Li Ho's Poetry
THROUGH TRANSFORMATIONAL-GENERATIVE GRAMMAR

Li Wen-Pin

李　文　彬

(作者為本校西語系教授)

摘　要

本文爲涉及兩個學科——文學與語言學——之比較研究，目的在經由語言學中的衍生變形語法理論 (Transformational-Generative Grammar) 探討李賀詩的特質。本文分三部份：㈠就衍生變形語法中的語言創造本能論解釋李賀的「怪誕」詩風；㈡以衍生變形語法中的表層、裏層結構分析李賀詩中句法上的模稜現象；㈢就衍生變形語法對歧義句的析論研討李賀詩裏的反常詩法。結論中指出衍生變形語法理論已漸爲西方學者應用於文學批評，而本文爲將其應用於中國古典詩批評之初步嘗試。

Transformational-Generative grammar (henceforth, T-G grammar), ever since its establishment in 1957 when Noam Chomsky published his now famous book *Syntactic Structures,*[1] has been gradually introduced into the study of literature. It has, in effect, injected into the style-study, or stylistics, a great deal of vitality. I have surveyed and discussed in my book, *Literature through Transformational-Generative Grammar,* the achievements made by T-G grammarians in the field of stylistics.[2] The present study is an attempt to apply what I have described in that book to the interpretation of the works of a Chinese poet. I am not the first person to discuss Chinese poetry in terms of T-G grammar. Mei Tsu-lin 梅祖麟 makes the initial move by applying it to the study of the ambiguity of T'ang poetry.[3] He has not, however, touched upon the works of Li Ho 李賀 (791-817).

In Chinese poetic tradition, Li Ho has long been regarded as a unique and odd figure in that he shows a peculiar and unconventional way of choosing and arranging linguistic elements. His style, the so-called *Ch'ang-chi* style 長吉體 ,[4] thus strikes the reader as strange, weird, or even exotic.[5] This is, however, precisely theare son why I am interested in studying Li Ho's poetry in terms of T-G grammar.

For it is usually in the poets with distinctive style that T-G grammar makes the most remarkable show. An approach to Li Ho's poetry through T-G grammar may prove effective in throwing new light on his stylistic traits. In the following analysis, I will explore the relevance of some general and basic principles of T-G grammar to the study of Li Ho's poetic style. To be more exact, three principles – the idea of innate language capacity, the theory of different levels of sentence structure, and the notion of grammaticalness – will be singled out as critical apparatuses to interpret the creative power, syntactic ambiguity, and deviant expressions as manifested in Li Ho's poetry.

I

One of the basic differences between T-G grammar and other linguistic schools, particularly the structuralist, lies in their different views of language acquisition. The structuralist proposes that a child learns the language of his society according to the stimulus-response model. That is, the child constantly receives linguistic stimuli, and at the same time associates what he has received with situations that call them forth. In this sense, language acquisition is a process of memorizing and repeating utterances that a child has learned. But T-G grammarians believe that the stimulus-response model leaves a lot of human language ability unexplained. For one thing, it cannot account for the fact that a child is capable of understanding and even producing sentences which he has never heard before. From this, it is clear that the stimulus-response model forms but a part of the picture of language acquisition. The other part, according to T-G grammarians, may have much to do with the competence of language creativity innate in human beings. As Noam Chomsky observes:

> The most striking aspect of linguistic competence is what we may call the "creativity of language," that is, the speaker's ability to produce new sentences, sentences that are immediately understood by other speakers although they bear no physical resemblance to sentences which are "familiar."[6]

In other words, the child does not have to learn all the sentences in order to be able to speak the language. In fact he has only a limited number of learning experiences; the utterances he has learned or memorized are far from sufficient for him to express himself. What he has been actually doing is to try to acquire, from his limited learning experience, a finite inventory of basic elements of language – sounds, words, or phrases – and certain rules of combining these

elements into "grammatical" sentences. Viewed from this point, the development of language competence depends not so much upon memorizing and repeating the utterances he has heard, as upon an innate capacity of language creativity.

This theory of T-G grammar about the creativity of language happens to support the emphasis on creativity in literature. "By popular definition," as G. N. Leech observes, "literature is the creative use of language."[7] As a matter of fact, the child who tries to learn a language and the writer who tries to create literary works are in quite similar situations. The child has a number of learning experiences which enable him to produce new utterances when he faces new events. In the same manner, the writer has to create new expressions, on the basis of his literary tradition, for new experiences or new responses to common experiences which his predecessors have never had before. The greatness of a writer of literature lies exactly in this demonstration of creativity.[8]

Judged from this angle, Li Ho's weird and odd style may be the hallmark of his power of creativity. It seems that he did not want to follow in the footsteps of others, and aimed to create a unique artistic world which no one had attempted before. Li Ho's uniqueness is recorded in his official biography in the *Chiu T'ang shu* 舊唐書：

