HSIEH HUI-LIEN'S "SNOW FU": A STRUCTURAL STUDY

STEPHEN OWEN

YALE UNIVERSITY

The complex structure of Hsieh Hui-lien's "Snow Fu" shows the potential of the *fu* genre to use formal variations as part of its cognitive meaning and to go beyond its descriptive limitations to arrive at a more complete definition of its topic. The *fu* consists of three styles—epideictic *fu*, Western Han song, and *ssu-yen shih*—and four speakers—Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Tsou Yang, Mei Ch'eng, and the persona of the snow itself—set within a narrative context. The range of styles, points of view, and levels of distance from the reader are used to exhaust the possibilities of ways to perceive the topic. In this way the more concentrated Nan-pei-ch'ao *fu* can achieve a completeness comparable to that of the older epideictic *fu*. One may also see the submerged form of the debate *fu* in the "Snow Fu": the correctness of Mei Ch'eng's viewpoint in the envoi is verified by the intrusion of the persona of the snow, seconding his viewpoint.

HSIEH HUI-LIEN (ca. 397-433) was a scion of the powerful Hsieh clan of the Southern Dynasties and a paternal cousin of the landscape poet Hsieh Ling-yün. A short biography of Hui-lien is to be found in Shen Yüeh's *Sung History*, appended to the biography of his father Hsieh Fang-ming.[1] This biography is repeated in the *Southern History* with minor variations.[2] During the short thirty-seven years of his life, Hui-lien's political career was insignificant, due, according to Shen Yüeh, to his "frivolous nature," *ch'ing-po*, a conventional disease among literati of the Southern Dynasties. What reputation he has today rests solely on his poetry and on the "Snow Fu."

The *Ching-chi chih* of the *Sui History* credits Hsieh Hui-lien with collected works in six *chüan*.[3] Of this, all that survives are thirty-two poems (twelve *yüeh-fu* and twenty *shih*),[4] one complete *fu*, the "Snow Fu," fragments of four other *fu* collected from the *Yi-wen lei-chü*, and a few prose pieces and fragments.[5] Of these works, the "Snow Fu," five poems, and a prose piece on the relocation of a tomb are included in the *Wen hsüan*.[6]

The "Snow Fu" is generally considered to be Hsieh Hui-lien's masterpiece; it is mentioned specifically in both biographies as being "considered outstanding for its lofty beauty."[7] "Beauty," *li*, should be understood in this case as a precious loveliness, close to the English "exquisite." It was precisely against this sort of beauty that T'ang writers and literary critics reacted, condemning in turn the "flashy beauty," *ts'ai-li*[8], and "delicate beauty," *ch'i-li*,[9] of the Southern Dynasties style. Such revulsion at the concentration on style and form of the literature of the Southern Dynasties has continued to the present, appearing in the

[1] *Sung shu* (Ch'ien-lung Palace edition; rpt. Taipei: Yi-wen, n.d.), c.53.17b-.18a.

[2] *Nan-shih* (Ch'ien-lung Palace edition; rpt. Taipei: Yi-wen, n.d.), c.19.17a-.17b. The differences between this and the *Sung Shu* biography are some stylistic alterations and the inclusion of some anecdotes about Hsieh Hui-lien and Hsieh Ling-yün which the *Sung Shu* had placed in the biography of Hsieh Ling-yün.

[3] *Sui shu* (Ch'ien-lung Palace edition; rpt. Taipei: Yi-wen, n.d.), c.35.13a.

[4] *Ch'üan Sung shih* ed. Ting Fu-pao (n.d.: rpt. Taipei: Yi-wen, n.d.), c.3.19b-.23b. Ōno Jitsunosuke in his *Chūgoku Shisen* vol. II (Tokyo: Shakai Shisho, 1971) p. 283, credits Hsieh Hui-lien with thirty-six pieces, fourteen *yüeh-fu* and twenty-two *shih*, though it is impossible to tell whether Ōno is including some omitted by Ting, or whether he simply made a mistake.

[5] *Ch'üan Sung wen* ed. Ting Fu-pao (n.d.; rpt. Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1969), c.34.1a-.5a.

[6] *Wen hsüan* (1174-1189; rpt. 1809; rpt. Taipei, Yi-wen, 1967), c.13.8a-.12b: c.23.9b-.10b; c.25. 22b-.24a; c.30. 4b-.6a (two poems); c.60.22a-.24a.

[7] *Sung Shu*, c.53.18a.

