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Regulated verse and semiotic structure: a poem by Li Shangyin (李商隱)

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Abstract: My expanded version of Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory of poetry deals essentially with modernist work. Here, I apply it to a 4-line Chinese *lü-shi* (律詩) of the Tang Dynasty, which has much formal parallelism – enquiring whether it may also have modern features. According to the theory, a modern poetic text is generated by two underlying "matricial" propositions, each of which produces a set of variant images having the same underlying semantic structure. This paradigmatic method of signifying is characteristic of modern poetry. Each matrix is reconstructed by the reader from a comparison of the images of each set. The matrices are linked syntagmatically in a variety of relations such as negation or difference of scale. The bimatricial text (subject-sign) has an intertextual counterpart (object-sign) of similar structure but different lexicon. The interpretant of these two complex signs has a sociolectic counterpart of similar lexicon but different structure. The semantic contrast thus established produces innovation, which is the other distinctive feature of modern poetry. Our lü-shi turns out to have a bimatricial semiotic structure; this raises the question of whether or not it is innovative. Could some such poems be considered "modernist"?

Keywords: matricial structure; modernism; semiotics of poetry; Tang regulated verse

1 Introduction: an expansion of Riffaterre's semiotic theory

Much of my published work since the early 1990s uses an expanded version of Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory of the structure of poetry, which in fact deals largely with the pioneers of *modern* poetry, from Hugo through Lautréamont and Mallarmé to Ponge. My expansion of it works on two levels: (a) the essential signifying structure – the matrix – has a counterpart of similar structure, so that there are two underlying propositions generating the surface images of the text; (b) the signification of the text,

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instead of stopping at the level of its intertextual model, is taken outside the boundaries of the text by the interpretant of text and intertext, which turns out to have a sociolectic counterpart, or *context*, of analogous vocabulary but contrasting structure. It is the relation between this SC and the interpretant which – in presenting the reader with a semantic contrast – produces the propositional innovation that is a distinctive feature of the modernist poetic text.

This theory has been successfully applied to a quite a large number of works – in English, French, and Japanese – indicating that its applicability may be universal (cf. Hopkins 2022 [2020]). The present essay takes up a short Chinese *lü-shi* (律詩) of the Tang dynasty, which turns out to have a bimatricial semiotic structure; this raises the question of whether or not it is innovative. Might some such poems be considered "modernist"?

2 Riffaterrian theory

According to the theory developed chiefly in Riffaterre's *Semiotics of poetry* (R.1978), the process of interpreting a modernist poem entails a search for the single underlying theme that generates the whole text: a "matricial" concept, which may consist of a single word, but always has the structure of an at least potential proposition. It never appears on the textual surface. This structure generates a set of images, the "ungrammaticality" (or catachresis) of whose surface structure signals that they are generated by an underlying proposition that represents the matrix, and which may seem to refer, as individual images, to disparate sociolectic phenomena. Riffaterrian semantic indirection can take a number of forms, which I will classify as follows: (a) metaphor, or lexical collocations that are "ungrammatical" (catachrestic) in terms of sociolectic conventions; (b) prosodic features of verse, which are often absent from prose poetry or *vers libre*; (c) syntactic and other formal parallelism.

In seeking to reconstruct the matrix, the reader may appeal to the authority of an "intertext," a structural model that may be found in other – usually pre-existing – texts or works of art (in Riffaterrian terminology, the term "structure" always has the sense of the semantic structure of an image or a matrix, which gives it its character as a poetic sign). Riffaterre himself gives the example of two variants of a shared text/intertext matrix, the first involving a camel "crossing the trackless sands of the desert," and the second involving a ship "furrowing the briny deep": both variants are built on the matricial proposition that *a trusty conveyance bears human beings across a large and dangerous expanse* (R.1984: 142).

The lexical form of the matrix is often modeled on that of a hypogram – i.e. on a phrase (often a cliché or commonplace) already existing in the sociolect, which has no necessary relation with the matrix on the level of structure. The fact that its set of

matrix-based images is thus controlled, on both the level of semiotic structure and that of lexical form, confers on the text its "monumentality" – the faculty of resistance to deformation by the reader. According to Riffaterre's initial version of the Peircean triad of signification, the interpretant of the text (as subject-sign) and intertext (as object-sign) may be a third text. In his mature theory, however, Riffaterre reverts to the classic Peircean definition: the interpretant is a proposition *given rise to in the mind of the reader* by a comparison of text and intertext (cf. R.1978: 81, R.1985: 44; *CP1*. 339, *CP2*. 228).