> His [Li Ho's] verse delights in the extraordinary. Everything he wrote was startlingly outstanding, breaking with accepted literary tradition. None of his contemporaries could follow him in this.
>
> 〔李賀〕辭尚奇詭，所得皆驚邁，
> 絕去翰墨畦逕，當時無能效者。[9]

Li Ho's break with accepted literary tradition might have much to do with his frustration in seeking high office in the traditional bureaucracy.[10] It is a calculated experiment with language for the purpose of expressing his sharp and unique response to his frustration in life. As language is the chief and the most effective means by which human feelings and thoughts are conveyed, the poet must rely heavily on language if he is to convey his feelings and thoughts at all. But old and conventional expressions become stale by repetitive use, and lose most of their expressiveness. Therefore a poet must constantly weigh the potentiality, intensity, and flexibility of the language he uses in order to select the words, syntax and organization most appropriate for the conveyance of his unique feelings and thoughts. This is exactly what Li Ho did:

Every day at dawn he would leave the house riding a colt, followed by a servant-lad with an antique tapestry bag on his back. When inspiration struck him, he would write the verses down and drop them in the bag. He never wrote poems on a given topic, forcing his verses to conform to the theme, as others do. At nightfall he would go home and work these verses into a finished poem. If he was not blind drunk or in mourning, every day was spent like this. Once he had written a poem he did not greatly care what became of it. His mother used to have her maid rummage through the bag and when she saw that he had written so much she would exclaim angrily: "This boy of mine won't be content until he has vomited out his heart."[11]

每旦日出，騎弱馬，從小奚奴，背古錦囊，遇所得，書投囊中。未始先立題然後爲詩，如他人牽合程課者。及暮歸，足成之。非大醉、弔喪日率如此。過亦不甚省。母使婢探囊中，見所書多，卽怒曰：「是兒要嘔出心乃已耳。」

The result of this conscious and painstaking effort is a corpus of poetry which strikes one as weird and odd.

But the most important question is whether or not Li Ho's weird and odd style is adequate enough to express his unique response to what happened around him. The answer is positive. For example, Li Ho suffered from serious illness which eventually culminated in his untimely death at the age of twenty-seven.[12] Owing to his poor health, he revealed a marked obsession with the passage of time. He seemed to have been always aware of "Time's winged chariot hurrying near." In Chinese poetry the concern about time usually leads to a *carpe diem* theme which urges a hedonic enjoyment of life, or a yearning for the Taoist immortality which demands a complete oblivion of human society. Li Ho's obsession with time is uniquely keen, and his way to express it is accordingly unique:

They bid us farewell at the ferry, singing "Water flows,"
Wind chills the drunkard's spines, South Mountain dies.

津頭送別唱流水，
酒客背寒南山死。[13]

How many times have Ethereal Immortals been buried in Heaven?
The drip of the water-clock, day after day, goes on without pause.

幾回天上葬神仙，
漏聲相將無斷絕。 (p. 166)

The phrass " 南山死 " (South Mountain dead) and " 葬神仙 " (Immortals buried) are definitely new combinations of linguistic features. " 南山 " and " 神仙 ," as symbols of immortality in the tradition of Chinese poetry, cannot be "dead" or "buried." They are, thus, incompatible with the conventional ideas of death and burial. But the incompatibility as revealed in Li Ho's two freshly-coined phrases conveys a profound sense of the inevitability of time passing, unsurpassed by any conventional expressions usually found in Chinese poetry.

Li Ho has been frequently compared with John Keats.[14] This comparison is not made without reasons. For one thing, both of them are young poets who indulge themselves more in sensuous expressions than in metaphysical contemplations. Li Ho's sensuousness can be adequately seen in the poem below:

> I hack away at their green lustre, to inscribe my Songs of Ch'u.
> Over perfumed oils and spring powder, the black ink flows luxuriantly.
> Passionless, yet full of bitterness – who will ever gaze upon them?
> Weighed down with dew, mourning in mist, a million branches.[15]
>
> 斫取青光寫楚辭，
> 膩香春粉黑離離；
> 無情有恨何人見，
> 露壓煙啼千萬枝 (p. 89).

Here Li Ho related his feeling when he was writing the Songs of Ch'u on the stems of bamboo. To appreciate the poem, all our five senses are called for: the phrases " 青光 " (green lustre) and " 黑離離 " (luxariantly black) appeal to our eyes; the words " 膩 " (oily) and " 香 " (perfumed) cater to our taste and smell; the expressions " 露壓 " (weighed down with dew) and " 煙啼 " (mourning in mist) are tactile and auditory appeals. The whole poem seems to be a sensory embodiment which forces itself to our perceptive organs. The sorrow implied in the third line is greatly intensified by these sensuous appeals. We not only know the sorrow of the poet, but also feel it. This rich sensousness is seldom, if ever, found in traditional Chinese poetry.