[8] Ch'en Tzu-ang, "*Hsiu-chu shih hsü*, in *Hsin-chiao Ch'en Tzu-ang chi* (n.d.; rpt. Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1964), p. 15.

[9] Li Po, "Ku-feng" 1, in *Li T'ai-po ch'üan-chi* (Hong Kong: Kuang-chih, n.d.), p. 42.

charge of "formalism," often leveled by Marxist critics against the literature of this period.[10] These modern critics use the term in its simplest pejorative sense, that content has been sacrificed for form. In the case of poetry it may be true that the loss of direct personal lyricism cost that genre more than stylistic concentration repaid, but in the case of the *fu*, the concentration on style and structure gave that genre a new lease on life.

The structural complexity of the "Snow Fu" is not only the center of interest in the piece, it is also the means by which its cognitive values are expressed. The "Snow Fu's" structure constitutes an implicit comment on the modes of perceiving the *fu*'s topic and, by extension, on the nature of the *fu* genre itself. Grounded in the suasive origins of the *fu*, the structure of the "Snow Fu" manipulates the reader as well as the topic, carrying the reader through an exercise in the perception of the snow.

The Snow Fu[11]

The year approaching its close,
The season getting dark,
Cold winds gathering,
Gloomy clouds clustering.
The Prince of Liang was not cheerful
as he strolled in Rabbit Garden—
So he set out fine wine,
called for his friends to come,
summoned Master Tsou,
invited old Mei.
Hsiang-ju was the last to arrive,
sat to the visitors' right.
All of a sudden light sleet fell,
then heavy snow came down.
Thereupon the the Prince sang "Northern Wind" from the *Songs* of Wei,[a]
chanted "South Mountain" from the *Odes* of Chou,[b]
passed a tablet to Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, said:
"Bring out your most intimate thoughts,
Give free rein to your elegant diction,
Balance its beauty and measure the snow's praise,
Describe it poetically for me."
Whereupon Hsiang-ju rose from the mat,
drew back and bowed, said:
"I have heard that a Snow Palace was built in that Eastern State,[c]
that a snow mountain juts in the Western Regions,[d]
how King Wen chanted of it in "Today I come,"[e]
how King Mu made a song on yellow bamboo.[f]
that Ts'ao's Airs compared snow's color to linen robes,[g]
that Ch'u's lays matched snow song with orchid tune,[h]
if a full foot, it shows good omen for a fruitful harvest,
if a yard deep, it means the power of Yin is unbalanced.
The season of snow has far-reaching meaning indeed;
With Your permission I will state its beginnings:
Now when Darkness is at its apex,[i]
a sharp air rises,
boiling creeks dry up,
hot water valleys freeze,
fire wells go out,
hot springs ice over,
boiling pools don't bubble,
scorching winds don't rise,[j]
on northern doors they plaster cracks,
in lands of naked savages they wear low silks.
Then clouds rise on rivers and seas,
sand flies in the boreal desert,
continuous vapor, thick haze,
veil the sun, shroud its reflection on the clouds.
First sleet gathers, whistling in the wind,
then much snow, blanketing the air.
This is what it looks like:
scattering out, then intermingling,
welling up, then whooshing past,
massing, floating,
thick and profuse,
joined wavering, then flying, spattering,
back and forth, piling up.
First it follows the tiles and caps the beams,
finally opens curtains, comes in cracks in the walls,
starts sinuous fluttering on porch and in hall,
at last in whirls heaping on curtains and mats.
It will take to a square and form a jade tally,
come on a circle and make a jade disk.
Gape at the marshes—a million acres the same silk-white,
Scan the mountains—a thousand peaks all white.
Now the terraces are all like 'Layered Jade Terrace,'[k]

[10] An example of this can be found in Liu Ta-chieh's treatment of the literature of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period in *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh fa-chan shih* (Shanghai: Ku-tien, 1958), I, 279-287.

[11] Other translations can be found in Erwin Von Zach, *Die chinesische Anthologie: Übersetzungen aus dem Wen hsüan* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1958), pp. 195-8; Burton Watson, *Chinese Rhyme-prose* (New York: Columbia, 1971), pp. 86-91; a partial translation by G. Margouliès, *Anthologie raisonée de la littérature Chinoise* (Paris: Payot, 1948), pp. 359-61.

