

**THE ART OF ALLUSION IN LI SHANGYIN**

by

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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in the University of Toronto**

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## THE ART OF ALLUSION IN LI SHANGYIN

Thesis Abstract

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Many poems by Li Shangyin (ca.812-858), an eminent poet of the Tang Dynasty, possess highly allusive characteristics. It is recognized that Li Shangyin's use of allusion is a development in Chinese literary history where one finds a preference for allusion among poets of previous ages. To show how exactly Li Shangyin's allusions work is in a way to explicate the poetic significance of allusion in classical poetry.

Framed mainly within traditional poetic concerns, this study focuses on the function of allusion in some highly allusive poems by Li Shangyin, trying to bring allusion into a rhetorical function which works as a constitutive element of the poetic system and thus contributes to the process of poetic signification. While carrying out this task, the study also renders a presentation of the poetic world of Li Shangyin's poems.

In the central chapters in this study, through discussing one particular allusion the poet favors (Chapter 2), and analyzing and interpreting his poems on history (Chapter 3) and his untitled poems

(Chapter 4). Li Shangyin's major modes of allusiveness, such as "overt" and "assimilative" modes, and "orthodox" and "inverted" modes, are examined and the poet is seen to be engaged with sophisticated craft and complex structures to create a subtle and oblique ambiance in his poetic world. His complex and indefinite poetry is largely related with his use of allusion, especially his internalized use of it in which a mood, tone, or atmosphere is usually dominant.

The study sees the art of allusion in Li Shangyin as a highly crafted and conscious one. This art is based upon a dialectic understanding of the literary past. That Li Shangyin's poetic creativity is accomplished by means of manipulating prior literary material shows the power and richness of the literary convention to which almost all great poets have recourse.

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## Introduction

In The Poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-Century Baroque Chinese Poet, an important translation and study of Li Shangyin 李商隱 (ca.812-858) in English, James J. Y. Liu writes: "Li Shang-yin (Li Shangyin) has been both admired and condemned for the highly allusive character of much of his poetry."<sup>1</sup> Few scholars of Chinese poetry would question this statement. In fact, not only does allusion figure prominently in Li Shangyin's poetry, it is also recognized that allusion is abundantly common in pre-modern Chinese poetry in general. Traditionally, the work of coming to grips with allusions was fundamental for literary commentators in the annotation and interpretation of poetry. While providing valuable information about origins of allusions in allusive texts, traditional commentators treated allusive phenomena mainly as source or influence. This situation has gradually changed in modern and contemporary studies of classical poetry where scholars recognize the importance of allusion to poetic forms and meanings.<sup>2</sup> While being illuminating, most of these studies, when referring to allusion, have not said enough about its function in texts and the structuring of texts.<sup>3</sup> Although other aspects, such as the classification of allusion, in the study of allusion in Chinese poetry

also need to be addressed, it is the function of allusion that deserves, I believe, special attention and therefore is the core of this study.

To approach my subject, I propose to explain the poetic significance of allusion by the use of models drawn from Li Shangyin, trying to bring allusion into a rhetorical function which works as a constitutive element of the poetic system and thus contributes to the process of poetic signification. While carrying out this task, I also render a presentation of the poetic world of Li Shangyin's poems. As a major poet of the late Tang, Li Shangyin represents the poetic style and vision of the last phase of what is acknowledged as the Golden Age of Chinese poetry, the Tang Dynasty.<sup>4</sup> Most literary historians and critics, even those who have objected to Li's frequent use of allusion, agree that Li Shangyin is the last eminent Tang poet and has a special position in the tradition of Chinese poetry. The following by James Liu outlines to a large extent that position Li Shangyin takes:

Apart from Tu (Du) Fu, who is supreme in his universality and versatility, I cannot think of more than half a dozen Chinese poets who may, with any justification, be called greater than Li Shang-yin (Shangyin), and not many more who can be called equally great. On the whole, the strength of his poetry does not lie in self-effacing contemplation of nature but in passionate involvement

with life. Like Tu (Du) Fu, but unlike T'ao Ch'ien (Tao Qian), Wang Wei, and Li Po (Bai), Li Shang-yin (Shangyin) is a poet engagé. Whether writing of love or of politics, he commits himself with characteristic intensity. . . . On the other hand, Li Shang-yin (Shangyin) explores strange and fascinating worlds of passion and fantasy that none of the other poets has explored.<sup>5</sup>

In making his distinctive contribution to Chinese poetry and marking his position as an important poet in classical China, Li Shangyin, who was writing in the shadow of many great poets of the tradition, seemed to transform the misfortune of belatedness into an authority, as we shall demonstrate in this study, to create something different based on a particular understanding of past literary writing, especially its characteristics of allusiveness.

With few exceptions, studies of Chinese allusion have excluded traditional critical statements on allusion, and a primary definition of Chinese allusion seems inconsequential to them. I feel it is necessary to examine these statements because in fact they are a part of the tradition. Furthermore, some of them are illuminating in the understanding and helpful in explicating the poetic significance of allusion in general and in showing how Li Shangyin's allusions work in particular. One of the leading aims of this introduction is thus to

survey the definition and application of allusion in the Chinese tradition. But before we set about this, we shall acquaint ourselves with something known about Li Shangyin's life.

### **Li Shangyin: A Biographical Skeleton**

The biographical pickings of Li Shangyin are very slim: he earns brief notices in both of the official histories of the Tang Dynasty, the Old Tang History 舊唐書 and the New Tang History 新唐書, although the two accounts limit themselves to factional disputes that took place between Li Shangyin's patrons.<sup>6</sup> With the aid of these, some other unofficial sources, and their speculations of Li's prosaic and poetic writings, several Qing and modern scholars attempted an outline of his life.<sup>7</sup> A reasonable reconstruction, yet these scholars' accounts cannot be accepted as indisputable since they are to a large extent based on personal readings of Li's own writings.