It is important to note that the semiotic structure of the text according to Riffaterrian theory is impervious to any influence brought to bear by the reader. The latter's contribution to the interpretive process begins with the considerable effort involved in reconstituting their common underlying structure from a comparison of the images of the textual surface (each image, as subject-sign, refers to another image, its object-sign; their interpretant, on the intra-textual level, is their common underlying propositional structure). Riffaterre terms this "retro-reading," since only after all the ungrammatical figures of the text have been taken into account – regardless of their linear order – can their underlying structure be discerned. In stressing the invulnerability of the text to any input by the individual reader, Riffaterre is only fitting his theory to the kind of material he is dealing with: the modernist text is far from laying itself open to modification by the reader. Instead – though Riffaterre does not make this point – it sets out to *change the reader's preconceptions regarding reality* (its very monumentality would seem to be essential in giving the text this power). The role of the intertext as a model is important in this regard since it overdetermines the semiotic structure of the primary text. The originality of the latter consists in its having a unique vocabulary set into a propositional framework that is generally homologous with that of an intertextual model. The Riffaterrian reader, then, requires a certain amount of intertextual background knowledge, in addition to an alertness to the existence of hypogrammatic structures that will influence his choice of vocabulary as he seeks to formulate a matrix. One might say that a Riffaterrian "literary competence" (see Culler 1975: Ch. 6) involves both a grasp of the "syntactic" rules of poetic structure according to the theory and a knowledge of the "lexicon" of intertextual and hypogrammatic material.

2.1 Binarism

Riffaterre's principle of poetic unity requires that there be a single matrix per text (see, for example, R.1978: 2, 20). Following private discussion with Riffaterre in December 1986, and for the reasons detailed below, I will insist that there are two.

2.1.1 Two matrices

In my expanded theory, the above rules become more complex in that every modern text has not one but *two* paradigmatic sets of images generated by *two* matricial propositions, linked together by a syntagmatic relation, which may be of several types: negation, difference of scale, etc.

In the course of the chapter devoted to Riffaterre in *The pursuit of signs* (Culler 1981), Jonathan Culler makes a suggestion that is very relevant to my argument in favor of this type of binarism. Observing that the Riffaterrian principle of unity requires that all the images of a poem be "variants of the same structural matrix" (R.1978: 82), Culler doubts that the semiotic structure of a poetic text is necessarily as simple as that (Culler 1981: 92–93). He prefers to say that "in many cases readings unify a poem with the aid of some elementary binary opposition," citing as an example Rimbaud's *Fêtes de la faim* (Culler 1981: 93). This "binary opposition" is evidently suggested to Culler by the analysis which Riffaterre himself initially proposes of Rimbaud's text into two sections or expansions, each generated, I would say, by a different matrix: "eating the inedible, eating the edible" (R.1978: 78).

It proves to be the case that bimatriciality, far from being the exception, is apparently a very powerful rule. Our 4-line example of Tang Chinese "regulated verse" [*lü-shi*] also happens to have bimatricial structure. The two matricial phrases will be called "MP1" and "MP2" (the latter being the more innovative, and more difficult to identify) according to my convention in Hopkins 1994. I approach Eliot's long poem from the same "bimatricial" perspective (see Hopkins 2016).

2.1.2 Intertext and sociolectic context

Even acknowledging the notion that the intertext detailed in Section 1.2 may constitute a sort of "literary context" – in its role as structural model – it is an important part of my theory that a text also possesses a context in the narrow sense mentioned above: i.e. a proposition homologous with the matricial structure of the text on the level of vocabulary. In making this proposal, I am assuming that poetry communicates, not only in relation to other texts, but also in relation to that sociolectic background – or *sociolectic context* (SC) – which the reader brings to it. For example, if the primary text compares the power of human intelligence unfavorably to the power of Nature, the sociolectic context of this message includes these same lexical elements, which, however, are not related in the same fashion as in the primary text. Thus, we have similarity on the lexical level and contrast on the structural level.