the avenues are like linked jadelets,
nephrite stairs are set in courtyards,
onyx trees stand rigid in the forest.
It surpasses the freshness of glistening crane,
makes the silver pheasant lose its whiteness.
Pale sleeves shamed at their paltry charms,
Jadewhite faces cover their loveliness.
Then if the piled whiteness is not yet melted,
it's fresh in dawn's sunlight—
flashing like the candledragon who
face full of glimmer, lights K'un-lun Mountain.[1]
Next it flows and drips over hanging icicles,
down along eaves it grasps the corner—
splendid like the river god who
splitting oysters, sets out bright pearls.
What's more, its aspect—a profuse confusion, helter-skelter,
its manner—sparkling, glistening, marble-pure,
its force—turning back scattering, whirling,
its wonder—flying into groupings, ice-glitter.
Constantly circling without end,
Alas, we'll never understand it fully.
Now as it shows its playfulness unceasing,
the night calm and secluded, filling me with brooding.
Wind touches the beams, its echoes winding,
Moonlight reaches the curtain, its rays penetrating.
I pour out thick wine from the Hsiang and Wu[m];
put on double robes of fox and badger.
face a pair of dancing pheasants in the courtyard,
peer at a lone goose flying among the clouds.
tread the interlocking drifts of frost and snow,
pity the leaves that have erred from the trees.
Urging my thoughts a thousand miles into the distance,
I long to take a hand in mine and return together."
When Tsou Yang heard this
His heart grew melancholy.
He was in the mood for a lovely song,
And respectfully attached a closing piece.
Thus he chanted a "Song of the Snowdrift" that went:
"Taking my lady by the hand I open the thick portiere,
Pulling up lacy coverlet seated in fragrant ornament,
Light the incense burner turn up the bright candle,
Pour out cassia wine raising a clear melody."
He continued with a "Song of the White Snow" that went:
"A melody is raised the wine is set out,
Ruddy face blushes thoughts grow intimate,
Wishing to lower the curtains to put our pillows close,
Longing to undo our sashes and snatch off our belts.
We resent how easily the year comes to its close,
are pained at no chance for a later meeting.
Can't you see the white snow on the steps,
Can it be its glitter will be gone in mid-spring?"
The song was done, and the prince mulled it over,
chanting it for his pleasure,
Lovingly inspected it, slapped his knee in approval,
Looking over to Mei Ch'eng to rise and make the envoi.
It went: "Though the white feather is white,
Its substance is lighter than this.
Though the white jade is white,
In vain it holds to virtue.
Neither as good as this snow
That with the season rises and fades.
Dark Yin congeals it, not obscuring its purity,
Sun's Yang force glints on it, not hardening its integrity.
'How could integrity be my name,
How could purity be my virtue?
With the clouds I ascend and descend,
On the wind I flutter and fall.
Encountering objects, I diffuse over their images,
On the earth I spread over its form.
Blank according to what I meet,
Foul following another's sullying.
My heart is wild and free—
Why should I worry, why hustle and bustle?'"

One may consider the *fu* as an extensive definition of its topic, the topic itself being the unifying element of the work, delimiting the realm of discussion. At the same time the genre permits almost endless speculation within those limits, pretending to exhaust the verbal possibilities of the theme.

This fundamental unity of topic is complicated in the "Snow Fu" by another unity, that of the narrative. We may contrast the importance of the narrative in the "Snow Fu" with the function of the narrative in certain older *fu*, such as the Sung Yü *fu*[12] or Chia Yi's "Owl Fu,"[13] where it serves simply as an introduction or setting for the *fu* proper. In the "Snow Fu," although Ssu-ma

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[12] e.g., the "Kao-t'ang Fu" or the "Shen-nü Fu", *Wen hsüan*, c.19.1a-.9b.

[13] *Wen hsüan*, c.13.16a-.20a.

Hsiang-ju's *fu*[14] forms the bulk of the *Fu*, the narrative is necessary to bind different parts of the *Fu* together. In this respect the "Snow Fu" resembles and probably echoes the "debate *fu*" of an earlier era.[15] The narrative sets up and echoes motifs in the verse sections, but its primary function is to provide a unifying context for the different viewpoints in the verse sections.

The *Fu* begins with four three-syllable lines, setting the time of year and suggesting the gathering snowstorm. This description is atemporal; it is fixed in the past tense only in relation to the past scene which follows. Since we read a poem diachronically rather than synchronically, this first descriptive scene is of a general condition of the year's end, which is focused by the succeeding lines to a specific time in the past. Setting the mood and heralding the subject of the *Fu*, this description links the past situation with all time, including the present.