Li Shangyin, whose courtesy name is Yishan 義山, and stylish names are Yuxisheng 玉溪生 and Fannansheng 樊南生, was born into a family of minor gentry in Zhengzhou 鄭州 (in modern Henan province), about seventy miles away from the Henei district 河內 of Huaizhou prefecture 懷州 (in modern Henan province) where his ancestral home was. Customarily, both Tang histories regard him as a native of Huaizhou. Li Shangyin's birth date has been a matter of

controversy. Of the various years suggested, however, 812 or 813 is an accepted estimate. Although the poet claimed to be the descendant of Li Hao 李昊 (351-417), founder of the kingdom of western Liang, from whom the Tang imperial house also claimed descent, evidence tells that he belonged to a family far from being wealthy or influential. At the time when he was born, Li's father Li Si 李嗣 was serving as magistrate of Huojia district 獲嘉 (in modern Henan province).

Like many famous poets, Li Shangyin exhibited literary talents at a young age. In his childhood he studied the Classics and practiced writing; when he was sixteen, he already wrote two mature essays that attracted certain attention of his contemporaries. Li's precocious gifts obviously impressed Linghu Chu 令狐楚, then military governor of Tianping Region (in modern Shandong province), who appointed Li to the post of inspector 巡官, a junior position without a rank. Under the guidance of Linghu Chu who was an expert in writing in parallel prose 駢文, Li Shangyin often practiced this subgenre of prose and became a master of it. Nevertheless, the young poet lacked luck of success in the examination system through which literati usually began to move toward social advancement. In 833 Li Shangyin unsuccessfully sat the *jinshi* 進士 examination in Chang'an; in 835 he took again the examination and failed again. In 837, under the influence of Linghu Chu's son Linghu Tao 令狐綯 who was then a Senior Advisor in the

Chancellery 門下省. Li Shangyin finally passed the examination and became a *jinsu*.

Li Shangyin never achieved high official rank. In 838, he joined the staff of Wang Maoyuan 王茂元, military governor of Jing and Yuan, and married his daughter soon afterwards. In 839, after he "took off serge" ("shihe" 釋褐, that is, ceased to be a commoner). Li was appointed a collator in the Imperial Library but soon transferred to be sheriff 尉 of Hongnong district (in modern Henan province). In 842, Li passed the "Outstanding Talent" examination and was appointed a sub-editor 正字 in the Imperial Library. From 847 to 855, Li Shangyin traveled extensively as he moved from one post to another, sometimes as a clerk 書記, sometimes as a supervisor 判官. In 851, Li joined the staff of Liu Zhongying 柳仲鄧, military governor of Dongchuan and prefect of Zizhou, working as a clerk with the honorary title of principal secretary in the Ministry of Works 工部郎中, the highest rank he ever attained. In 858, after he lost his last post, a salt and iron assessor 鹽鐵推官 in Chang'an, Li Shangyin returned to Zhengzhou and died of illness soon. His wife died before him in 851, leaving him one boy and one girl.

Almost every biographical description of Li's career attributes his political failure to the strife between two factions, represented by Li Deyu 李德裕 (787-850) and Niu Sengru 牛僧孺 (779-848) respectively, which racked the central bureaucracy for forty years.

The poet's first patrons Linghu Chu and his son Linghu Tao belonged to the "Niu faction." When Li Shangyin married the daughter of Wang Maoyuan, partisan of the "Li faction," the late Linghu Chu's son Linghu Tao felt insulted and resented his marriage. Consequently the powerful Linghu Tao later refused to promote Li's interests (in 850 Linghu Tao became chief minister with the concurrent titles of under-secretary of the Central Secretariat 中書侍郎 and minister of rites). Although questionable, the belief that Li failed to achieve high office because of the animosity of Linghu Tao has been influential in Li Shangyin studies.

### **Allusion in Tradition**

In The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons 文心雕龍, the earliest theoretical work that discusses the Chinese notion of allusion at length, the term "shilei" 事類 is used by Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465-522) to refer to allusion:

Factual reference, that intrinsically shares certain properties with a present situation, exists outside the formal structure of the text. By making such references, one draws comparisons between previous events and his own principles, and adduces the past to prove the present.

Formerly, when King Wen explained the *Jiji jiusan* in his annotation of the lines of the hexagrams, he referred to the ancient expedition of Gaozong; and when explaining the *Mingyi liuwu*, he alluded to the staunchness of Prince Qi of recent times. Here, human events were adduced to affirm propositions. Lord Yin, when launching a punitive campaign against Yi and He, cited the teachings from the Zhengdian; and King Pangeng, in his admonishing speech to his people, used Chiren's dicta. Here, established texts were quoted to elucidate principles.

Therefore, it is the great stratagem of the Sages and the general axiom of the Classics to quote established texts to elucidate principles and to adduce human events to affirm propositions.

事類者，蓋文章之外，據事以類義，援古以證今者也。昔文王繇易，測判爻位，既濟九三，遠引高宗之伐，明夷六五，近書箕子之貞；斯略舉人事，以徵義者也。至若胤征義和，陳政典之訓；盤庚誥民，叙遲任之言；此全引成辭，以明理者也。然則明理引乎成辭，徵義舉乎人事，透聖賢之鴻謨，經籍之通矩也。 8

What is said here means that "shilei" is a rhetorical device characterized by referring to something in the past that lies beyond the formal structure of the text: by this device, the author can produce effects of comparing or testifying the present with the past.<sup>9</sup> Liu Xie's theory became the foundation on which later theoretical discussions of the Chinese notion of allusion were developed. In Liu Xie's examples of "shilei," as we have seen, a distinction is made between reference to historical events and citation of prior texts, denoted respectively by "renshi" 人其 and "chengci" 成辭. Being essential to the Chinese notion of allusion, this distinction shows two kinds of allusiveness which were used by poets and commented on by critics in the history of Chinese classical poetry. Speaking of the first line of the second poem of Li Shangyin's "Mawei Slope" poems 馬嵬二首, for instance, the Song critic Wei Qingzhi 魏慶之 points out Li's citation from the writing of the philosopher Zou Yan 鄒衍 (third century BC) as a kind of using "chengci:"

In Li Yishan's [Shangyin] "Uselessly I learnt that beyond the seas lie nine other continents," he referred to the motif of Consort Yang's being in the Penglai Mountain by using the language from Zou Zi's "Beyond the nine continents lie nine other continents."

