point of view, suggests that "man cannot govern his own behavior directly and creates signs in order to control it indirectly" (29), and therefore, "the basic function of every semiotic system is the modeling of the world," and "every semiotic world model can also be regarded as a program for the individual and collective behavior" (36). Lotman follows this notion and observes that language and literature respectively function as the primary and the secondary modeling functions (*The Structure* 9-10), and further links the modeling function to the particular structure of literature, saying that artistic text is inclined to be a I-I communicative system (self-communication) more than a I-S/he system: in the former the "information" is "qualitatively transformed" and "this leads to a restructuring of the actual 'I' itself" (*Universe* 22). Lacan, from the psychoanalytic perspective, also hints at the modeling function of language, observing that "in its symbolizing function speech is moving towards nothing less than a transformation of the subject to whom it is addressed by means of the link that it establishes with the one who emits it" (83). Finally, but with a strong sense of mediation, Peirce suggests that "a person is not absolutely an individual. His thoughts are what he is 'saying to himself,' that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time" (5: 423). Then to what extent, could a female-*persona* lyric be considered as a particular case of Lotman's "auto-communication," Lacan's "symbolization," and Peirce's "saying to himself"? To what extent, could the female *persona* be considered as such an other "I," a particular "function of symbolization," the "other self" of the poet?

The common character of these female *persona*e is their underprivileged position and consequent loneliness and sorrows. These lyrics have been approached from a social point-of-view, taken as a critical reflection of the social reality through women, its obvious victims. Meanwhile, poets have been praised for their sympathy for the deprived women. That is to say, sympathy has been considered in its external sense: a sympathy for the Other. This social interpretation and external sense of sympathy is valid by itself, but it fails to explain why the male poet has to speak in the *persona* of a female. Some deep

psychological levels must be explored in order to account for the modeling function of female-*persona* lyrics.

To begin with, sympathy should be considered in its internal sense, taken as an expansion and regulation of the poet's psychic zone in a process of identification, identifying himself with, or losing himself to, the Other, that is, the female *persona* in the present case. One may notice that there is an ambiguity in Li Po's poem: my English rendition is in the first person voice, but the Chinese original borders on a third person voice. This ambiguity is due to the deletion of the grammatical subject ("I" or "She"?) in the Chinese poetic syntax and due to the concise expression of the poem. This ambiguity is not uncommon in Chinese female-*persona* lyrics, which reveals to us its subtle but always incomplete process of identification. To draw on Lacan's psychoanalysis, we may say, sympathy or identification is a case of the mirror stage and the imaginary, a return to the pre-Oedipal stage where the "I" sees its image of unity and where the subject and the object have not been further split by the third party, that is, the Father and the Symbolic. To draw on Peirce's theory of icon, we may say, sympathy or identification means making the female *persona* an icon so that the poet can mediate through it and participate in the qualities of the icon. The Lacanien mirror and the Peircean icon could possibly reinforce each other and merge together (Eco 215-237).[3] In Chinese female-*persona* lyrics, this sympathy and identification sometimes involves also a specific kind of Narcissism: a male poet portrays himself as a deprived woman, and through an imaginary or iconic identification takes as his own the virtues, the beauty, and the deprivation of the woman. Finally, this Narcissism takes a political turn in meaning: a deprived woman of beauty and virtue is iconic to a deprived politician or scholar of great talent and integrity, that is, iconic to the poet himself. Certainly, some of Li Po's poems entertain such a Narcissistic interpretation.