My prime reason for proposing the existence of a sociolectic context is the notion that, for the reader to be able to adequately interpret the semiotic structure of the

modernist literary work, he must first set it against the familiar structures of the semiotic framework of the sociolect within which he normally communicates.

2.1.3 Interpretant and perceptual change

In the chapter of *La structure du texte artistique* titled "Le texte et les structures artistiques extra-textuelles," the Russian semiotician Juri Lotman begins by stating that the interpretation of the work as an artistic text is possible only after the difference between artistic and non-artistic texts has been recognized (Lotman 1973, [1970]: 390–406). This recalls Riffaterre's own emphasis on the impossibility of interpreting an artistic text according to the rules of sociolectic discourse. Unlike Riffaterre, however, Lotman takes the interpretive process beyond the text: he points out that, once the text has been decoded according to the rules of the literary idiolect, the reader's previous world-view ("le vieux modèle du monde") is swept away by the "nouveau modèle plus complet du réel" (the "new, more complete, model of the real") offered by the text. Lotman calls this process "modélisation," which I translate as the "remodeling" power of the literary work. I should add that this power is characteristic of *modernist* texts.

The interpretant of the textual matricial structure (TMS) is abduced by the reader from a comparison of TMS and intertext. This interpretant will contain enough of the TMS to present to the reader a new view of the world. Subsequently, the reader projects this new world-view "not only onto the structure of his artistic experience, but also onto the structure of his experience of life," i.e., onto his sociolectic preconceptions (Lotman 1973 [1970]: 392, 396). The result will be a *change* in those preconceptions.

Umberto Eco, also, is very explicit about the power of "aesthetic texts [to] modify our concrete approach to states of the world" (Eco 1976: 275). Among literary semioticians apart from Lotman, Eco is the most explicit concerning how the relations between text and sociolect might be accounted for, without doing violence (as Barthes does, for example) to the notion of the text as an impermeable – or "monumental" – semiotic structure. Eco does not deny the importance of establishing rules governing the operation of the internal signifying system of the literary text. In his terminology, one would speak of an intensional semantics, which, he insists, should be considered a prerequisite for any extensional semantics, i.e., one that would deal with the relations between text and sociolect, which "[…] controls the correspondence between a sign-function and a given state of the world" (Eco 1979: 179).

2.2 The work of the reader

The investigative work demanded by the modern poetic text from the reader may be divided into four stages. Stage (i) consists in comparing the images belonging to a

single set in order to uncover their underlying common features as poetic signs. In the expanded theory, this stage involves two sets of matrix-generated images. Stage (ii) concerns searching for an intertextual model for the global structure of the primary text – a model which can influence the semiotic structure of the text, particularly on the syntagmatic level of the relation between the propositional structures generating each set of images. Stage (iii) is that of abducing an interpretant from a comparison of primary text and intertext. And stage (iv) consists in the search for a sociolectic context (SC), where necessary via an appeal to a continuing series of interpretive triads, the interpretant of the textual triad becoming the subject-sign of a subsequent triad, and so on. The SC is lexically similar to the final textual interpretant, but the two components of its proposition are linked *in a different way*. This difference foregrounds the uniqueness of the proposition made by the interpretant, thus bringing about a *change* in the reader's preconceptions.

Whereas, according to the deconstructivists, the text may be changed by the reader, according to the poetics of Eco (and of Lotman et al.), it is rather the reader's thinking which is changed by the text (this leaves aside the whole question of the appropriateness of deconstructivism to postmodern poetry – with which we are not concerned in this essay).

3 Analysis of "Chang-O"

For my analysis, I refer to the original Chinese text of "Chang-O" as cited in Takahashi (1976). I also provide a pinyin transcription of the text with a literal English translation and an illustration of the tone pattern (Table 1), as well as the English translation by James Liu (1969).

"Chang-O" by Li Shangyin (A.D. 813–858):

1 雲 母 屏 風 燭 影 深
2 長 河 漸 落 曉 星 沈
3 常 娥 応 悔 偸 靈 藥
4 碧 海 青 天 夜 夜 心

(Li Shangyin, cited in Takahashi 1976: 55–56, line numbering mine; horizontal layout for ease of representing the tone pattern)

James Liu provides the following English translation (Liu 1969: 99, my numbering):

1. Against the screen of 'mother-of-clouds' the candle throws its deep shadow;
2. The Long River gradually sinks, the morning star sets.
3. Ch'ang-o should regret having stolen the elixir:
4. The green sea – the blue sky – her heart every night!