李義山“海外徒聞更九州”，其意則用楊妃在蓬萊山；  
其語則用鄒子云“九州之外，更有九州” 10

In the same chapter on "shilei" of The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, Liu Xie once used the term "yong shi" 用事 for references to previous events; after Liu Xie, "yong dian" 用典 was sometimes used to refer to references to the fundamental works of Chinese culture, such as the Classics, whereas the term "yong shi" came to include all kinds of references to previous events and citations from prior texts.<sup>11</sup> Ever since the sixth century, "yong shi" has been a term used most frequently by traditional critics and scholars to denote the Chinese notion of allusion. In the following distinction of "yong shi" made by Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin, we see that the term comes closest to the English word "allusion:"

We would like to alert the reader to the fact that the word "allusion" is used here as the equivalent for the Chinese term 用事 *yung-shih* (yong shi), literally "use event." "Event" is understood here as past event, something mentioned in a preexisting text. "Use event" should be distinguished from "mention event." If an event contemporary to the poet is referred to directly, then we

will say that he "mentions the event": but only if he uses a past event to refer to a present event would we say that he "uses an event." "Historical allusion" is probably a more precise translation of *yung shih* (*yong shi*). But since "allusion" is shorter, we will often use it to stand for "historical allusion," which in turn stands for *yung shih* (*yong shi*).<sup>12</sup>

Allusion, or "yong shi," defined so, came into play noticeably in Chinese classical literary composition in an early time. This is observed by Liu Xie:

Writers before the time of Ch'ing (Qing) [or Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (Sima Xiangru)] and Yuan [or Wang Pao (Bao)] mostly wrote out of their natural inclinations, and seldom took advantage of the experience of others, but after the time of [Yang] Hsiung (Xiong) and [Liu] Hsiang (Xiang), many writers began to quote the works of past authors to help them in their own writing.

自卿淵已前，多俊才而不課學；維向以後，頗引書以助文。<sup>13</sup>

In terms of popularity in poetic practice, allusions were used not only by ordinary poets, but by many outstanding poets as well. As the Song critic Zhang Jie 張戒 says: "The use of allusions in poetry for showing erudition started with Yan Guanglu [Yannian] and reached the ultimate with Du Zimei [Fu]" 詩以用事爲博，始于顏光祿，而極于杜子美.<sup>14</sup> During the Six Dynasties, allusion was so abundant in poetic composition that even in Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427), who is well known for his poetic naturalness and immediacy, one will find that "his poetry can be as mannered, erudite, and allusion-laden as that of any Six Dynasties poet."<sup>15</sup> Since the Tang Dynasty, use of allusion had become a convention in Chinese poetic writing. During and after Li Shangyin's time, allusion was especially popular.<sup>16</sup>

Although allusion was commonplace in classical poetry, it was found by some critics superfluous or inappropriate in lyric writing. This was especially true in times when the current fashions of plagiarization of old texts became very popular and poets abused allusions by using them in their poems mainly for display. In the Preface to his The Poets Systematically Graded 詩品, for example, Zhong Rong 鐘嶸 (496-518) expressly objects to the use of allusion in poetic writing:

Rich erudition is expected to bear on official documents, and the shining examples of our forebears are required to be used exhaustively in the writing of glorifications, counter-proposals and ordinary memorial addressed to the throne, but the melodic expression of what one feels does not become more valuable for its bookish references.

夫屬詞比事，乃爲通談；若乃經國文符，應資博古，撰德駁奏，宜窮往烈，至乎吟咏情性，亦何貴於用事？

17

Here, what Zhong Rong is really concerned with is the anti-lyrical effect of allusion used by poets like Ren Fang 任昉 (460-508) and Wang Rong 王融 (468-494) who favor the display of erudition over the direct expression of feeling.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in scattered discussions of allusion in later critical writings, the use of allusion, especially the excessive use of it, is regarded by some critics as a sign of poetic failing and poor imagination. Yan Yu 嚴羽 (1180-1235) and Tu Long 屠隆 (1542-1605), for instance, are against writing a poem with abundant allusions.<sup>19</sup> In Wang Guowei's 王國維 (1877-1927) opinion, allusions are substitutions 代字 and they are obstructive 礙 in poetry.<sup>20</sup>

Despite critics' criticism of the excessive use of allusion in poetry, allusive texts in poetic practice seemed to have increased undeterred. This phenomenon drew certain critical attention to the ability to use allusion judiciously and skillfully in poetic composition. Wang Shimao's 王世懋 (1536-1588) comment exemplifies this recognition: "The shortcoming is not caused by allusion. However, one should know how and when to use it" 病不在故事，顧所以用之何如耳。<sup>21</sup> To some critics, this ability became an important criterion against which good or bad poems were to be measured. As Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602) remarks:

Besides being imitative and expressive, poetry is also allusive. . . . By reading his allusive poems, one would know the poet's writing skills and talent.

詩自模景述情外，則有用事而已. . . . 欲觀人筆力材旨，全在阿堵中。<sup>22</sup>

Thus, while preserving the view that direct expression of emotion was the essential nature of poetry, traditional critics also argued for the appropriate employment of allusion in poetry. First of all, they emphasized the fidelity to the source in the use of allusion because for these critics the original meaning of the allusion should

remain immutable. If one's understanding of the original text was perfect, his use of allusion to it would not obstruct his expression. Poets who disregarded or defied the original meaning of the allusion risked distorting the very text their work was supposed to preserve. The emphasis on the source of allusion can be illustrated by an example given in The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons:

The "yuan-k'uei (yuankui)," a poem on a garden sunflower, by Lu Chi (Ji), runs:

[Things] *shelter* their *feet* by the same instinct,  
 But each has a unique life pattern which differs  
 from ten thousand others.