The phrases " 青光 " and " 黑離離 " lead us to another instance in which Li Ho's creativity is demonstrated: his use of color images. Almost all critics of Li Ho have noted his special fondness for colors, especially the color of white.[16] But none of them has pointed out that the way Li Ho uses color images is unprecedented and thus unique. The following two observations may serve as evidence to make clear Li Ho's creativity in this respect.

First, in T'ang poetry, color images usually appear in parallel couplets; for example:

The blue mountain stretches on the northern border of the city,
The green river winds around the eastern area of the city.

青山橫北郭，
綠水繞東城。

As the sun sets, the river and the lake become white,
When the tide comes, the heaven and the earth are blue.

日落江湖白，
潮來天地清。[17]

With Li Ho, the situation is different: color images may show up at any positions of the poem. We have seen "青光" and "黑離離" appear in different positions in the poem quoted above. Let us see some more examples:

Flying fragrance and running reds fill the sky with spring,
Colorful dragons coil and writhe up to the purple clouds.

飛香走紅滿天春，
花龍盤盤上紫雲。 (p. 136)

Mountains stretch towering in the distance,
Crumbling greens sadly fall to the ground.

Rocks dissolve, forming winding caves,
At the scented tracks the old reds sway drunkly.

遙巒相壓疊，頹綠愁隨地。

層團爛洞曲，芳徑老紅醉。 (p. 129)

Color images are found in the above three couplets, of which none is parallel in structure. Examples like these indeed run throughout Li Ho's poems. This wide and free employment of colors may be due to the fact that the frequency of colors appearing in Li Ho's poems is much higher than in the works of other T'ang poets.[18] As a result, color images cannot be all properly accommodated in parallel couplets; they must be shared by other lines of the poem. Whatever the reason may be, this wide and free employment of colors reflects Li Ho's boldness to break away with conventional rules.

Second, the colors used in T'ang poetry usually serve to specify or intensify certain qualities pertaining to the objects which the colors modify.[19] Take, for

example, the images "青山" (blue mountains) and "綠水" (green rivers) quoted above. The colors of "青" (blue) and "綠" (green) are qualities usually associated with mountains and rivers. The colors have not, in effect, added anything new to the objects they modify. They only pinpoint the visual appeals innate in the objects. Li Ho, however, does not always adhere to this convention. More often than not, the colors he uses are not qualities usually associated with the objects they modify. In the line "　花龍盤盤上紫雲," we have dragons which are "colorful" and clouds which are "purple." We do not know the exact color of the dragon, but in common usage dragons can be golden, blue, yellow, or black, but never "colorful" (花). And clouds in Chinese poetry are seldom specified as purple. This unconventional use of colors is responsible to a great extent for the exotic and strange atmosphere which pervades Li Ho's poetry.

Li Ho sometimes carries his experiment with colors one step further. Instead of pinpointing the visual appeal of an object, he makes the visual appeal stand for the object, and then attributes to it an unusual quality. We have in the lines quoted above several images of this kind: "走紅" (running reds), "頹綠" (crumbling greens), and "老紅" (old reds). The colors of red and green here are visual appeals representing respectively flowers and leaves. The modifying words "走" (running), "頹" (crumbling), and "老" (old) are definitely not qualities pertaining to the colors. But strangely enough, by yoking two incompatible qualities such as "走" and "紅", "頹" and "綠" together, Li Ho is able to convert something inanimate into something animate, and to charge the objective world with subjective lyricism. This remarkable practice of metaphorical extension demonostrates fully Li Ho's creative power.

The creativity of literature depends upon the bringing about of a new combination of linguistic elements for the purpose of adequate and forceful presentation of unique ideas and feelings. Just as a child has to create new sentences to convey his response to new experiences, a poet must also find new expressions for his observations of the world outside or inside himself. Sentences learned through experiences are not enough for a child to cope with all the situations he has to face; likewise conventional expressions are not adequate for a poet to deal with all the things he eccounters. It is precisely in this sense that Li Ho's weird and odd style is justifiable: he tries to create new utterances for his unique feelings and thoughts. His daring and impressive experiment with language brings out his creative power in full light. Creativity is highly emphasized in literature, and the theory of the innate capacity of language creativity advocated by T-G grammarians happens to back up this emphasis.

II

According to T-G grammar, every sentence has two levels of structure: the deep structure and the surface structure. The former preserves the basic meaning of the sentence; and the latter represents its actual form. Two utterances that are similar in surface structure may have entirely different deep structures. Take, for example, the floowing two sentenes:

> John is easy to please.
> John is eager to please.[20]

In form, these two sentences are similar. But whoever understands English knows that they are actually different. The difference lies of course in the lexical meanings of the two adjectives "easy" and "eager"; yet more basically, it is also in the different deep structures. In the former, John is the receiver of the action or the logical object of the verb "please": some unspecified persons please John, and to do so is easy. In the latter, John is the actor or the logical subject of the verb "please": John pleases some unspecified persons and is eager to do so. But in surface structure, John is the grammatical subject for both sentences.