The entrance of the famous patron of the arts, the Prince of Liang, son of Han Wen-ti, sets the time in the distant, almost legendary past. The first characterization of the prince is that he is "unhappy," and as a remedy for his depression he summons his poet friends, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Tsou Yang, and Mei Ch'eng. Through the course of the *Fu* the prince's mood changes from depression (1.5) to delight (11.117-118), echoing the venerable theme of the *fu* as verbal therapy for a ruler's problems. Later we shall see that it is both physically therapeutic, as in the *Ch'i-fa* by the real Mei Ch'eng,[16] and morally therapeutic, as in the hunt *fu* of the Western Han.[17]

The focal points of the definition of the snow are in the different reactions of the three poets, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Tsou Yang, and Mei Ch'eng. Each poet represents a separate viewpoint, and each uses a different style with a distinct meter. Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju presents a formal descriptive *fu* covering those aspects of the topic appropriate to a *fu*, the snow in terms of literature, history, geography, myth, in descriptive hyperbole, and with a concluding personal reaction. This lyric ending of the *fu* leads into the two lyric songs in the Western Han style by Tsou Yang, concerning a tryst occasioned by the snow. The second of these songs ends with a coda of three couplets in the *fu* meter, echoing Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu* and resuming the metrical continuity of the *Fu*. The fourth piece is an envoi composed by Mei Ch'eng in the meter and style of the *Shih Ching*, which discusses the snow from a philosophical viewpoint. This piece breaks midway with a longer *fu* line, echoing the meter of the *fu* and punctuating Mei Ch'eng's section of the envoi. The second half of the envoi is Mei Ch'eng assuming the *persona* of the snow itself commenting on its own nature. Thus if one includes the snow's self-description in the last part of the envoi, four separate viewpoints form the definition of the snow, three external and one internal.

One interesting problem we encounter in the *Fu* is that of the levels of distance between the author or reader and the various sections of the *Fu*. Through the art of the rhetorician, the reader is carried in and out of these levels in such a way that he is unaware of them. First we must posit a level of immediacy, an "I" which is contemporary with the reader's present. This is the level of most *shih* and many *fu*. This level of immediacy does occur in the first four lines, when the reader need make no distinction between a "now" and a "then."

The first level of distance is the third person narrative (11.5-23). First person discourse occurs within the narrative without disrupting the readers' recognition that this is a third person narrative. Thus the beginning of Sus-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu* with the formal "said," *yüeh*, and "I have heard that . . .." *ch'en wen*, seems to lead into ordinary first person discourse. However, as the *fu* progresses, we forget the contingent situation of the narrative, and the *fu* itself become a third person description of the snow, a third person description within a third person narrative. This is a second level of distance from the immediate. Gradually towards the end of the *fu* (1.86), the first person poet is reintroduced with an emotional reaction to the snow. This not only provides a transition to the lyric songs of Tsou Yang, it also eases the reader back into the narrative context in which the *fu* is set.

The two songs of Tsou Yang obviously do not describe the situation of the narrative, yet possess the immediate pseudo-present of a lyric in relation to the narrative. This is also a second level of distance, but one of a different variety from that of the *fu*. Unlike the *fu*, which depends on its length to make the reader forget the third person

[14] For convenience, I refer to the entire piece as the *Fu* and to Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's piece as the *fu*.

[15] e.g. the capital *fu* in *Wen hsüan*, c.1-6.

[16] *Wen hsüan*, c.34.1a-.13b.

[17] *Wen hsüan*, c.7.17a-c.9.8b.

of the narrative in favor of the third person description, length in these two songs would remove them from the past tense narrative and make them present to the reader. To prevent this, the narrative is inserted between them, forcing the reader to recognize a pseudo-present contemporaneous to the third person past.

The envoi of Mei Ch'eng, aphoristic and objective, establishes a second level of distance similar to that of the *fu*, although its impersonality severs it from being spoken within the narrative context. The second half of the envoi, however, sets up a third level of distance: an impersonal speaker within a third person narrative assumes a (first person) *persona*, that of the snow. This level of distance is ambiguous in that it is both the furthest from the reader in level of distance, and at the same time it is the most intimate. It uses the informal first person pronoun, *wo*, and is not introduced by the formal marker of first person discourse in a third person narrative, "he said," *yüeh*. Thus the *Fu* ends as ambiguously as it began, with a statement that is both past and present, mediated and immediate.

Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's traditional *fu* forms over half the bulk of the *Fu*. Formally it is divided into eight sections, each with an introductory phrase or sentence: I, 11.24-32; II, 11.33-43; III, 11.44-49; IV, 11.50-64; V, 11.65-72; VI, 11.73-80; VII, 11.81-86; VIII, 11.87-98. Of these, sections I, II, IV, and VIII indicate major changes in the discussion, although VIII lacks a strong formal introduction. Later we shall look at the interplay between these formal transitions and the actual transitions of idea and prosody. This, like the technique of echoing and resumption of themes and meters, is necessary to give the *fu* continuity and prevent monotony in the accumultion of description.