The sunflower's ability to *protect* its *feet* was cited [by Confucius] to ridicule the artless Pao-chuang (Baozhuang) [-tzu (-zi)], and that creepers know how to *shelter* their *roots* was stated by Yueh (Yue) Yu. So if [Lu Chi (Ji)] meant to liken the sunflower to the creepers, his allusion is a mistake; and if he thought that *shelter* was a better term to use than *protect*, then he lost sight of the true nature of the original situations in his modification.

陸機園葵詩云：庇足同一智，生理合異端。夫葵能衛

足，事譏鮑莊，葛藟<sup>葛</sup>庇根，辭自樂豫；若譬葛爲葵，則引事爲謬；若謂庇勝衛，則改事失真。 23

Secondly, traditional critics stressed the integration of the borrowings into the alluding text. The poet was supposed to understand the alluded material very well and be able to grasp the essence of it. As long as the poet was faithful to the original meaning of the alluded context, he was free to use allusion in expressiveness -- he could use it by making a statement of analogy or contrast. In either way, the allusion should be used aptly so that it became an organic part of the poem. This concern is again indicated in Liu Xie's writing which is echoed by later critics:

When a writer's allusions to past events are appropriate to the situation in question, it is as if he himself has created them. But if the facts alluded to are out of harmony with the context, their use will always be a blemish. . . .

*The T'san (Zan):*

. . . .

To be able to use the words of others as if they were  
one's own creation

Is to have perfect understanding of the past.

凡用舊合機，不齊自其口出，引事乖謬，雖千載  
而為瑕……

贊曰：……用人若己，古來無替， 24

To achieve the integration, however, different individuals in traditional criticism made different suggestions and different poets adopted different ways. In his Poetic Rules of the Masters 詩法家數, Yang Zai 楊載 (1271-1323), for instance, recommends "huo yong" 活用:

Set forth antiquity to criticize the present: use one thing to prove another: don't show your tracks--it's all right if you give a shadow: though it be a dead reference, it can be used in a lively way.

陳古諷今，因彼證此，不可著迹；只使影子可也，雖死  
事亦當活用， 25

The concept "huo yong," lively or creative use of allusion, includes what critics called "fan yong" 反用 and "an yong" 暗用. In these uses, a poet not only often varies the allusive forms, but sometimes changes

or borrows only parts of the original meaning given in the alluded texts. Employed so, the allusiveness can be more profound and subtle, and the alluding poem more rich in significance and distinctive in style. These uses, together with some others, will be further discussed later in this introduction when we define certain traditional terms used in the study.

If integrating borrowed words and phrases into one's new poetic pattern in certain frames was one of the strategies in using allusion in lyric poetry, then, digging out allusions hidden in poems became an important as well as a fashionable part for poetic commentators in actual critical practice. In Tang poetry in general, for instance, commentators had to "illustrate nearly every line with quotations from older sources--standard references for mythological, historical, and geographical information, earlier examples of idioms, earlier uses of images which have accumulated special associations."<sup>26</sup> Being overzealous in search for the so-called sources, such commentators quite often were simply showing off their own wide learning by displaying their subjects' erudition. Within certain limits, such an approach is obviously useful as it identifies most allusions and, for that matter, this is the great achievement of the traditional approach. One of its limitations, however, is the compulsion to hunt for the source--searching for the sake of searching. Further, when annotating their subjects, these commentators often tried to offer a historical,

biographical, or political interpretation of allusions, neglecting the process of artistic transformation and the rhetorical function of the allusion as an integral part of the systematic character of poetic composition. It is these neglected aspects and other associated formal and semantic facets of allusion that interest us in the present study.

By its very nature, the study of allusion raises the issue of imitation and to a certain extent treads on the same ground. In a sophisticated and self-conscious literature, such as Chinese classical poetry, imitating the literary past is predominant. Ever since Confucius' time, literati poets, at social and state functions, expressed their hopes and fears, stated their compliment and complaint by means of exchanging passages from the canonical works, such as the Book of Songs 詩經, which they had learned by heart. This sort of imitation of ancient texts, sometimes mixed with imitation of each other's works, is apparently reflected in many lyric poems collected in anthologies of model works such as the Literary Anthology 文選 and the New Songs from a Jade Terrace 玉臺新詠. It is interesting to point out, however, that tradition and imitation always stand in a dialectical relation to one another. The ancient Chinese literati poet's referring to and using the literary past inevitably preserve and at the same time modify the tradition.

If in the relationship between imitation and tradition allusion plays an important part, in actualizing the allusiveness in a given text.

a high degree of cultural literacy is presupposed in the reader. This requirement was usually fulfilled to an appreciable extent by the Chinese literati poet who was both a writer and a reader. He was first a reader who read widely and was able to appreciate the literary language in different literary genres. At the time when he was ready for writing, he was himself a plurality of texts and of different codes. As Liao Ping Hui points out:

Before trying his hand at literature, a poet had to acquire considerable awareness of the tradition through the study of earlier texts. Not just in the yueh-fu (yuefu) poetry alone, which like the western pastoral lyrics is often sung or put to music and which invites replies, many Chinese poems absorb and transform by taking up the same theme or by employing similar (sometimes just the opposite) words or syntax to refresh an artistic experience of the earlier poets or texts. Frequently Chinese poets would approach an aesthetic experience through the reshaping of words to test their creative potentiality, bringing their own works into an intertextual (dialogic) relationship to those of others.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the modes of reading a text were implicitly brought into the modes of writing. Moreover, the literati poet, on the one hand, assimilates present experiences to his cultural tradition by means of "yong shi," thus obtaining the authoritative seal of conventional norms and paving a larger ground for validating the poem as a representation of the "real." On the other, through "yong shi," he manipulates the autonomic characteristics of literary language to produce an imagined world differentiated from the "real."