Sometimes even a single utterance may possess two or more deep structures. Note the title of a famous short story by Wang Cheng-ho 王禎和 : " 嫁粧一牛車 ." This surface structure in effect represents two different deep structures: one is "The dowry is only an oxcart," and the other "The dowry loads a full oxcart." In this case, what we actually see is an ambiguous remark.

In speaking of ambiguity we must go to William Empson, who made the word highly cherished in modern poetic criticism. He says in his book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*:

> I propose to use the word [ambiguity] in an extended sense, and shall think relevant to my subject any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language.[21]

The phrase "alternative reactions to the same piece of language" can be interpreted, in T-G grammarians' terms, as different deep structures for the same surface structure of an utterance. Owing to the syntactic flexibility, Empsonian ambiguity can be amply found in Chinese poetry, particularly in Li Ho's poetry. But traditional Chinese critics often ignored deliberately this phenomenon,

insisting on one "correct" reaction to an ambiguous poetic line.[22] Now that our perspective of poetry has changed, we can look at poetic ambiguity in a different light. Ambiguity is often responsible for the subtle, complicated, and intense implications which a poet wants to convey to the reader. To limit an ambiguous remark to only one interpretation is an act of simplification and an ignorance of the artistic aspect of poetry. Ambiguity is one of the most salient features of Li Ho's poetry. It is mainly due to his ambiguity that so many different and even contradictory interpretations arise; it is also his ambiguity that makes J. D. Frodsham, who translates his whole poems into English, feel that his poems "defy translation."[23] In Empson's extended use of the word, ambiguity has seven types; yet I have to limit my discussion to the level of syntactic ambiguity because it is on this level that T-G grammar really has a say.

Let us take a look at another poem typical of Li Ho's style:

Mournfully chanting, I study the sighs of Ch'u.
My sick bones ache in lonely poverty.
From gazing at autumns, my hair has turned white.
Leaves on the trees moan in the wind-blown rain.
The lamp burns blue, its orchid-oil run dry,
Round its falling sparks the flying moths are dancing.
On ancient walls the dust grows thicker still,
The vagrant spirit mutters through its dreams.

咽咽學楚吟，病骨傷幽素；
秋姿白髮生，木葉啼風雨；
燈青蘭膏歇，落照飛娥舞；
古壁生凝塵，羈魂夢中語。 (p. 77)

The English rendition of the poem is from Frodsham (p. 80). Stripped of all ambiguous tincture, it can be only regarded as Frodsham's own interpretation of the original poem. What Li Ho has expressed is much more than what Frodsham has translated. In the poem Li Ho describes his frustration at the time when he was sick, poor, and living away from home. Nuances of implication that relate outer phenomena to inner sentiments are rendered possible by the syntactic flexibility. The second line, for example, is a typical ambiguous expression. The phrase "幽素" may refer to, as Frodsham's translation indicates, "lonely poverty," or to Li Ho's frustrated and melancholy feeling. Syntactic ambiguity results from the position of the verb "傷" (hurt) in the surface structure of the line. Embedded between two nouns, "傷" may serve as an intransitive verb, and

the line shows a meaning equivalent to that rendered by Frodsham. It can also be taken as a causative verb; in this case the deep structure of the line will be "Sick bones make my melancholy feeling hurt." A third possible interpretation is that the line is an inverted construction; what it really means is "Melancholy feeling hurts my sick bones."[24] Similarly, the fourth line represents at least three possible deep structures:

1. Leaves on the trees moan in the wind-blown rain.
   木葉啼於風雨之中
2. Leaves on the trees make the wind-blown rain moan.
   木葉使風雨啼
3. The wind-blown rain makes the leaves on the trees moan.
   風雨使木葉啼

How do we detect these deep structures from a single surface structure? The answer is that the language used in traditional Chinese poetry is terse and flexible: certain words can be deleted, and the word-order can be changed. The deleted words that are related to syntactic formation may have something to do with time and place (e.g. ;) or with causativity ( ). In interpreting a line of poetry, we must take account of these possible deletions, and try to restore the deleted words. Note that in the deep structures above we have restored several words which are delected in the surface structure " ." In this sense, a surface structure is developed from a deep structure after the latter goes through certain simple or complicated transformations. Take the above three deep structures for example:

1. 木葉啼於風雨之中 —Deletion transformation (delete the place indicators)→ 木葉啼風雨。

2. 木葉使風雨啼 —Deletion transformation (delete the causative auxiliary 使)→ 木葉風雨啼 —Inversion transformation→ 木葉啼風雨。

3. 風雨使木葉啼 —Deletion transformation→ 風雨木葉啼 —Inversion transformation→ 木葉啼風雨。

By specifying the transformations that convert the deep structures into surface structures, the T-G grammarian is able to account for the syntactic ambiquity

of a poetic line. Similar ambiguous constructions fill the pages of Li Ho's poetry:

老兎寒蟾泣天色 (p. 46).
衰蕙愁空園 (p. 51).
駿骨折西風 (p. 70)
花光變涼節 (p. 135)

All the lines above, as Frodsham says, "defy translation," because the ambiguous overtones cannot be aptly represented in translations. The positions of the verbs underlined make the lines possible for ambiguous interpretations. And furthermore, these verbs – "泣" (wail), "愁" (depress), "折" (break), "變" (change), plus the two in the quoted poem, "傷" (hurt) and "啼" (moan) – all are Li Ho's favorite words. They reveal unmistakably a sick and frustrated young man's pessimistic view of life. Their appearances in the lines are supposed to specify the actions of the objects put before or after them. But they are so charged with the poet's subjective feeling that we cannot be sure whether the lines are objective representations of the outside world or subjective presentations of the poet's inner world. This ambiguous effect owes a great deal to the syntactic ambiguity of the lines.

Syntactic ambiquity can be also seen in the line below:

旗 濕 金 鈴 重
(Flag wet gold bell heavy) (p. 107)

The line consists of two clauses: "旗濕" (the flag is wet), and "金鈴重" (the gold bell is heavy). Since the relationship of the clauses has not been specified, the meaning of the line becomes vague. The line is thus capable of ambiguous interpretation: the surface structure of the line represents at least three deep structures:

旗濕且金鈴重
The flag is wet and the gold bell is heavy.
旗濕之時，金鈴重
When the flag is wet, the gold bell is heavy.
因爲旗濕，所以金鈴重
Because the flag is wet so the gold bell becomes heavy.

Since all the three interpretations are possible, ambiguity results. Let us see

some similar examples:

玉 冷 紅 絲 重
(Jade cold red silk heavy)
夜 遙 燈 焰 短
(Night distant lamp flame short)
星 盡 四方 高
(Stars gone sky high)

The word-for-word English equivalents show that in surface structure these three lines are identical to the line we have just discussed. They are, therefore, subject to ambiguous interpretation. One thing, however, should be noted: " 旗濕金鈴重 " can be taken as objective descriptions of some phenomena in the outside world, but the three lines quoted above are strongly tinged with the poet's subjective feelings towards the outside world. Accordingly, in accounting for the ambiguity of the lines, we should also take care of the overtones of the subjective feelings.

The line " 旗濕金鈴重 ," in fact, has a possible fourth interpretation. That is, if we treat the word "濕" not as an adjective but as a verb, the line will be differently interpreted. Now the line contains two kernel sentences: the first " 旗濕金鈴 ," and the second " 金鈴重 ." In this construction the two component sentences demonstrate marked causal relationship. The act of " 旗濕金鈴 " leads to the state of " 金鈴重 ." The line thus may be read as "The flag wets the gold bell and makes the gold bell heavy." In this case, the word "重" serves as an object complement. Now consider the following three lines:

1. 蟾光挂空秀 (p. 97).
2. 秋藜遶地紅 (p. 109).
3. 蠟光高懸照紗空 (p. 83).

In the surface structure the three lines are similar to the construction described above, and there is no doubt that "挂" (hang), "遶" (spread) and "照" (light) are verbs. But a closer scrutiny of the lines shows that the complement at the end of each line may be, in the deep structure, related to the object as well as to the subject, or even to something else. The word "秀" (beautiful) in the first line, for example, can be a modifier to " 蟾光 " (moon) or to "空" (sky); the word "紅" (red) in the second may serve to modify " 秋藜 " (goosefoots) or

"地" (earth). The third line is even more troublesome: The word "空" (empty) may refer to "紗" (gauze) or to "蠟光" (candle). But these references do not seem semantically plausible. Possibly it refers to the emptiness and loneliness of a place where the high-hanging candles shine through the gauze curtain. In other words, each of the above three lines represents two or more deep structures, and is therefore capable of ambiguous interpretations.

It must be pointed out that in the employment of syntactic ambiguity Li Ho is not unique; other T'ang poets reveal the same predilection.[25] But Li Ho resorts to ambiguous expressions so persistently that we are left with the impression that he relies heavily on ambiguity to present his response to life. With its theory of different levels of syntactic structure, T-G grammar is able to contribute, as we have shown, to the analysis of Li Ho's ambiguous utterances.