The first section begins with the formal phrase, "I have heard that . . .," proceeding, as the phrase suggests, with the literary and historical background of the topic. The theme is the snow's universality. The geographical extremes of "that Eastern State," i.e. Ch'i, and T'ien Shan in the West make the snow spatially universal. Next references are made to Kings Wen and Mu of the early Chou Dynasty, lending the snow the dignity of being associated with remote antiquity, as well as universalizing it temporally, in the sense of the Chinese universal "from high antiquity on," *wan-ku*. The next couplet links the snow with the two primary poetic traditions of the *Shih Ching* and the *Ch'u Tz'u* (although he must use the apocryphal "Satire Fu" to provide the reference he needs for the latter). This couplet also spans social class: the snow is linked with the noble "orchid" as well as with humble linen clothes. The fourth couplet of the *fu* links the snow with the extremes of fortune: a certain depth indicates a good harvest the following year, while another depth shows a disproportionate influence of the *Yin*.

Lines thirty-two and thirty-three are external to the description, the poet stepping out and commenting on what he has said and on what he is going to say. In the first of these lines he uses the word "far," *yüan*, as a comment on the universality or distance between the extremes in the preceding section, as well as in its sense of "important." In the next line Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju introduces his second topic, the beginning of the snow. Thus the transition is ingeniously accomplished, binding each line to the lines immediately preceding and following it.

The transition into section three is also interesting. A metrical shift from a three-syllable line to a four-syllable line occurs at line forty, though the line is linked with the preceding line in being just another body of hot water cooled off by the chilly air. The second line of that couplet shifts the topic from water to air itself, while unity is maintained by the similarity of the events: the cold air stops the "scorching winds." The scene then shifts to the human world, still describing the effects of the cold air. Although the naked savages being forced to wear long clothes is still hyperbolic, plastering the cracks in doors is credible and returns the reader from a fantasy world to the actual world in preparation for section three. This north-south couplet echoes and complements the east-west couplet of the previous section. Line forty-four carries the four-syllable line across a formal transition and change in rhyme.

The short third section describes the oncoming storm and its actual beginnings. The vapors and haze which block the sun are associated with "Darkness," *hsüan* (1.34) and the *Yin* (1.31). The progression from clouds and wind to sleet and finally snow is the same progression found earlier in the narrative (11.4-5, 13-14), while the latter progression, from sleet to snow, is the classically proper one, as in *Shih* 217: "If snow is going to fall, / First there is sleet."

Section four begins the description of the actual snowfall with the formal introduction, "this is what it looks like." The six lines of descriptive

binomes which follow describe the movement of the snow in the wind. Following the course of the snow down, the two couplets beginning with line fifty-seven describe the snow just as it comes in contact with the buildings. Here its ingressions into the buildings were hinted at earlier by the "Plastering cracks in doors" (1.42).

Line sixty-one begins the theme of the transformations wrought by the snow: this theme is carried to line sixty-nine, although the formal transition does not occur until line sixty-five. While some of the strongest formal transitions (I, II, and IV) do mark a definite change in topic, some of the weaker ones, such as "thereupon" here in line sixty-five, mark a metrical transition after a transition in theme has already taken place. This situation where the theme carries over the formal and metrical transition may be contrasted with the beginning of section three where a metrical shift carried over the formal and thematic transition.

Lines sixty-one to eighty form a distinct change of tone: the description of the snow in the preceding section was exuberant but not fantastic. This section can be divided into three parts: transformations, the "surpassing" *topos*, and mythological comparisons. The first of these couplets (11.61-62) is the most modest: the snow has fallen on different parts of the building and forms a square or circular "jade" depending on the form of the thing it meets. This hints ahead to the snow's song of Mei Ch'eng's envoi in which the snow describes the essential aspect of its nature as its passivity. The next transformation is that of the marshes turning into silk, and in the next couplet the terraces and streets turn into jade. The real world is lost for the precious, fantasy world.

The "surpassing" *topos* makes the snow whiter than white birds or than the clothes and faces of fair ladies. This is an inversion of the cliché which has the above objects whiter than snow. The last of these precious passages is section six which describes two consecutive snow scenes in terms of myths. When the sun shines on the snow before it has melted, it gleams like the eyes of the candle-dragon which illuminate the sunless north. When the snow begins to melt and form icicles, it is described as being like P'ing-yi (here taken as the River God, Ho-po) getting pearls out of an oyster.