Table 1: Tone pattern of "Chang-O" (varying: +/level: –) with pinyin transcription and literal English translation.

	+	+	–	–	+	+	–
1	Yun	mu	ping	feng	zhu	ying	shen
	'Cloud-	mother'	screen-	wind	candle	shadow	deep
	–	–	+	+	+	–	–
2	Zhang	he	jian	luo	xiao	xing	shen
	Long	river	gradually	descends	morning	star	sinks
	–	–	+	+	–	–	+
3	Chang	e	ying	hui	tou	ling	yao
	Chang	O	must	regret	stealing	'spirit	drug'
	+	+	–	–	+	+	–
4	Bi	hai	qing	tien	ye	ye	xin
	Green	sea	blue	sky	night	night	heart

3.1 Two separate situations in the text

It should be mentioned that "Chang'e 6" was the name given to China's spacecraft which successfully touched down on the dark side of the moon on 2 June 2024 – incidentally demonstrating the persistence of the Chang-O/Chang-e legend.

Different interpretations of Li's poem are given by James Liu and Takahashi Kazumi. In Liu, the unspecified character sitting forlornly by a screen as the stars set in lines 1–2 represents a Taoist nun with whom the narrator is romantically involved; this is cued partly by association: the moon spirit Chang-O of line 3 is the only person mentioned in the textual surface of the poem, and is of course both female and alerts the reader to the common sociolectic association between the moon and the shaven heads of nuns or priests. Li also uses Chang-O – or "Heng-O" – to represent a nun in several other poems.

Contrary to Liu, Takahashi flatly states that it is a male persona who waits all night for a girl who doesn't come, and indeed it might be a nice conceit to compare the situation of the Chang-O of legend (who stole her husband's magic elixir in his absence and was changed into the spirit of the moon) to that of a faithless woman and her male counterpart (cf. Takahashi 1976: 56). But if one takes the side of Takahashi, Li's use of the Chang-O legend to illustrate a human woman's situation will be limited to lines 3–4.

Leaving the question of which interpretation is valid until later, an initial reading suggests that there are clearly two separate situations in the semiotic structure: the human persona's lonely vigil, and the regrets imputed to Chang-O for her theft. In short, these two situations already have something like a bimatricial structure. Below I shall explain why I believe the above issue can be decided in favor

of Liu. But first I wish to investigate the role that Jakobsonian formal parallels may be thought to have in forming the poem's total semiotic structure. We shall find that they are localized in ways that prevent them from coinciding with either of our two matrices.

3.2 Formal parallels

To a Jakobsonian analyst, this text looks like a positive goldmine of formal parallels. These are enumerated below.

3.2.1 Formal parallels and semantic structure

(1) Let us look first at the rhyme-scheme: the end-rhyme of in/in in the reconstructed Tang pronunciation of lines 1, 2, and 4. Even though pronunciation has changed over time, the modern reader knows to expect rhymes in these lines (incidentally, Tang pronunciation tends to be preserved in modern Japanese). If rhyme indicates some sort of similarity on the semantic level, then the "deep" and "sunken" at the ends of lines 1 and 2 may share semes with the state of the heart at the end of line 4, i.e., the hearts of both protagonists would be "sunken" or downcast. In isolation this would be perfectly valid, and it does not contradict the larger metaphor of the whole text, in which Chang-O's situation is juxtaposed with the situation in lines 1 and 2.

(2) In addition to rhyme, the last three characters of lines 1 and 2 also have more or less parallel syntax (adj.-noun-past part.). The shared idea here is that "the night is almost over"; i.e. the "depth" of the candle's reflection indicates the lateness of the hour.

(3) (a) In addition to rhyming end-words, lines 1 and 4 have the same tone pattern, as well as basically similar syntax. There are, however, certain syntactic differences, which are detailed in 3.2.2 just below. Jakobson might go so far as to ignore these and, relying on the tone pattern plus rhyme, set up a semantic parallel of A' is to B' as A is to B ("semiotic square") configuration, which implies a semantic relation between the mica screen and the sea and sky, on one hand, and the depth of the candle-reflection and the heart, on the other (cf. Greimas 1970: 138). This would be an attractive conceit. (b) There would also be some justification for a syntactic parallel in the last three characters of each line, where "heart" could function semi-adjectivally. Tone pattern and rhyme are parallel. The common result would be to impute a connection between the moon spirit's heartache (minus the reason for her regrets) and the human lady's lonely vigil. The regrets of line 3 are key to the relation between matrices.