According to the Chinese philosophy of *t'ai-chi* (太極), originated from the *I-ching* or *Book of Changes* (易經), the universe is originally in the state of a primordial whole called *t'ai-chi*, which splits or degenerates into two primary forms, the *yin* (陰) (the femi-

nine) and the *yang* (陽) (the masculine) and therefore human being, into female and male. The philosophy of *t'ai-chi* or primordial whole has been presented in the form of an icon: a circle is divided by a S-shaped moving line into two fish-shaped parts: the shiny, white part and the shaded, dark part—more surprisingly, the shaded part contains a small bright circle while the shiny part contains a small dark circle, thus indicating that there is masculine in the feminine and there is feminine in the masculine. In short, the *t'ai-chi* icon represents a simultaneous opposition, complementarity, and penetration between equals, and is supposed to capture the dynamics of the universal forces. This *t'ai-chi* philosophy and icon dominates the Chinese thought and has abstracted great interest and favorable comments from the world. J. E. Cirlot observes that "the two parts so formed are invested with a dynamic tendency which would be missing if the division were by diameter. . . Each half includes an arc cut out of the middle of the opposing half, to symbolize that every mode must contain within it the germ of its antithesis" (Wilden 256). Grison comments that "in sum they are the expression of a universal dualism and complementarity. . . They are inseparable, and the rhythm of the world is the rhythm of their alteration" (Wilden 257). Guenon considers the *t'ai-chi* icon a representation of "a universal whirlwind which brings opposites together and engenders perpetual motion, metamorphosis and continuity in situations characterized by contradiction" (Wilden 257).[4] Or, in the words of Richard Wilhelm, whose wonderful German rendition of the Book of Changes has made the difficult text accessible to the Western reading public, the "two principles are united by a relation based on homogeneity; they do not combat but complement each other. The difference in level creates a potential, as it were, by virtue of which movement and living expression of energy become possible" (281-282). These favorable comments about the *t'ai-chi* philosophy and icon suggest to us a dynamic and hopeful perspective of the problem of gender and the possibility of an androgynous subject. Now the point is that this philosophy of the androgynous subject may be turned into something with a psychoanalytic dimension. We may say, for instance, when the individual

assumes a gender, the individual degenerates from the primordial whole of human species, and there comes a sense of lack, for being deprived of the plenitude of the primordial wholeness. We may ask at the same time that when one speaks, does one speak from the primordial whole of human species, or from the already split forms of the masculine and the feminine, or from both? This preliminary psychoanalytic re-formulation of the philosophy of *t'ai-chi* or primordial whole may contribute something to the definition and the recent debate of the androgynous subject in feminism as briefly summarized before. To be sure, I am in support of a dynamic definition of the androgynous subject, and indeed, from a general psychological perspective, as Cook has suggested, "the blending of positive masculine and feminine characteristics within a person" is considered as possible and favorable (33).

Psychoanalysis since Freud has established a close bound between literary writing and particular psychic zone named as the unconscious or fantasy (Freud), the Imaginary (Lacan), the semiotic (Kristeva), and the bisexual (Cixous)—Kristeva's semiotic is closely linked to the instinctual, rhythmic impulses, differing itself from the general notion of semiotics as developed by De Saussure and P.S. Peirce. It appears to me that this psychoanalytic position presumes an androgynous subject, which embraces the masculinity and femininity. To me, it may be most probable that poetic writing is a return to the androgynous subject and from where the poet speaks, although this return is always incomplete. The female-*persona* lyric is such a psychoanalytic return to the androgynous subject, an expression of the subject's discontent with the conscious, with the Symbolic, with the masculine, in short, with the hegemony of the phallic, patriarchal culture. The male poet has to release his repressed femininity, and the means of release is emotionally to turn himself into a female. And this is the psychoanalytic function of female-*persona* lyrics. It is primary, compared with the biographical, social, political modeling functions of a female-*persona* lyric we have mentioned earlier. The psychoanalytic and the social-cultural functions do not cancel each other but coexist in female-*persona* lyrics. Meanwhile, the poet's sympathy could

be considered as a redemption and guilt in the patriarchal society where the males are privileged, for *the androgynous subject is always fair to all the elements it embraces.*