### **The Key Terms Used in the Study**

My perspective in this study is mainly framed within traditional poetic concerns, and therefore some key terms used in the study are taken from traditional theory of allusion. At times, however, a few Western critical terms are applied--my purpose is to use these terms as an analytical and communicative aid in showing as clearly as possible the operation of Li Shangyin's allusion. Of these Western terms, the "allusion marker" is very useful and more often used in the study. To clarify my points and arguments in analyzing and discussing Li Shangyin's poems in the study, we need to define certain key terms here.

*Gushi and chengci* 故事、成辭

As we mentioned before, the Chinese notion of allusion contains a distinction between reference to historical events and citation of prior texts, described respectively in The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, as "renshi" 人事 and "chengci" 成辭. In a later section of the chapter on allusion, the "renshi" was replaced by Liu Xie with "gushi" 故事 which was generally used by later critics.<sup>28</sup> The difference between "chengci" and "gushi" is seen mainly in the fact that in many cases "chengci" obtain a strong sense of the immediate present and therefore can be understood in the context of a poem without knowing the source meaning which, when being known, however, adds rich implications to the understanding; whereas "gushi" in most cases cannot contribute to the significance of a poem unless the original meaning of the alluded source is acquired.

In effect, however, since a "gushi" is an event or story "mentioned in a preexisting text," as explained by Kao and Mei in an earlier quoted passage, it actually bears similar features attributed to "chengci." Moreover, on the one hand, since some "gushi" are so commonly used that they become less effective as historical events and therefore function as "chengci," on the other, "gushi" are sometimes used by poets in unconventional forms and can produce effects of the immediate present which do not depend on, though will be amplified by, the source meaning. It was perhaps because of these shared

features and effects that the term "yong shi" 用事 was generally used to refer to all kinds of citations from and references to prior texts in traditional criticism.

In this study, the term allusion is employed for "yong shi" in the broad sense, that is, to include both "gushi" and "chengci," or "historical allusion" and "textual allusion" as translated in this study, except in Chapter 3 where we focus on "historical allusion" in discussing Li Shangyin's poems on history, and in one session of Chapter 4 where Li Shangyin's use of "textual allusion" is particularly examined.

#### *Zheng yong* 正用

Allusion was used in classic poetry in different ways. Among many modes, traditional critics found four that were most often used by poets: "zheng yong" 正用, "fan yong" 反用, "ming yong" 明用, and "an yong" 暗用.<sup>29</sup> When an allusion is used to make a comparison between the present situation in the alluding poem and a past event from another text, and the original meaning of the allusion is fully applied in the alluding poem, the way to do so is called "zheng yong." In such a comparison, a poet can draw an analogy or a contrast between the present and the past. However, the analogy or contrast is not realized in the allusion itself, but in the context of the alluding

text. For the convenience of discussion, I sometimes use "orthodox allusion" as an equivalent for "zheng yong" in the study.

### *Fan yong* 反用

In traditional critics' words, this is to "use an allusion by reversing its original meaning" 反其意而用之.<sup>30</sup> It actually refers to the way where a poet either inverts the meaning of an allusion or changes an allusion's implication that is conventionally accepted. In either case, the purpose is to produce a special poetic effect. Traditionally, to use allusion this way is also called "turning the tables" 翻案. This kind of use did not become a popular practice until the Tang Dynasty and was encouraged by later traditional critics, such as Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1797) who has a well-known remark that "poetry is valued for its turning the tables" 詩貴翻案.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps because it could not be easily mastered, this use of allusion was not often adopted by poets. When applied successfully, however, it still shows the respect for the allusive source: to render a new implication based on a perfect understanding of the original meaning. Li Shangyin is especially skillful with this kind of allusion and for one particular use of it in his "Master Jia" 賈生, he was highly praised by the Song critic Yan youyi 嚴有翼 like this:

Employed in poetry or prose, some allusions follow the original meanings, while others reverse them . . . . Li Yishan's [Shangyin] "Alas, in vain did the Emperor move his seat forward at midnight-- Instead of asking about the people, he asked about the gods" uses the allusion to Jia Yi but negates the original meaning of it. One cannot do this unless he is widely learned and liberal, and he does not imitate his predecessors simply following the convention.

詩文用故事，有直用其事者，有反其意而用之者。 . . . 李義山“可憐夜半虛前席，不問蒼生問鬼神！”雖說賈誼，然反其意而用之矣。 . . . 非學業高人，超越尋常拘學之見，不規規然蹈襲前人陳迹者，何以臻此！ 32

In my discussion of Li Shangyin's historical poems in Chapter 3, I give some examples of his "inverted allusion" by which I mean "fan yong."

*Ming yong* 明用

When a poet employs an allusion by its conventional form, the way he does this is called "ming yong." In this kind of use, the allusion is easily identified because the poet does not change its form

with which a reader is familiar. We may call this kind of use "overt allusion." In practical application, an "overt allusion" can be used to achieve either the effect of "zheng yong" or that of "fan yong." Since "ming yong" or "overt allusion" is comparatively easy to be applied and recognized, it is commonly used by most poets and sometimes recommended by critics whose interest lies in simple and direct poetic expressions. In giving explanation to his model examples from the Mid- and late Tang poems, for instance, the Southern Song critic Zhou Bi 周弼 says:

In any poem, the use of references can cause obstructions. . . . If one does not blend the reference into the poem, and if one makes the references the main point, and further if the references are light and direct, then you will have something close to village ballads and street songs, sung to the tapped rhythm of bamboo sticks. Cases like this represent the most perfect use of references.