Section seven enumerates four aspects of the snow with appropriate descriptive binomes for each aspect, providing a transition from the precious fantasy world of the preceding section to the final, personal section of the *fu*. Up to this point Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu* has not only covered various aspects of the snow, it has also progressed chronologically. In moves from past instances of snow (section I) to a present. Then to give a complete snowstorm in the present, it evokes the proper symbolic concept to show that the season is ready for snow (1.34); the air gets cold and clouds rise (11.35-47); then comes first sleet and afterwards snow (11.48-49). First the snow is in the air (11.51-56), then just touching the buildings (11.57-60). After this it is described covering the ground and starting to melt (11.61-80).

The final section is the one aspect of the snow so far omitted, a personal reaction. The transition into this lyric section is the most abrupt of the entire *fu*. Line eighty-seven, containing a formal transition, *jo-nai*, describes the snow's playfulness and multitudinous forms, continuing the theme of the preceding couplet. The following parallel line is a direct contrast, as the poet enters the scene: the snow is "playful" while he is "full of brooding." Daytime (1.74) suddenly becomes night.

This final section repersonalizes Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju who has kept his presence hidden since the beginning of the *fu* (except for a hint in 1.33). Although the personal emotion here prepares us for the Tsou Yang songs, the situation here is exactly the opposite of the situation in the songs. The mood here is sadness at separation, caused, we may guess, by the snow which forms a barrier between the poet and the one he is longing for. Conversely, Tsou Yang's lovers are thrown together by the snow and resent the thought of its passing. It is interesting also to note how many elements are found in both this last section of the *fu* and in Tsou Yang's songs: curtains (11.90, 104, 111), wine (11.91, 107, 109), robes (11.92, 112), and taking someone by the hand (11.98, 104).

The third person narrative is reintroduced with Tsou Yang's response to the *fu*. Of the three poets, Tsou Yang alone is moved spontaneously to compose his pieces; both Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Mei Ch'eng are commanded to do so. This spontaneity is necessary to provide the truly lyric viewpoint. The two songs that follow are entitled "Song of the Snowdrift" and "Song of the White Snow" respectively. There is no mention of snow or drifts in the first song and only one mention of "white snow" in the last couplet of the second. Since both poems concern a tryst between two

lovers, we may guess that the relation they bear to the snowdrifts is that the latter have prevented one of the lovers from being able to leave.

The first song starts where the *fu* left off, taking the hand of a friend or lover. Also, as the last part of the *fu* moved out of doors from the inside, the song moves back inside again:

> "I long to take a hand in mine and return together . . . .
> Taking my lady by the hand I open the thick portiere,"

The second song is partially a mirror image of the first, at the same time advancing the level of intimacy. Similar action and objects are repeated in approximately reverse order in the second song:

Song I	Song II
taking the lady's hand	singing
pulling aside the curtain	setting out wine
turning up bedclothes	(blush)
(lighting bright candle)	lowering curtain
pouring wine	nearing pillow
singing	undoing sash

At the intimate point reached by line 112, the lovers resent the year's coming to an end; without the snow to occasion a tryst, they will have no opportunity to meet. There is a self-conscious inversion of values here. The year's end is generally a metaphor for old age and the end of life; here it means the beginning of spring which is given a negative rather than positive value. Spring is the proper time for lovers to meet, but here winter makes possible a meeting which spring will deny. At this point the narrative breaks in, showing the salubrious effect this lascivious singing has had on the prince's mood: he recites it again and again and literally "fondles" (*fu*, translated adverbially as "lovingly") it. Wanting to hear more, he orders Mei Ch'eng to sing an envoi.

This envoi marks another abrupt change of mood. We have moved from the emotional neutrality of the descriptive section of the *fu* to its melancholy and lonely conclusion. The songs moved first to a mood of sensuality and then to resentment. The narrative further shifted the mood to one of delight. Now in the envoi we have a tone of philosophical detachment.

The immediate referent of the envoi is the comment by the lovers in the song that their relationship must fade in springtime like the snow. The envoi answers that it is the snow's nature to "rise and fade with the season" (1.125). This is a comment on and rebuke to the lovers: like the snow it is proper that they also "rise and fade with the season." It rebukes their unwillingness to accept the passive ideal, made doubly perverse by their choice of the wrong season to rise and fade with. The envoi opens with an allusion to *Mencius*, 11.3:

> Mencius: Is the white of a white feather like the white of white snow; or is the white of white snow like the white of white jade?
> Kao-tzu: Sure.
> Mencius: Well, if that's the case, is the nature of a dog like the nature of a cow; or is the nature of a cow like the nature of a human being?