III. *Ecriture Feminine*

The binary opposition of masculinity and femininity is approached as a point of departure and deconstructed by recent French feminist theorists, notably, Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva. Their method is Derridean in a double sense: a Derridean re-reading of Freud and Lacan, working within the system of binary opposition until the system is exploded, and finally, exploring the Derridean notion of "*differance*" (meaning simultaneously "difference," "differing," and "deferral"). Cixous lists a number of oppositions in the form of binary, such as activity/passivity, father/mother, man/woman, exposes these binaries as unequal pairs in our patriarchal society, and finally denounces these oppositions as disastrous forms of "essentialism," false representation of human reality. ("Sorties" 90-98). She advocates a non-exclusive form of bisexuality: an "non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex," a "self-permission," a "multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire," according to "each other, male or female" ("Medusa" 254). Historically, the feminist Cixous continues, "woman is bisexual," whereas man keeps his "glorious phallic monosexuality;" that is, woman is opening up for, and benefiting from, this "bisexual" tendency of the human species ("Medusa" 254). As one can see, Cixous's concept of bisexuality is almost a synonym for androgyny, a concept we have discussed in the preceding section.

Meanwhile, Kristeva is suspicious of any absolute form of gender identity, and rejects any essentialist notion of femininity and *ecriture feminine*. Kristeva "displaces Lacan's distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic into a distinction between the *semiotic* and the *symbolic*" (Moi 161), and associates literature with the former. Briefly, the Lacanian Imaginary is a complex phenomenon, linked to narcissism and the formation of the subject , mediating between the

the female-*persona* lyric is an instance in which a male poet releases his femininity suppressed in the phallic culture and returns to an androgynous subject or bisexuality in Cixous's terminology. *Yet the very femininity is not totally spontaneous but rather suppressed as it is in our phallic culture.* Freud's argument that civilization is always suppressive and generates discontents (1961) is right only when civilization refers to a non-androgynous one. In poetry, not necessarily in the female-*persona* lyrics, femininity teases the masculinity from within as we shall see in the case of Shelley and Li Po .

Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," "Ode to the West Wind," and some other poems are notable for their sublimity or masculinity. For example,

> The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
> of their moon-freezing chrystals; the bright chains
> Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
> Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips
> His beak in poison not his own, tears up
> My Heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
> The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
> Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
> To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
> When the rocks split and close again behind;
> While from their loud abysses howling throng
> The genii of the storm, urging the rage
> Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
>
> "Prometheus Unbound," 31-43
> (Reiman and Powers 137)

> Thou
> For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
> Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
> The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
> The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
> Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,

Any tremble and despoil themselves: O hear!
"Ode to the West Wind," 36-42
(Reiman and Powers 222)

The opening passage of "Prometheus Unbound" (written in 1819) is sublime in any sense: meeting Longinus's, Kant's, and even feminist definition. The Titan Prometheus is described as almost the earth or universe itself, tortured by the "glaciers," "Heaven's winged hound," "ghastly People of the realm of dream," the "genii of the storm," and the "whirlwind," eating into the Titan's "heart" and "bones." The cry of Prometheus the Sufferer is indeed "the echo of a great soul," a voice of sublimity as defined by Longinus (66). Meanwhile, a sense of fear and pain is aroused from this torturing scene and fits perfectly Kant's definition of sublime: the feeling of the sublime "involves a pain, which arouses in us the feeling of our supersensible destination" (97). In Kant's dialectic theory the sublime begins with pain and fear, but transcends it by comprehending by our Reason the "inadequacy of all sensible standards" (97). A feminist would associate the sublime with the masculine, the phallic, and hears behind Prometheus's suffering voice "the same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallocentrism" (a phrase from Cixous, "Medusa" 249). Shelley's psychological identification with Prometheus the Sufferer is unquestionable, and shall we say that Shelley, like Prometheus, suffers not only from the tyranny of Jupiter, but also from his own phallocentrism? To be sure, this feminist reading of mine has a deconstructive notion itself.