詩中用事，既易窒塞。 . . . 若不融化，以事爲意，更加以輕率，則鄰於里謠巷歌。可擊竹而謠矣，凡此皆用事之妙者也。 33

*An yong* 暗用

Literally, this means to use an allusion or allusions in a hidden way. It actually refers to a poet's assimilation of the borrowings into an alluding poem. In this kind of use, the poet either selects scattered words and phrases from one alluded text and synthesizes them in the alluding poem, or distorts and blends several allusions from different sources to create one or a series of new allusive images in the alluding poem. In either cases, the allusive elements in the alluding text are distinctive and may not be sufficiently familiar. Like "overt allusion," allusion in this "an yong" mode can produce different effects. Although the "ming yong" of allusion is the common way in practice, "an yong" or the assimilative use of allusion is regarded as the highest level in allusiveness and strongly encouraged in traditional theory. An oft-quoted example of this encouragement comes from the Xiqing shihua 西清詩話:

Du Fu says: "The way of using allusions in poems should be assimilative as what is said in the Chan talk: 'Put salt in water: one can taste the saltiness by drinking the water.'" This is where a poet's secret lies. . . . As if tying the wind or grasping a shadow, the poet who is skillful with allusion won't leave a track of allusion in his poems.

杜少陵云：作詩用事，要如禪家語，“水中着鹽，飲水乃知鹽味”。此說，詩家秘密藏也。……則善用事者，如系風捕影，豈有迹耶？<sup>34</sup>

In this study, especially in Chapter 4, for the convenience of discussion I sometimes use "assimilative allusion" or "assimilative mode." "assimilative use," to refer to this kind of use.

#### *Allusion marker*

I borrow this term from Ziva Ben-Porat's theory on allusion. In her discussion, Ben-Porat emphasizes the differentiation between allusion as a textual element within the linear sequence of the alluding text and allusion as a process of activating the other text.<sup>35</sup> The so called allusion marker refers to the "textual element"--the marking elements in the alluding text which can be identified as belonging to another text. In other words, the marker appears in an alluding text and is the trigger for the actualization of an allusion. The marker is always identifiable as such no matter whether it assumes a conventional form or a new one. As Ben-Porat says: "A distorted quotation or a unique noun in a new declension are examples of markers that are recognizable as belonging to a certain system in spite of a new form."<sup>36</sup> The marker also contains some kind of literal meaning in the context of the alluding text besides the allusive one.<sup>37</sup>

In my analysis of Li Shangyin's poems, the term is applied in the above definition.

### **The Plan of the Study**

This study is designed to consist of two parts according to different material and focus. The first part, which includes this introduction and Chapter 1, is basically historical and theoretical. The second part, consisting of Chapters 2, 3, and 4, is analytical and interpretative. The first part provides a historical and theoretical basis for the discussions of selected poems from the Li Shangyin corpus, whereas the analysis and interpretation in chapters of the second part are meant to be exemplary rather than exhaustive--some analytical interpretations, for instance, can be done in more detail and can take as well different directions. In Chapter 1, besides undertaking other tasks, I try to establish an assumed ground for Li Shangyin's interest in allusiveness. In Chapter 2, I examine Li Shangyin's two allusive modes, the "ming yong," or overt, and "an yong," or assimilative, modes, and show how Li Shangyin appropriates these modes in his poetic composition and what effects they produce in his poems. These modes are relatively essential to his allusiveness. Chapter 2, then, provides the basis for examining the broad and subtle range of Li Shangyin's allusions in Chapters 3 and 4. In these chapters, there is a

kind of progression of discussion respectively--we move from analyses and interpretations of Li's allusive poems to that of his most highly allusive ones.

### Notes

1 James J. Y. Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-Century Baroque Chinese Poet ( Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969 ) 246.

2 See, e.g., David Lattimore, "Allusion and T'ang Poetry," Perspectives on the T'ang, eds. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) 405-439; James R. Hightower, "Allusion in Poetry of T'ao Ch'ien." Studies in Chinese Literary Genres, ed. Cyril Birch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 108-132; and Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin, "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion in T'ang Poetry," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 38 (1978): 281-356.

3 The term "text," as indicated by those critical works mentioned above, refers to written material, including literary, historical, and some other type writings. This definition of "text" is applied in this study since almost all Li Shangyin's allusions, including those to actual historical persons, are drawn from written material.

4 Following the Song critic Yan Yu 嚴羽 and the Ming critic Gao Bing 高棅, Tang poetry is usually divided into four periods:

Early Tang, High Tang, Mid-Tang, and Late Tang, although different literary historians have assigned somewhat different dates to these periods.

5 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 250. See also Zhang Shuxiang 張淑香, Li Yishan shi xilun 李義山詩析論 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1974) 1-2, 247-248.

6 See Jiu Tang Shu 舊唐書, 文苑傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975) *juan* 190 *xia*; and Xin Tang shu 新唐書, 文藝傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975) *juan* 203.

7 See, e.g., Feng Hao 馮浩, Yuxisheng nianpu 玉溪生年譜, in Feng Hao, ed. and annot., Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu 玉溪生詩集箋注, *fulu* 3, 839-879; Zhang Ertian 張爾田, Yuxisheng nianpu huijian 玉溪生年譜會箋 (Peking: 1917; reprinted—Taipei: Zhonghua, 1967).

8 Liu Xie 劉勰, Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍 (Sibu congkan 四部叢刊 ed.) 8.2b. My own translation.

9 Here, the term “shilei” 事類 is understood to designate one thing, not two. The “lei” in this phrase means “to classify” and, by extension, “to discern the similarities between things.” For a detailed discussion of this phrase, see Li Yuegang 李月剛, Wenxin diaolong jiaquan 文心雕龍駁詮, vol. 2 (Taipei: Guoli bianyi guan Zhonghua congshu bianshen weiyuanhui, 1982) 1693. I am indebted to Professor

Charles Hartman for calling my attention to Li Yuegang's interpretation of this phrase.

10 Wei Qingzhi 魏慶之, Shiren yuxie 詩人玉屑, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1978) 150. My own translation.