III

Every linguistic theory, in the final analysis, must bring forth and dwell upon the idea of grammaticalness. T-G grammar is no exception. Chomsky himself has offered the following sentences for the purpose of expounding the notion of grammaticalness:

1. Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
2. Golf plays John.
3. The boy may frighten sincerity.
4. Misery loves Company.
5. They perform their leisure with diligence.[26]

For Chomsky, these sentences, though grammatical in syntactic structures, seem unacceptable in ordinary discourse. They are only deviant sentences for they "break selectional rules."[27]

The so-called selectional rules, according to Chomsky, are the rules that restrict the environments in which linguistic components can appear.[28] In the ordinary use of language, the semantic ties that bind together the subject noun and the main verb, the adjective modifier and the modified noun are very strong. For instance, in Chomsky's sentences 1, 2, and 4, the verbs – "sleep," "play," and "love" – all demand animate nouns in their subject positions; in sentences 3 and 5, the verbs – "frighten" and "perform" – require respectively animate and concrete nouns in their object positions; and in sentence 1, the abstract noun "ideas" may not take color adjectives. Since the sentences above have not

observed these selectional rules, they will be taken as deviant sentences.

Deviant sentences, though unacceptable in ordinary discourse, tend to occur very often in poetry. For instance, Chomsky's sentence "Colorless ideas sleep furiously" is not far away from the type of expressions we often encounter in poetic language, such as William Blake's "Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity."[29] The so-called "poetic license" refers exactly to the poet's liberty with language rules. For some special effect or purpose, the poet distorts the rules or simply ignores them, and writes completely in his own way.

How shall we, then, deal with the deviant expressions that frequently appear in poetry? For the T-G grammarian, the way is simple: to interpret them in comparison with some well-formed or grammatical constructions.[30] In the caurse of comparison, not only can we understand what is actually said in the deviant expressions, but we also gain some extra dimension of meaning which we can never get in the well-formed expressions. A famous deviant phrase frequently cited by T-G grammarians is Dylan Thomas' "a grief ago."[31] If we set up the frame "a . . . ago," we can easily fill the empty space with temporal nouns like "while," "year," "week," "minute," etc., but the noun "grief" is certainly not available for selection in this position. Thomas has thus created a deviant expression. However, by comparing it with well-formed expressions like "a minute ago," "a week ago" and "a year ago," we sense that "grief" in the deviant expression "a grief ago" has acquired a new dimension of meaning. It seems that time is measured not only by minutes, weeks, and years, but by the intensity of "grief" also.

Li Ho is probably the Chinese poet who breaks selectional rules most frequently. Deviant expressions abound in his poems and contribute a great deal to his weird and odd poetic style. In describing bad weather, for instance, Li Ho says, "Brandished swords will not cut through the foggy sky" (揮刀不入迷濛天) (p. 148). This is a metaphorical extension, or to use T-G grammarian's phrase, a deviant expression. The action of the sword – cut through (入) – demands something solid as its object. The void sky is definitely not qualified. But how sharply and adequately the density or thickness of the fog is conveyed by this metaphorical or deviant expression!

Li Ho is really a master of metaphorical or deviant expressions. This can be testified by some of his famous lines which lovers of poetry and literary critics have often quoted:

The stream of clouds between silver shores imitates the sound of water.
銀浦流雲學水聲 (p. 53).
The sound of a flute blows the sun color.
蕭聲吹日色 (p. 108).
Lamp-flowers smile at night, congealing dark and light.
紅花夜笑凝幽明(p. 52).

Many more lines can be added to the list. Since they have been repeatedly discussed by critics,[32] we will concentrate our attention instead on Li Ho's unique treatment of reduplicative phrases (*tieh-tzu* 疊字).

We have seen a couple of his reduplicative phrases – " 離離 " and " 盤盤 " – in the lines previously quoted. Li Ho indeed makes such an extensive and even unrestrained use of reduplicative phrases that a Ch'ing critic, Ch'iu Hsiang-sheng 丘象升 , raises a protest: "Li Ho was not good at using reduplicative phrases; . . . not only is his performance unable to compare with that shown in *Shih ching*, but also far inferior to that of Tu Fu" (李賀不善用雙字…非維不及葩經〔詩經〕亦不逮老杜遠矣).[33] From the viewpoint of Chinese poetic tradition, Ch'iu may be right. But modern readers will be fascinated by the following uses of reduplicative phrases:

嗷嗷鬼母秋郊哭 (p. 44).
露花飛飛風草草 (p. 51).
玉爐炭火香鼕鼕 (p. 51).

To translate the above lines into English is to lose the subtlety which the reduplicative phrases carry. Therefore we will not translate them; the meaning of the lines, nevertheless, will be made clear in our discussion. We quote the lines deliberately in the sequence of increasing deviancy. The first reduplicative phrase " 嗷嗷 " is an onomatopoeia, mimicking the sound of a mother-ghost (鬼母) wailing in the autumn wilds. But " 嗷嗷 " is usually associated with wild geese.[34] It seems that in Li Ho's fantasy ghosts moan like wild geese which soar high in the sky; when we are attracted by their wailing sounds and try to trace them, they fly away and disappear. The unearthly and esoteric nature of the ghost is thus vividly evoked by this reduplicative phrase.

The second example involves two reduplicative phrases. The first one causes no troubles, but the second, a few. What on earth is the meaning of " 風草草 "? Compared with conventional expressions such as " 風蕭蕭 " or " 風呼呼 ," the phrase " 草草 " must refer to certain condition of the wind.