(4) Lines 2 and 3 both begin with two words of very similar pronunciation (including identical tone pattern). May we conclude that the "Long River" (the Milky Way) thereby takes on some of Chang-O's attributes? In any case, this is a nice example of phono-lexical parallelism: both expressions involve the night sky.

(5) The above parallel may be thought to extend to the first four characters of lines 2 and 3 on the grounds of identical tone pattern. The syntax of these two groups is almost parallel: noun phrase-adv.-verb/proper noun-aux.-verb. The semantic parallel involved, if it were allowable, would have the effect of gaining inevitability for Chang-O's regrets from the inexorable sinking of the Milky Way. But closer examination reveals that the verb is intransitive in line 2 and transitive in line 3, where we are really dealing with a verb phrase which extends to the end of line 3 ("must regret stealing spirit drug"). Thus, syntax gainsays the parallel suggested by tone.

(6) The grouping of three characters involving "sinking," etc., in lines 1 and 2 is a possibility: these have the same word-class, and also the same "water" radical, and this points the way – if pointer be needed – to their semantic common ground.

(7) Within line 2, we have a strict parallel between two adj.-noun-v.i. groups (the adverb "gradually" being a minor anomaly): "Long River [gradually] descends/ morning star sinks." On its own, the semantic correspondence thus identified is fairly simple, but the syntactic parallel is so clear that it definitely attracts the reader's attention to the location of an image: "our lady's heart sinks with the morning stars."

(8) Parallel no. 7 (l. 2) may be extended on grounds of syntax (similar adj.-noun groups plus a verb: "deep" as a past participle would be a quasi-verbal) plus the "graphic cohesion" of parallel no. 6, to include the last three characters of line 1. This would be semantically more interesting, as it could be taken to impute a connection between the movement of heavenly bodies and the human situation: their downward – i.e. negatively marked – movement, and their inevitability.

3.2.2 Problems and anomalies

It is important to note that matricial structure is *larger in scale* than the formal parallels of regulated verse.

The Jakobsonian approach of collecting the maximum number of formal parallels turns up some interesting isolated semantic correspondences. But some of these seem to conflict with each other, and none extends through the whole text. The way prosodic categories are distributed shows that they are not designed to delineate a common text-wide semiotic structure, nor a pair of structures like the two matrices

detailed in 3.3. Rhyme (parallel no. 1) links the final character of lines 1, 2, and 4, whereas tone pattern links the first four characters of lines 2 and 3 in one instance and lines 1 and 4 in the other. These three groupings between them conflict with the intuition of two matrices involving both lines 1–2 and 3–4 respectively.

The tone plus syntactic parallel of lines 1 and 4 (no. 3) comes the closest in semantic effect to this latter intuition. However, there remains the fact that there are clashes between syntactic and other categories. We have noted above the conflict between tone pattern, line position, and rhyme on one hand, and syntax on the other, in respect of "deep," "heart," and "candle-shadow" (3.2.1, 3b). As for the apparent parallel between the "mica screen" of line 1 and the "sea" and "sky" of line 4, at first sight we have two successive noun phrases – but in fact "mica" modifies "screen," whereas "sea" does not modify "sky." It is doubtful that we could avoid this problem of syntax by simply giving the tonal parallel precedence.

These formal-level contradictions are not so important if we allow formal parallels to function heuristically, and in respect of semantic parallels in the first and second parts of each line, rather than the two lines as units. In other words, without adhering to any of the formal parallels too strictly, once these have attracted the reader's attention, he notices the possibility that line 4 is a macro-scale representation of the human situation in line 1: Chang-O's nightly heartache might be seen as "reflected" – like the candle in the screen of line 1 – against the backdrop of sea and sky, a screen on a huge scale.