11 For Liu Xie's use of this term and its variant "yin shi" 引事, see, e.g., Liu Xie, Wenxin diaolong, 8.3a. The employment of this term in Zhong Rong's 鐘嶸 Shipin 詩品 is regarded by many Chinese scholars as the authoritative use to include all kinds of references to previous texts. See, e.g., Shen Qiuxiong 沈秋雄, "Shilun Li Yishan shi de yongdian" 試論李義山詩的用典, Li shangyin shi yanjiu lunwen ji 李商隱詩研究論文集, ed. Guoli Zhongshan daxue Zhongwen xuehui 國立中山大學中文學會 (Taipei: Tiangong, 1984), 617.

12 Kao Yu-kung, and Mei Tsu-lin, "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion in T'ang Poetry." Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 38 (1978): 326. Also, in most of the English works on allusion in Chinese poetry mentioned earlier, the term "allusion" is used to refer to "yong shi" 用事, "yong dian" 用典, etc..

13 Liu Xie, Wenxin diaolong, 10.2b. Trans. Vincent Yu-chung Shih in Vincent Yu-chung Shih, trans. and annot., The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons Chinese-English ed. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1983) 493.

14 Zhang Jie 張戒, Suihantang shihua 歲寒堂詩話, in Ding Fubao 丁福保, ed., Xu lidai shihua 續歷代詩話, vol. 1 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1974) 544. My own translation.

15 James R. Hightower, "Allusion in Poetry of T'ao Ch'ien," Studies in Chinese Literary Genres, ed. Cyril Birch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 109.

16 For detailed discussions of allusion used in the Tang period, see David Lattimore, "Allusion and T'ang Poetry," Perspectives on the T'ang, 405-439.

17 Zhong Rong 鐘嶸, preface, Shipin 詩品, in He Wenhuan 何文煥, ed., Lidai shihua 歷代詩話 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1974) 8. Trans. Siu-kit Wong in Siu-kit Wong, ed. and trans., Early Chinese Literary Criticism (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1983) 96-97.

18 See Zhong Rong, Shipin, 9.

19 See Yan Yu 嚴羽, Canglang shihua 滄浪詩話, in Lidai shihua, 443; and Tu Long 屠隆, You quan ji 山拳集, vol. 3 (Taipei: Weiwen, 1977) 1173.

20 See Wang Guowei 王國維, Renjian cihua 人間詞話 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua, 1975) 16-22. In some other traditional and modern critical writings, we see a sort of ambivalence toward allusion. The theoretical ambivalence, in my opinion, stemmed at least in part from a somewhat paradoxical theory which ever since Confucius' time had

advocated both "naturalness" 自然, and "suggestiveness" or "reserve" 含蓄 in poetic writing.

21 Wang Shimao 王世懋, Yipu xieyu 藝圃擷余, in Lidai shihua, 497. My own translation.

22 Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, Shi sou 詩數 (Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1962) 64. My own translation.

23 Liu Xie, Wenxin diaolong, 8.3b. Trans. Vincent Yu-chung Shih. 399. Shih's translation, "each has a unique life pattern which differs from ten thousand others," is based upon this sentence: 生理各萬端: according to Fan Wenlan 範文瀾, "合异" in the quoted Sibu congkan version is a mistake for "各萬." See Fan Wenlan, ed. and annot., Wenxin diaolong zhu 文心雕龍注, vol.2 (Hong Kong: Shangwu, 1975) 622.

24 Liu Xie. 8.3a, 8.3b. Trans. Shih. 397, 401.

25 Yang Zai 楊載, Shifa jiashu 詩法家數, in Lidai shihua, 471. Trans. Stephen Owen in Stephen Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 440.

26 A. C. Graham, Poems of the Late T'ang (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965) 27.

27 Liao Ping Hui, "Intersection and Juxtaposition of Wor(l)ds," Tamkang Review 14 (1983-84): 407.

28 Very often the term "gushi" 故事, or "gushi" 故實, are used in many "remarks on poetry" 詩話 to mean references to

historical events. See, e.g., Wei Qingzhi's citations from Xiqing shihua 西清詩話 and Xizhai huaji 西齋話紀 in Shiren yuxie, vol. 1, 157, 158-59.

29 The Yuan critic Chen Yiceng 陳繹曾 divides allusive modes into nine types among which these four are included. See Chen Yiceng, Wen shuo 文說 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu, 1972) 6-7.

30 Wei Qingzhi, Shiren yuxie, vol. 1, 147. My own translation.

31 When Zhang Gaoping 張高評 examines the characteristics of inverted allusion in Song poetry, he points out that Song poets inherited this use from previous poets. However, almost all the pre-Song examples of "turning the tables" poems given by Zhang are from Tang poets' works. See Zhang Gaoping, Song shi zhi chuanchen yu kaituo 宋詩之傳承與開拓 (Taipei: Wenshizhe, 1990) 20-32. Yuan Mei's 袁枚 remark is from Yuan Mei, Suiyuan shihua 隨園詩話, vol. 1 (Taipei: Guangwen, 1971) 6. My own translation.

32 Quoted from Yan Youyi's 嚴有翼 Yiyuan cihuang 藝苑雜錄 cited in Wei Qingzhi, Shiren yuxie, vol. 1, 147. My own translation.

33 Quoted from Stephen Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 426. Trans. Stephen Owen, 426-427. The Chinese text used by Owen is from Murakami Tetsumi 村上哲見, Santaishi 三體詩 2 vols. (Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 1966).

34 Cited in Wei Qingzhi, Shiren yuxie, vol. 1. 147. My own translation. There is controversy over whether or not this was said by Du Fu. However, this is not our concern here.

35 See Ziva Ben-Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and theory of Literature 1 (1976): 107-108.

36 Ben-Porat, 110.

37 See Carmela Perri, "On Alluding," Poetics 7 (1978): 300.

## CHAPTER 1

### Ambiguity and Allusiveness:

#### Li Shangyin Approached and Reapproaching Li Shangyin

聖帝春心托杜鵑，佳人錦瑟怨華年。  
詩家總愛西昆好，獨恨無人作鄭箋。

"Emperor Wang's springtide heart, entrusted to a night  
jar."