"Ode to the West Wind," written in the same year of 1819, is as sublime and cosmic as "Prometheus Unbound," but with an unequivocal lyrical personal voice.[5] We find in the poem the cyclical movement of the seasons, the steep sky's commotion, the echoing of "O, hear!." And finally, the "Atlantic's level powers/Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below/The sea-blooms and the oozy woods . . . know/Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear/And tremble and despoil themselves" as we are told in the passage. The word "fear" (the pre-condition for the Kantian sublime) is unequivo-

cally present in the passage and is mingled with the overall feeling of the sublime.

Among the sublime voices of the Autumn, we hear the most personal, most lyrical tone of Shelley:

> Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
> I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

This speaking subject "I" in this passage is rather feminine, remarkably differing from the masculine West Wind that acts as a center and exerts the power to "preserve" and to "destroy," and, surely, differing from the phallic voice of Prometheus. Here Shelley speaks in his own person (as a male) but with a feminine tone. What is most striking and revealing to us is that the voice is so like the one we hear from an Indian girl, a female *persona* Shelley assumes in his another poem:

> O lift me from the grass!
> I die, I faint, I fail!
>
> —"The Indian Girl's Song"
> (Reiman and Powers 370)

This is the most lyrical, most feminine voice of this female-*persona* lyric of Shelley. The Indian girl and the British young man Shelley share *almost* the same femininity! From the perspective of androgyny or bisexuality, Shelley in these feminine passages relieves his own femininity and redeems himself from the confinement of the masculine ego or phallocentrism. I said "almost" because I am going to enunciate the difference between them. The British young man falls upon "the thorns of life," unlike the Indian girl, who falls upon "the grass." The hardship of "thorns of life" redeems the speaking subject from a total femininity. Meanwhile, this femininity is further redeemed by the masculine character of the speaking subject, who is, like the West Wind, "tameless, and swift, and proud." This is to say, the feminine voice in "Ode to the West Wind" should be described as

there is femininity in masculinity and masculinity in femininity as in the *t'ai-chi* icon. Again, an essentialist opposition between masculinity and femininity is deconstructed in Shelley's androgynous subject.

No one will not be impressed by Li Po's sublime and masculine voice, and perhaps no Chinese poet in classical poetry excels him in this respect. Let us hear his thundering lyrical voice in his famous "The Road to the Frontier *Shu* is Hard:" (蜀道難):

噫吁戲危乎高哉
蜀道之難難於上青天
. . . . . .
但見悲鳥號古木
雄飛從雌繞林間
又聞子規啼夜月,愁空山
蜀道之難難於上青天
使人聽此彫朱顏
連峰去天不盈尺
枯松倒挂倚絕壁
飛湍瀑流爭喧豗
砯崖轉石萬壑雷
其險也如此
嗟爾遠道之人胡為乎來哉!

Ah! Oh! Alas! How dangerous! How high!
The Road to the frontier *Shu* is hard, harder than climbing up to the sky!
. . . . . .
You see but sad birds crying among ancient trees—
The male birds circling among the wood, followed by their mates.
You hear but nightingales's wailing under the deep night moon—
Mountains are left to sheer sadness.
The road to the frontier Shu is hard, harder than climbing up to the sky!

Upon hearing these words your rosy cheeks would wither!
Away from the sky lesser than one foot are the cliffs,
And against the cliffs dead pines hang up-side-down.
Cataracts and torrents compete for their roars, dashing upon cliffs and rocks,
Like thunders echoing among ten thousand valleys.
A dangerous place it is!
Alas! For what should you come here from afar?
(Li 1: 199)