But although this somewhat fanciful parallel of lines 1 and 4 would not contradict our intuition of a matricial structure, neither can it account for the vital element of the regrets imputed to Chang-O, which need to be factored into the moon spirit's "heartbreak" if it is to be juxtaposed with the "deeply" embedded candle-shadow. As we shall see, the only structure which can act as a model for this larger parallel – which extends throughout the text – is intertextual. To repeat, only a parallel extending across lines 1 and 2 on the one hand and 3 and 4 on the other could explain the text-wide metaphor involving the important point of Chang-O's regrets. None of the above formal parallels – whether based on rhyme, syntax, or tone – can be said to do this. The only kind of parallel that could encompass the whole text would be syntactic: either all four lines would have to share the same syntactic pattern, or there could be two couplets of parallel syntax. The second of these two cases is not inconceivable, but it does not obtain here.

If such a global formal parallel did exist, that would tend to mean that everything in the poem is generated by a single matrix, i.e., an A' is to B' as A is to B ("semiotic square") structure would tend to point to the existence of a unimatricial underlying structure, since this type of parallel would imply a semantic parallel between its two components.

3.3 Bimatricial interpretation

3.3.1 Liu and Takahashi

The solution to the dilemma of Liu's and Takahashi's differing interpretations is supplied by an intertextual model. Takahashi gives no intertextual justification for his interpretation, whereas Liu relates this poem to a number of others in his selection.

But first things first: let us look more closely at the poem's images. Examples of anomalous use of lexemes which qualifies as Riffaterrian ungrammaticality are found, signaling indirection of expression in three lines of the text, the other line (l. 2) containing the formal parallel no. 7 (the heuristic effect of this kind of parallel is discussed in 3.2.1). In fact, as is usually the case in poems of this genre, we have an image per line. Briefly, the ungrammaticalities are the use of "deep" to modify the candle's shadow or reflection in line 1, the poet's assertion that Chang-O "must regret" her lonely isolation in the moon in line 3, and finally the unexpected use of the single character for 'heart' in line 4.

From the first line we know that someone is sitting up late at night in a rather elegant interior; the word "mother" (Liu's translation for "mica" reverses the order of the two characters "cloud-mother"), as well as semes like "delicate," "creating subtle reflections," of the material mica suggest that this is a feminine environment, *contra* Takahashi. Line 2 tells us that this someone has been waiting all night. This is plainly additional scene-setting, but here the internal syntactic parallel certainly has the effect of foregrounding the unusual use of verbs representing downward movement. The connotative affinity of these verbs with line 1's "deep" (parallel no. 6) (a) tells us that both lines belong to the same matricial environment and (b) helps explain this unusual use of "deep" by relating it to the lateness of the hour. If it were not for no. 6, line 2's parallel might indeed be semantically quite banal; but "descends" and "sinks" are already overdetermined by the semic load of the "deep" candle-reflection, and thus may act as figures for the state of the lady's heart. With line 3, there is an abrupt switch of scene and protagonist to the world of the Chang-O legend, and the reason is not clear from a mimetic reading. With its apparent novelty of regret, this line is the nearest to direct (mimetic) expression in the whole poem. That the explanation is an affair of the heart is hinted at by the obtrusive use of that word at the end of the last line; the expression "green sea blue sky" tells us that this is indeed the macro-environment of the moon goddess's lonely exile, as opposed to the human micro-environment of lines 1–2.

We should note that the lady waiting alone is an *understood subject* in line 2. In line 4, the word "heart" is foregrounded by coming as the final word of the poem. This

is reflected in Liu's translation of line 4: "her heart every night" (cf. 2.3). Line 2 and line 4 are thus secondary images generated by Matricial Phrase 1 and MP2, which are based on lines 1 and 3, respectively. So, even in this short poem, we have two images per matrix – a pair for each textual situation.

3.3.2 One matrix or two? Intertextual evidence

The change of protagonist in line 3 is the most obvious clue to the existence of two matrices. Also, it seems plain from the above that we have two image-generated environments: that of the woman waiting alone until late at night, and that involving Chang-O and her regrets. Each line contains a single image, the first two being generated by the first matrix, and the last two by the second matrix. At one point Liu puzzlingly talks of the poet's representation of the mythological scene as if the imagery of the first two lines is part of it. Line 2 obviously could be, but the candle in line 1 (plainly an item of a human interior) does not fit this "unimatricial" scenario. Liu was perhaps influenced by the formal parallels described in 3.2.1 (no. 3a), for example, the possibility that the mica screen has something in common semantically with the expanse of sea and sky. Indeed, if the whole poem were nothing more than a representation of Chang-O's loneliness, then it could have a unimatricial structure. But this would of course conflict not only with Liu's own summation of its structure, but also with all the intertextual evidence ("Chang-O" is poem no. 28 in Liu 1969: 99.)