Tseng Yi 曾益 proposes that " 草草 " describes the roughness of the blowing wind.[35] This annotation, though possible and appropriate, has not taken care of the subtlety of the line. " 草," as a noun, means grass. Its appearance together with drops of dew (露花) in the same line conjures up naturally a mental picture of the grass attached with drops of dew. The line, therefore, describes the hard blowing wind which makes the drops of dew flying from the grass. In Tseng's annotation, two natural objects are involved: the drops of dew that are flying around, and the wind which is blowing hard. A possible reference to grass, which grows out of the reduplicative phrase, is added in our interpretation. In other words, the deviant expression " 風草草 " describes not only the roughness of the wind, but also the passage of the rough wind over grass. By using the reduplicative phrase " 草草 " as a modifier of the word " 風 ", Li Ho is able to make the phrase specify certain state of the wind, and at the same time retain the original meaning of the word " 草."

The third example, " 玉爐炭火香鼛鼛 ," contains rich sensory appeals. Four of our sense organs are needed in order to appreciate the line. " 玉爐炭火 " are visual and tactile images; " 香 " appeals to our smell; and " 鼛鼛," an onomatopoeia for the sound of drums, is an auditory appeal. Li Ho's deviant treatment of the reduplicative phrase is obvious. Fragrance (香), as a smell, cannot produce sounds as a drum does. It demands modifiers usually associated with smell; " 鼛鼛 " is certainly not one among them. Thus " 香鼛鼛 " constitutes a deviant expression. Here Li Ho breaks a certain selectional rule by yoking two incompatible linguistic elements together. But this expression can be easily understood as an analogy to a well-formed expression, such as " 香噴噴." In the deviant expression, " 香 " still preserves the meaning which we understand in ordinary language; but meanwhile, being modified by " 鼛鼛," it extends itself to a new semantic area which it never dares to transgress in ordinary speech. Fragrance is now understood not only as a pleasant smell, but also as a provoking sound that forcefully draws our attention.

Li Ho's deviant treatment of reduplicative phrases is evident in his poem. Let us have some more examples:

啾啾赤帝騎龍來 (p. 50).
蘭臉別春啼脈脈 (p. 149).
秋白遙遙空 (p. 105).
馬蹄白翩翩 (p. 104).

All the underlined reduplicative phrases break, more or less, certain selectional rules. To understand them, as T-G grammarians tell us, involves a comparison of them with similar but well-formed expressions. And the comparison is worthwhile; the deviant utterances reveal new dimensions of meaning which the similar but well-formed expressions cannot have. We feel that something voiceless and static is converted into something voiced and dynamic, and what is simple and plain becomes what is complicated and subtle.

When a poet frequently breaks, as Li Ho does, selectional rules, it is reasonable to assume that such rule-breakings are done with deliberation and not out of carelessness. The poet chooses deviant expressions for certain well calculated effects. The function of a normal expression, as T-G grammarians see it, is simply to allow the reader to recover the meaning preserved in the deep structure. The surface deviancy in a line of poetry, however, may serve a double function. It allows the reader to recover the meaning preserved in the deep structure, and at the same time affords him, through the act of analogy or comparison, something unexpected. What T-G grammarians want to do is to describe the deviancy and to point out its effect.

To read Li Ho's poetry is an enjoyment as well as a challenge: an enjoyment because it opens for us a new world of poetic grandeur; a challenge in that we constanly face the problem of how to explore this new world. The ways of exploration, of course, are many; but T-G grammar, with its insights into language, may prove especially effective in revealing a corner of the new world – Li Ho's poetic style which has fascinated and puzzled so many readers. In the foregoing study, we have tried to show how Li Ho's creativity, ambiguity, and deviancy, manifested in his style, can be accounted for in terms of T-G grammar. This endeavor, we hope, will facilitate further explorations into the poetic world created by Li Ho.

Notes

1. Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1957). Since the publication of this book, Chomsky's grammar has gone under various terms: Generative, Transformational, Generative-Transformational, and Transformational-Generative. The terms are not quite all the same although they are often used almost interchangeably. The last term in the list is used here for its broad coverage of Chomsky's theory.
2. (Taipei: The liberal Arts Press, 1978).
3. "Ambiguity in Grammar and in Poetry," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology,*

Academia Sinica, xxxix (1969), 83-123.