Mei Ch'eng's point, like that of Mencius, is that a distinction must be drawn between attribute and essence. At the same time, Mei Ch'eng is rejecting the bird and jade metaphors used in the *fu* (11.61-62, 65-70), and accepting the snow's transience and passivity as essential, the transience which the lovers wrongfully resented as a negative attribute of the snow (1.116).

The metrical shift in the fourth couplet of the envoi signals the end of the first part of the envoi. The second half is ostensibly sung by the snow itself. It agrees with Mei Ch'eng's observation that passivity is its essence and elaborates on its conformity to that Taoist ideal. It not only follows the shifts of the seasons, it moves with the wind and takes the form of whatever it lands on. It is not pure by nature, but is rather pure or foul according to what it falls on. It does not transform the world, as Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's *fu* would have it, but rather yields to the world as it is.

One may read this *Fu* in two ways by weighing different aspects of the piece. First, it is possible to look at the *Fu* as a definition of the snow, arrived at from three (or four) different viewpoints. The *fu* as a genre is extensive rather than intensive; it pretends to completeness. If the *fu* is to exhaust its topic, it must go beyond the simple descriptive *fu* to incorporate the lyric, personal reaction of the song and the philosophical standpoint of the envoi. Each of these occupies a necessary position towards a complete understanding of the snow. Moreover, in addition to the external viewpoints of the three poets, an internal viewpoint is provided by the snow itself.

At the close of the Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju *fu* there is the feeling that something more needs to be said, that the *Fu* must go beyond itself to achieve its goals. Tsou Yang offers to compose a "closing piece" (1.102), but he feels he must "continue" with still another song. After that an envoi is needed. The way in which these last three pieces

are set in the narrative implies that they are something extra, that the *fu* was the main event, but that there were other interpretations which needed expression.

From the above, we may consider the "Snow Fu" as a comment on the *fu* genre. A genre which strives for completeness must constantly go beyond itself to achieve that purpose. The narrative unity, described earlier, is created to hold together the new elements which must be brought in. The *Fu* runs the gamut of emotions and brings in different genres. Every aspect which the poet can imagine is included to form a total description of the single topic, the snow.

A second approach to the *Fu* is to see it in the tradition of the debate *fu*. In this case there is also an attempt at definition, but unlike the preceding interpretation, there are correct and incorrect viewpoints. The crux of this interpretation lies in the envoi by Mei Ch'eng which seems to answer earlier parts of the *Fu*

Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju is made melancholy in the closing section of the *fu*, contrasting his own loneliness to the snow's playfulness; Tsou Yang's lovers delight in it and resent the thought of its passing. Mei Ch'eng answers that the snow has no connection with any of these emotions; it is purely passive. Moreover, the tone of the envoi is neutral and impersonal in contrast to the intensity and exuberance of the songs and the *fu*. Midway through the envoi, the snow enters the poem as if to *affirm* that Mei Ch'eng's interpretation of it is the correct one. Though human beings may see it in fantastic forms and react to it with intense emotion, it itself is "without cares" (11.136-137), emotionally neutral.

On another level, the envoi demonstrates the proper, philosophical attitude to the prince, remonstrating with his delight in the sensuality of Tsou Yang's songs. This echoes the original suasive purpose of the *fu* genre. Thus as in the *Ch'i-fa*, the ruler is led out of his depression (in the case of the *Ch'i-fa*, actual sickness) through the gamut of emotions into delight, and finally to morality. It is significant that the Mei Ch'eng who is supposedly delivering the envoi is the actual author of the *Ch'i-fa*. Although the moral attitude here is Taoist rather than Confucian, like the Confucian moral it stands opposed to the hedonistic world of the *fu* and songs.

The first part of the envoi seems to respond to the technique of the *fu* by Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, particularly to the theme of transformations which are really a set of comparisons. The phrase "neither as good as," *wei jo* (1.123), means literally "are not like," with the fixed implication "not like, but worse than." This denies the similarities, the "likenesses," and the technique of the comparison of attributes as well. They deceive one as to the true nature of the snow, which is unlike the lightness of the bird's feather and the hardness of jade. Thus the prince is shown error of the lovers' emotions and the deceptiveness of the *fu's* technique of comparing mere resemblances.