I have no way to reproduce in translation the sonorous voice, the sublime style, the masculine melancholy, the overtone of self-exile. Yet from our present feminist perspective it is an agonized voice of phallocentrism, which should be relieved for the contentment of an androgynous subject. With this feminist understanding, we are not surprised to find out that Li Po is also known for the feminine sensibility of his other poems, an opposition to the masculine sensibility in his sublime lyrics. However, we are still astonished to find out that Li Po has produced a lot of female-*persona* lyrics, around 25 in total, according to my statistics, excelling all his contemporary poets in number, if not in quality. Li Po even dedicated a poem entitled "To My Wife" to his wife and spoke in the *persona* of the wife: the female *persona* in the poem complains about Li Po's alcoholism. Li Po's female *personae* in general are palace ladies, abandoned women, and lonely young wives whose husbands left home for war or commerce. The types of women chosen as the *personae* reflect to some extent the social reality and problems of Li Po's time. Yet what we are here concerned with is the problem of femininity and masculinity of writing and the possible psychoanalytic function of female-*persona* lyrics in general. Let us begin with one of Li Po's poems entitled "On Behalf Of a Beauty Sadly Facing a Mirror" (代美人愁鏡) (Li 3: 1486):

明明金鵲鏡
了了玉台前
拂拭皎冰月

光輝何清圓
紅顏老昨日
白髮多去年
鉛粉坐相誤
照來空淒然

Bright is the golden-magpie mirror;
Luminous is the jade table upon which the mirror stands.
Wiping and rubbing—the mirror now glitters like an icy moon;
How bright and full is its light!
My rosy cheeks faint yesterday;
White hair is abundant since last year.
I have wasted my prime time on make-up powders—
Oh, how sad when I look at the reflection of my face!

A number of things interest me. First, the title indicates clearly that this female-*persona* lyric is speaking on behalf of someone else. But in most female-*persona* lyrics, the phrase "on behalf of" is deleted, and this deletion is unmistakably significant, for it suggests that the space between the speaking subject and the *persona* is now blurred. An internal identification and sympathy as discussed in the previous section becomes possible. Second, a poem with a leading phrase "on behalf of" does not necessarily mean that the boundary between the speaking subject and its *persona* can not be crossed over. The mirror image and its white hair reflection is not necessarily the privileged area of *this* female, but constitutes in fact a component of Li Po's deep psychic zone as revealed in Li Po's another poem entitled "Invitation to Drink" (將進酒) (Li 1: 225):

君不見黃河之水天上來
奔流到海不復回?
君不見高望明鏡悲白髮
朝如青絲暮成雪?

Do you not see the water of Yellow River come from
the sky, rushing into the sea with no return?
Do you not see the bright mirrors of grand parlors
Grieving us with white hair?
Our hair is like dark-green silk in the morning,
but snow flakes it becomes in the evening!

The mirror image and its white hair reflection expresses itself as a suppressed femininity of self-pity in the previous female-*persona* lyric. Now the same feminine touch is undermined by the overwhelming phallocentrism and disturbs at the same time the very phallocentrism from within and makes it uneasy in the present poem of Li Po's own voice. It is another instance in which femininity and masculinity act upon and deconstruct each other as we have seen in the case of Shelley.

IV Generic Description

I have tried in the preceding sections to go beyond the social level and meditated upon the possible psychoanalytic functioning of female-*persona* lyrics, not in the instinctual sense of the Freudian psychoanalysis, but from the perspective of androgyny or bisexuality as expounded in contemporary feminist theory and from the perspective of a primordial wholeness of human psyche as suggested in classical Chinese philosophy. I believe that human species is endowed with an androgynous subject, and human being suffers from a split of an androgynous whole. The female-*persona* lyrics is an expression of our desire to return to the state of androgyny in the example of the male: man speaks in the *persona* of a female and releases his femininity suppressed in the phallic culture. In fact, we have two Freud: the Freud biologist and the Freud semiotician. The Freud semiotician emphasizes on the semiotic, cultural process through which a human being is shaped into a semiotic, cultural man. The Freud semiotician uncovers for us, with a sense of urgency, the suppressive power of culture and our discontents. From our present perspective, the gender

difference and the fixation of gender roles are nothing but a significant component basic to the cultural process which is necessarily suppressive.