If the "domestic environment" semes in "mica screen" and "candle" are not enough to dissuade the reader from a unimatricial interpretation, the existence of a number of other poems by Li comparing a human woman's situation with that of Chang-O should convince. Particularly apposite is poem no. 35 in Liu's selection of works, the title of which is *Again to the Sung Sisters of Hua-Yang Temple, on a Moonlit Night*. This poem also likens Chang-O's isolated situation to that of the nuns in their temple; the first line tells all: "Stealing the peaches and pilfering the elixir cannot both be done." The former expression is a common Li euphemism for clandestine love, and the latter alludes to the inaccessibility of someone committed to the monastic life (via the legend of Chang-O's exile in the moon as a result of her theft). The message is that *shutting yourself away in a temple (like Chang-O on the moon) is going to make you miss a lot of fun*. This is corroborated in Liu (1969: 106). The nun is obviously being chided for her inaccessibility. The two situations are very similar to those in our poem, and the relation between them – the "intermatricial relation" – is the same: *exile is going to make you sorry*. This element of scolding is the essential of the intertextual structure, and it is surprising that Liu omits to mention it in his notes on "Chang-O" despite its presence in no. 35 and other texts.

According to Liu, poems 28–34 in his book all take their cue from no. 35 and refer to a romantic relationship with a Taoist nun. Interestingly, he omits poem no. 36,

where a male lover prepares wine but awaits in vain, i.e., the latter is much closer to Takahashi's interpretation, but Liu does not consider it relevant to the case of "Chang-O." For Takahashi's interpretation to be valid, we would require an intertext where a male lover was waiting in vain. Of course intertextual models need not have the same lexicon as the primary text; but it is hard to see how a male lover's wait could be reconciled with Li's use of Chang-O's self-imposed exile on the moon in so many other of his poems as an extreme version of a lady's situation, in order to demonstrate what might happen if she carries on as she has been doing: sealing herself off in a world of her own.

The object of the love is not so explicit in the two poems which follow "Chang-O" in Liu's collection, but both are clearly divided into two matrices corresponding in extent to the couplets – the first of which describes a nocturnal scene of this world, and the second, the solitary watch of Chang-O on the moon. Further, no. 29 contains an element of reproach in addition to the word "heart." Once again, the message is that *a human person should not imitate Chang-O*, and this idea constitutes the relation between the two matrices of our intertextual matricial structure. Briefly, in each poem sharing this structure, we always meet the following two situations: (MP1) *the feminine protagonist isolated from the world*, and (MP2) *the regretful goddess in exile*. The fact that the "regrets" are integral to this intertextual structure would tend to prevent them from being a novelty in our primary text. Moreover, the regrets of Li Shangyin's poem must be seen against the background of Bai Juyi's famous preceding longer poem *Chang Hen Ge* (長恨歌, 'Song of Everlasting Regret'). If "Chang-O" could be taken in isolation, the regrets imputed to the awaiting lady might be considered innovative – but that would be to ignore literary tradition. Thus, our poem can hardly be considered "proto-modernist," despite its clearly paradigmatic semiotic structure.

4 Conclusions: the functions of formal parallelism

The existence of genres like the lü-shi, where parallelism is a prosodic feature which seems to function as a heuristic device, suggests a need to add certain provisos to what I have called Riffaterre's "type (c)" semantic indirection. It is interesting that despite his famous counter-argument to Jakobson (R. 1966), Riffaterre did not feel the need to be more specific in R.1978 – perhaps because he is dealing there with poetry where formal parallels are few. To quote, the kinds of parallel Riffaterre allows for are "symmetry, rhyme, or semantic equivalences between positional homologues in a stanza" (R.1978: 2). It is clear that the emphasis is on semantic parallels. Riffaterre is not specific about the role of the formal level in type (c) indirection, but phonetic repetition is an obvious feature of rhyme, for instance. Although rhyme would

normally be part of type (b), it is clear enough that he aims to cover those types of indirection which depend on devices other than purely lexical incompatibilities.