That one can arrive at two such different interpretations attests to the richness and complexity of the "Snow Fu." By the constant interplay of motifs and moods with the shifting levels of distance and person, the reader is carried into the world of the poem, becoming himself passive like the snow. Unable to know whether the different viewpoints refute or complement one another, the reader loses his orientation, until at the end he is reading "I" which is the snow in a poem by Mei Ch'eng which is sung at a party with the Prince of Liang in a *fu* by Hsieh Hui-lien.

NOTES TO THE "SNOW FU"

[a] *Shih* 41 "North Wind":

Chill is the North Wind,
The snow falls thick—
If you love and care for me,
Take my hand and go with me.

This is from the *Airs* of Pei, rather than from those of Wei. Since Pei and Wei were adjoining states, we may presume that Hui-lien is using the larger state of Wei as representing the entire region. Notice how the situation here looks forward to that of the end of the *fu* and the Tsou Yang songs.

[b] *Shih* 210 "True, South Mountain":

The high heavens are covered with clouds,
The snow comes down thickly.

[c] *Mencius* I.ii.4 mentions a Snow Palace belonging to King Hsüan of Chi', Ch'i being the "Eastern State" referred to.

[d] This is T'ien Shan, "Heaven Mountain."

[e] *Shih* 167 "Gathering Bracken":

Of old when I (we) went,
The willows were soft and delicate.
Today I (we) come (back),
The snow falls heavily.

Traditionally this poem was believed to have been written when King Wen of Chou, then only the Duke of Chou, undertook an expedition against the western tribes. Hsieh Hui-lien seems to be attributing the song to Wen himself.

[f] *The Tale of King Mu, Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*, c.5 tells how, during one of the king's periods of not travelling, there was a great snow causing suffering among his people. Blaming himself for this, King Mu wrote three songs, the first of which goes in part:

I went to the yellow bamboo,
They bore and blocked the cold.
. . .
I shall be ruler of my ten thousand people,
And not forget them day and night.

There is a lacuna in the second line which makes interpretation uncertain.

[g] The "Satire Fu," *Feng Fu*, supposedly by Sung Yü (*Ch'üan Shang-ku San-tai wen*, c.10.2b-.3a) mentions that Sung Yü sang two songs "Hidden Orchid" and "White Snow" to King Hsiang of Ch'u's palace ladies.

[h] *Shih* 150 "Mayfly" contains the line "Linen robes like snow."

[i] "Darkness" is literally "the musical mode of (the season of) darkness" *Hsüan-lü*. Musical modes were associated with set times of the year. "Mysterious darkness" is associated with winter. Thus the phrase is an erudite way of saying the depths of winter, the twelfth month.

[j] The commentator Li Shan duly cites references and gives explanations for this series of hot springs, volcanic fissures, and the scorching winds. However, it is unclear to what extent these are specific place names rather than generic terms, and their use here is clearly evocative rather than specific.

[k] *The Tale of King Mu*, c.6 mentions that King Mu built a "Layered Jade Terrace" for his favorite concubines.

[l] The "Candledragon" is a legendary creature which dwells in the sunless north. By opening his eyes he lights up the region, and by closing them he brings back the dark.

[m] The Hsiang is a river of South China, while Wu designates the region of southeast China just south of the Yangtse.

Hsieh Hui-lien 謝惠連
Hsieh Ling-yün 謝靈運
Shen Yüeh 沈約
Hsieh Fang-ming 謝方明
ch'ing-po 輕薄
Ching-chi Chih 經籍志
yüeh-fu 樂府
shih 詩
Yi-wen lei-chü 藝文類聚
Wen hsüan 文選
li 麗
ts'ai-li 彩麗
ch'i-li 綺麗
fu 賦
Sung Yü 宋玉
Chia Yi 賈誼
Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju 司馬相如
Liang 梁
Han Wen-ti 漢文帝
Tsou Yang 鄒陽
Mei Ch'eng 枚乘
Shih ching 詩經
yüeh 曰
ch'en-wen 臣聞
wo 我
Ch'i 齊
T'ien Shan 天山
wan-ku 萬古
Ch'u Tz'u 楚辭
yüan 遠
hsüan 玄
P'ing-yi 馮夷
Ho-po 河伯
jo-nai 若乃
fu 撫
wei jo 未若

(Notes to "Snow Fu")

Pei 北
Wei 衛
Hsüan 宣
Mu T'ien-tzu chuan 穆天子傳
Feng fu 諷賦
hsüan-lü 玄律
Li Shan 李善
Hsiang 湘
Wu 吳