The essentialist notion of femininity and masculinity can not be held without qualification in gender nor in writing. The *ecriture feminine* or feminine writing should not be interpreted as an essentialist version, but is always in the relation of *differance* to its opposition, the masculine writing. The distinction between the feminine style and the masculine style is not something new, but has been recognized and differently named in critical writings East and West long ago. What may be new in our study is that the problem of femininity and masculinity is linked to the problem of gender, to the modeling function, to the androgynous subject, and to a specific lyrical genre called "female-*persona* lyric." What interests us is that femininity in female-*persona* lyrics is overwhelmed by the masculine, phallic voice and yet is able to disquiet the very masculinity and phallocentrism from within, as shown in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and Li Po's "Invitation to Drink."

The female-*persona* lyric is a lyrical genre newly defined in the present paper. To conclude my investigation, let me reconstruct this lyric genre according to Todorov's triadic model as I did in my studies of other lyric genres, for example, love poetry (1989), landscape poetry (1990), and *carpe diem* poetry (1993). Todorov's model is based on the three aspects of the literary text as Todorov sees it, namely, the verbal, the syntactic, and the semantic. According to his recapitulation in his famous study of the Fantastic (1975), the verbal component refers to "the properties of the utterance itself" and "its performance" which involves the author and the reader. The syntactic component accounts for "relations which the parts of the work sustain among themselves." The semantic component consists of "the 'themes' of a literary text whose "transformations and combinations" may be profiled against the background of "some universal semantics of literature." Finally, these three components "are manifested in a complex interrelation" in all literary texts and genres (20). As one can see, these three components have been deepened and substantiated in

the present paper by the concepts drawn by contemporary feminist and semiotic theories.

My generic description will be brief. The semantic component of female-*persona* lyric as a genre refers to the problem of gender, the androgynous subject, the modeling function on the psychoanalytic level, aside from its social functioning. As to the syntactic component, female-*persona* lyric is similar to love lyric in the sense that an addressee is inscribed as a structure in these lyrics—this time, the addressee is not a lady, but a gentleman; this time, the poet speaks not in his own voice but in the voice of a female *persona*, and this female *persona* is, in the last analysis, part of his androgynous subject. All these features will bear on the verbal component of female-*persona* lyrics. The verbal component is related to the problem of feminine writing, the on-going differing process of femininity and masculinity in style. It is interesting to note that the most masculine poets, such as Shelley and Li Po, are inclined to produce most feminine poems, or to bind together femininity and masculinity in a dynamic whole in their poetry. Needless to say, these three components, namely, the semantic, the syntactic, and the verbal, penetrate each other in *female-persona* lyric as in other lyric genres.

NOTES

[1] Some lyrics are ambiguous in gender, for example, Robert Herrick's "Chop-Cherry" (Betjeman and Taylor 56) and Sir Walter Scott's "An Hour With Thee" (Stallworth 179).

[2] Showalter's and Moi's polemic arguments on the issue of androgyny are reprinted in juxtaposition to each other in Eagleton's *Feminist Literary Criticism* with Eagleton's fair review in her Introduction. See Eagleton.

[3] Recently, Eco develops a wonderful concept of mirror, which is a critique as well as a further development of Lacan's Mirror stage and Peirce's concept of Icon. See Eco 215-237.

[4] However, Anthony Wilden seems to have reservations for the dynamic world as suggested by the *t'ai-chi* icon, and his main interest

in the essay to which I am indebted for the quotations is not philosophy but the process of the perception of an icon. He comments that "Here the root metaphor of 'opposition betwen equals' denies the reality of Chinese society, where *yang* ('male, light, active') dominates *yin* ('female, dark, passive')" (255). But I would suggest that this denial is the violation of the primordial, universal *yin-yang* principle and is an index of the alienation of our historical moment in the long development of human species.

[5] According to G. M. Matthews, "Ode to the West Wind" is "the only lyric with an unequivocal lyrical personal voice." Matthews's essay is collected in the present edition of Shelley's poetry. For the quotation, see Reiman and Powers 682.

WORKS CITED

Betjeman, John & Taylor, Geoffery, eds. *English Love Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1957.