4. The term *Ch'ang-chi* style is rather vague; it usually refers to some, not all, of Li Ho's poems, which contain unconventional syntax and imagery; cf. Chou Ch'en-chen 周誠眞 , *Li Ho lun* 李賀論 (Hong Kong: Wen-i shu-wu, 1971), pp. 208-215.
5. This view runs through the sixty short criticisms on Li Ho's poetry made by traditional chinese scholars; see Chen Hung-chih 陳弘治 , *Li Ch'ang-chi ko-shih chiao-shih* 李長吉歌詩校釋 (Taipei: Chia-hsin Cultural Foundation, 1969), pp. 308-5.
6. Chomsky, *Topics in the Theory of Generative Grammar* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966), p. 10.
7. G. N. Leech, "Linguistics and the Figures of Rhetoric," in *Essays on Style and Language,* ed. Roger Fowler (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 136.
8. Cf. Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation: A Study of the Conscious and Unconscious in Science and Art* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1964), p. 380.
9. *Chiu T'ang shu,* punctuated edition (Taipei: Ting-wen shu-chu, n.d.), p. 5788. The English equivalent is from J. D. Frodsham, *The Poems of Li Ho* (oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. xvi.
10. Because the word 晉 (chin) in his father's name was homophonic with the 進 (chin) in the 進士 *(chin-shih)* examination, Li Ho was deprived of the opportunity to sit for the examination. The homophones constituted a name taboo in T'ang times. For details, see Frodsham, pp. xixxxii.
11. *Chiu T'ang shu,* p. 5788; Frodsham's translation, p. xvi.
12. Li Ho's complaints about his ill health are found throughout his verse; we will see some of them in the poems to be discussed below.
13. See *San chia p'ing-chu Li Ch'ang-chi Ko shih* 三家評註李長吉歌詩 (Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chu, 1959), p. 49. This book includes notes of Li Ho's poems made by Wang Ch'i 王琦 (preface 1760), Fang Shih-chü 方世擧 (preface 1751), and Yao Wen-hsieh 姚文燮 (preface 1657). This book will be cited throughout, and further page numbers referring to this book appear in the text. English equivalents of this quotation and the following one are from Frodsham, p. 36; p. 243.
14. Cf. David Y. Chen, "Li Ho and Keats: A Comparative Study of Two Poets" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1962); Liu Ts'ang-lang 劉滄浪 , "Li Ho yü Keats shih-chung te Anacreon se-ts'ai 李賀與濟慈詩中的亞奈科雷昂色彩 ," *Shih Hsüeh* 詩學 , 2 (1976), 195-298.
15. Frodsham's translation, p. 104.
16. Cf. Frodsham, pp. lvii-lxii, and Yang Wen-hsiung 楊文雄 , *Li Ho Shih yen-chiu* 李賀詩研究 (Taipei: Liberal Arts Press, 1980), pp. 137-144.
17. The first quotation is from Li Po 李白 , and the second from Wang Wei 王維 ; see *T'ang Sung shih chü yao* 唐宋詩擧要 (Taipei: Hung-yeh shu-chü, 1977), p. 457; p. 430.
18. See Yang Wen-hsiung, pp. 137-138.
19. Cf. Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin 高友工 , 梅祖麟 , "Syntax, Diction, and Imagery in T'ang Poetry," *Harvard Journal of Asiastic Studies,* xxxi (1971), 69-79.
20. These two sentences are actually given by Chomsky himself, and have been frequently quoted by other T-G grammarians for the purpose of showing the difference between the deep structures and the surface structures of sentences. See Chomsky, "The Logical Basis of Linguistic Theory," in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists,* ed. Horace Lunt (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964), p. 941.

21. (Meridian paperback edition, 1936), p. 1.
22. This traditional way of reading poetry can be clearly seen in Wang Li's 王力 famous book *Han-yü Shih-lü Hsüeh* 漢語詩律學 (Shanghai: Chiao-yu chu-pan-she, 1963).
23. See Frodsham's "Preface" to *The Poems of Li Ho.*
24. This interpretation is possible in Chinese poetry; cf. Mei Tsu-lin, pp. 93-94.
25. Cf. Mei Tsu-lin.
26. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, Mass: The M. I. T. Press, 1965), p. 149.
27. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,* p. 149.
28. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,* p. 227.
29. William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," in *Blake's Poetry and Designs* ed. M. L. Johnson & J. E. Grant (New York: W. W. Northon & Company Inc., 1962), p. 89.
30. For example, Chomsky says, "these [deviant] sentences are apparently interpreted by a direct analogy to well-formed sentences that observe the selectional rules in question." See his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,* p. 149.
31. For example, Samuel Levin has discussed this phrase; see his "Poetry and Grammaticalness," in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists,* pp. 308-14.
32. For example, Yang Wen-hsiung, pp. 171-177.
33. Cited by Chen Hung-chih, p. 192.
34. In *Shih Ching* there are two lines from which the phrase is apparently originated: 鴻雁于飛，嗷嗷哀鳴；see Ch'ü Wan-li 屈萬里，*Shih Ching shih yi* 詩經釋義 (Taipei: Hua-kang shu-chu, 1974), p. 141.
35. *Li Ho shih-chieh* 李賀詩解，included in *Li Ho shih-chu* 李賀詩註 (Taipei: Shih-chieh Book Co., 1965), p. 25.