In the lü-shi, "positional homologues" would cover tone pattern (e.g. the first four characters in lines 2 and 3 of "Chang-O"). "Symmetry" is left to cover a multitude of phenomena including, one may assume, syntactic parallels coextensive with semantic parallels. The simplest and most obvious way in which the latter could function is to have a set of two or more parallel syntactic structures, each exactly coextensive with each image generated by a single matrix. The most obvious example of "symmetry" in "Chang-O" is no. 7 in line 2, which is striking enough to function heuristically. Just how is interesting. Its components are smaller than the total line-length which is the extent of each image of the poem; as the semantic structures coextensive with the components of the parallel are closely equivalent, the two components together direct the reader to the image noted in 2.3.1: "the sinking of heavenly bodies weighs on our lady's heart."

Evidently, we need to distinguish between (i) those parallels whose components are smaller in scope than the individual image, but together are coextensive with it, the semantic effect being at the level of the single image (e.g. no. 7 within line 2); (ii) those parallels each of whose components is coextensive with a single image, and whose effect involves two or more images and may extend as far as a whole underlying matrix; and (iii) those whose scope is either (a) smaller than (i) (e.g. isolated alliteration or repeated sound groups as in no. 4) or (b) larger than (ii) but do not coincide with a text's total TMS. These could sit astride two matrices without coinciding with either, like parallel no. 3b, or even like no. 1's rhyme, or no. 6.

Of the above, case (ii) most clearly fits our theory: a parallel may juxtapose two or more images and be a cue to a complete matrix. As an example, in Tamura's *4,000 no hi to yoru* (a poem among my modern Japanese texts in Hopkins 2022 [2020]), two parallel syntactic structures are repeated throughout the text, each strictly coextensive with an image representing one of the two matrices. Case (i) allows for poems in which a single image has a parallel as its heuristic clue. Case (iii) could be excluded by a rule such as the following: *In order that the semantic correspondence based on a formal parallel may contribute directly to an image paradigm, either each component or both components of that parallel must be coextensive in the text with an image generated by a single underlying matrix*. This rule aims to prevent conflict between putative formal parallels and a text's matricial structure. In "Chang-O," our rule would disallow any semantic effect on the matricial level to any supposed syntactic parallel between lines 1 and 4 – a case of type (iiib); allowing this parallel would lead to the conclusion that this is a unimatricial text, since it stands astride images belonging to different matrices. The removal of this parallel between two lines means that there are now no formal parallels conflicting with our larger bimatricial structure.

In the light of our Chinese example, it is hard to see how rhyme by itself could be a guide either to an individual image to or to a complete matrix. And yet there is no need to dismiss it as simply an ornament; rather, it is a form of phonic cohesion, and a mnemonic, which does not necessarily induce a semantic correspondence. Where a rhyme pattern extends across much of a text, it may draw our attention to similarities between concepts in different matrices. However, it seems questionable whether rhyme alone may be held – as Jakobson tended to do – unfailingly to impute a semantic connection. In "Chang-O," the common negative semes of "deep/sunken" contribute to the negative marking of the rhyming "heart" in line 4; yet we would be less sure of this without the backup syntactic parallel of the last three characters of lines 1, 2, and 4. Where there is a clash between rhyme and other parallels, a parallel involving syntactic structure would seem to have precedence.

Tone pattern is something found largely in classical Chinese verse and is therefore hardly relevant to modern poetry in other languages. It provides a kind of regular melody to the poem, and aids as a mnemonic. Where it coincides with another form of parallel, it has a reinforcing effect, as here. On its own, it is perhaps not sufficient reason to impute a semantic parallel.

To conclude, only one of the parallels in "Chang-O" functions on both formal and semantic levels as an example of Riffaterre's third type of indirection: no. 3 (involving lines 1 and 4); at the same time its formal substructure acts as a heuristic clue to the location of our two matrices. In the case of our poem the formal parallels may be said to contribute a kind of "poetic cohesion" to the text, and in some cases may do more, assuming that the rather charming semantic conceit of no. 3 is allowable on formal grounds. Such parallels are the point of our above rule, since they operate outside the level of matricial structure, to which their contribution is thus incomplete. It is reassuring from the viewpoint of our theory to find that, even in as extreme a case as "Chang-O," the formal parallels are not essential to the matricial structure of the poem, except as heuristic clues to the location of images generated by that structure.

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