Cixous, Helene. "Sorties." *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. Eds. Elaine Marks & Isabelle de Courtivron. New York: Schocken, 1980. 90-98.

——. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. Eds. Elaine Marks & Isabelle de Courtivron. New York: Schocken, 1980. 245-64.

Cook, Ellen Piel. *Psychological Androgyny*. New York: Pergamon, 1985.

Eagleton, Mary, ed. *Feminist Literary Criticism*. London: Longman, 1991.

Eco, Umberto. "Mirrors." *Iconicity: Essays on the Nature of Culture, Festschrift for Thomas A. Sebeok on his 65th birthday*. Eds. Paul Bouissac, Michael Herzfeld and Roland Posner. Tubingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1986. 215-37.

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Ed. And Trans. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1961.

Hsu, Ts'ui-yun (許翠雲). "T'ang-tai kuei-yuan-shih yen-chiu" (唐代閨怨詩研究) [A Study of the Boudoir Poetry of the T'ang Dy-

nasty]. *Journal of Research Institute of Chinese Language and Literature, National Taiwan Normal University* (國立台灣師範大學國文研究所集刊) 34 (1990): 547-670.

Ivanov, V.V. "The Role of Semiotics in the Cybernetic Study of Man and Collective." *Soviet Semiotics*. Ed. Daniel Lucid. Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP, 1977. 27-38.

Jones, Ann Rosalind. "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of l'*Ecriture feminine*." *Feminist Criticism: Essays on Woman, Literature and Theory*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Pantheon, 1985. 361-77.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. Trans. J. H. Bernard. New York: Hafner, 1951.

Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Routledge, 1977.

Kristeva, Julia. "Revolution in Poetic Language." *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. 89-136.

——. "Women's Time." *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986. 187-213.

Ku, Tim-hung (古添洪). "A Semiotic Approach to Chinese-English Love Poetry: Focusing on the Space of the Addressee." *Tamkang Review* 20.2 (1989): 169-93.

——. "Toward a General Poetics of Landscape Poetry: a Semiotic-Deconstructive Approach." *Bulletin Nat'l Taiwan Normal University* (師大學報) 35 (1990): 159-82.

——. "Toward a General Poetics of Chinese-Western *Carpe Diem* Poetry." *East-West Comparative Literature: Cross-Cultural Discourse*. Ed. Tak-wei Wong. Hong Kong: Department of Comparative Literature, University of Hong Kong, 1993. 253-69.

Li, Po (李白). *Li-Po chi chiao-chu* (李白集校註) [Poetry of Li Po, with Annotations]. Ed. Chu T'ui-yuan (瞿蛻園). 3 vols. Taipei: Li Jen, 1981.

Longinus, Cassius. "On the Sublime." *Criticism: The Major Texts*. Ed. Walter Bate. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1952. 62-75.

Lotman, Jurij. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Trans. Gail Lenhoff

and Ronald Vroon. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1977.

——. (Yuri Lotman). *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990.

Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. London: Methuen, 1985.

Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Collected Papers*. 6 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1931-58.

Reiman, Donald H., and Sharon B. Powers, eds. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*. New York: Norton, 1977.

Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of their own: British Women novelists from Bronte to Lessing*. London: Virago, 1978.

Stallworthy, Jon, ed. *A Book of Love Poetry*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic*. Trans. Richard Howard. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975.

Wilden, Anthony. "Ideology and the Icon: Oscillation, Contradiction and Paradox: An Essay in Context Theory." *Iconicity: Essays on the Nature of Cultur—Festschrift for Thomas A. Sebeok on his 65th birthday*. Tubingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1986. 251-302

Wilhelm, Richard and Cary Baynes, trans. *The I-Ching or Book of Changes. The Richard Wilhelm translation rendered into English by Cary Baynes*. New York: Princeton UP, 1977.

Yu, Shou-chen (喻守真), ed. *T'ang-shih san-pai-shou hsiang-hsi* (唐詩三百首詳析) [Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty with Annotations]. Taipei: Chung Hwa, 1980.