The beauty's patterned lute laments the youthful years.

Poets generally love the fine quality of Li Shang-yin's  
(Shangyin) verse:

One only regrets there is no Cheng Hsuan (Zheng Xuan) to  
explicate it. 1

This seven-character quatrain is the twelfth poem of the Thirty Poems on Poetry 論詩三十首 written by the poet-critic Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190-1257). By mentioning the elaborate Xikun 西昆 style inspired by Li Shangyin, the quatrain serves as a commentary on Li Shangyin's famous poem "The Ornamented Zither" 錦瑟 and by extension on his poetry in general.<sup>2</sup> The focal point in this quatrain

indicates two characteristics of Li Shangyin's poetry: allusiveness and ambiguity. By quoting and alluding to Li's poem "Jin se," Yuan's poetic comment is allusive itself and immediately brings out an allusive reading of Li Shangyin's poetry: after stating that Li's poetic writing as a whole is beautiful, the last couplet of this quatrain points out the ambiguous quality of Li Shangyin's poetry by referring to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200), the famous late Han commentator of the Book of Songs. Obviously, in Yuan's view, these characteristics of Li Shangyin's poetry are inseparable.<sup>3</sup> It seems that ambiguity is by definition interwoven with allusiveness, and allusiveness in turn is integral to the epithet of ambiguity. To a large extent, allusiveness and ambiguity are two of the most striking features in the Li Shangyin corpus and because of them Li Shangyin has fascinated and frustrated generations of critics and scholars over the centuries.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Problematics of Ambiguity in Li Shangyin's Poetry**

Chinese concepts of ambiguity have occasionally been discussed or hinted at by quite a few literary critical writings in history. In the chapter, "The Recondite and the Conspicuous" 隱秀, of The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons, for example, Liu Xie says:

In the case of the beauty of a literary composition, it too has both conspicuous and recondite elements. The recondite elements are the layered ideas beyond the expressions, and the conspicuous the startling excellencies in the piece. The beauty of the recondite lies in its multiple concepts, and that of the conspicuous in its startling transcendency. It is these which are preeminently the exquisite qualities of the ancient literature, and form the happy conjunction of talent and feeling.

是以文之英蕤，有秀有隱。隱也者，文外之重旨者也。秀也者，篇中之獨拔者也。隱以復意爲工，秀以卓絕爲巧，斯乃舊章之懿績，才情之嘉會也。 5

Here Liu Xie's "layered ideas" 重旨 and "multiple concepts" 復意 certainly refer to ambiguity. The oft-heard Chinese aphorism, "shi wu da gu" 詩無達詁, may express the Chinese understanding of ambiguity in a better way; the aphorism does not mean that poetry cannot be understood or interpreted, rather, it means that the meaning of a poem cannot be exhausted by limited interpretations. In spite of this theoretical realization in traditional Chinese literary criticism, poetic ambiguity in classical text was either reduced or explained away by

commentators throughout history. A. C. Graham keenly observes this phenomenon when he remarks:

In China, as in England before Empson provided the tools of analysis, there is often a strong feeling that a line of poetry is impoverished by too precise a prose explanation, and a willingness to allow different readers to see different things in it, but only a vague and fitful awareness that apparently contradictory explanations may all be valid.<sup>6</sup>

Compared with the traditional Chinese situation, modern studies of ambiguity in the West have brought out more obvious results with the development of semantics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. No matter how controversial restricting the scope of the term might be and how different the ways of classifying it, the 20<sup>th</sup> century concepts of poetic ambiguity all point out the multi-signification of poetic language.<sup>7</sup> Following William Empson's definition that ambiguity is "any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language," James Liu, when discussing Chinese poetry in general and Li Shangyin's poems in particular, uses the word "ambiguous" to describe "a word, a line, an image, or a whole poem, which allows more than one interpretation."<sup>8</sup> According to some

modern scholars of Chinese poetry, intrinsic elements in the grammatical structure of a poem, such as fluidity regarding parts of speech, the absence of inflections, and polysemy, can be factors contributing to ambiguity, and the flexibility with identifying the tenor of imagery and allusion in a poem can also cause ambiguity.<sup>9</sup>

Described as above, the poetic ambiguity is seen to have gradually developed to classical poems. Zhu Ziqing's 朱自清 (1898-1948) pioneer study of equivocal characteristics of the Han poem "Traveling on, on and on Again" 行行重行行 collected in the "Nineteen Ancient Poems" 古詩十九首 is a good example of critical recognition of this gradual development.<sup>10</sup> It was during the Tang Dynasty, however, that sensibility toward poetic ambiguity increased and its significance in terms of poetic effect was consciously explored and appreciated.<sup>11</sup> Among many obscure and equivocal works by Tang poets, ambiguity stands out strikingly in the Li Shangyin corpus in terms of degree and quantity. Hence the saying that "Li Shang-yin (Shangyin) is one of the most ambiguous, if not *the* most ambiguous, of Chinese poets."<sup>12</sup>

The ambiguous characteristic of Li Shangyin's poetry was widely known and commented on, both positively and negatively, by many traditional critics and modern scholars in history. In traditional critical writings on poetry, such as "remarks on poetry" 詩話, Li Shangyin's poetry is very often associated in Chinese with "yinpi"

隱僻, “shenpi” 深僻, or “huise” 晦澀, all of which could be interpreted in one way or another as referring to reconditeness and which are associated with ambiguity. Although many critics, for various reasons, denounced the ambiguous character in Li Shangyin’s poetry, positive attitudes towards it have been seen in quite a few critical writings since the Song Dynasty. In the Yuan shi 原詩, for example, Ye Xie 葉燮 (1627-1703) views Li Shangyin’s quatrains as follows:

Li Shangyin’s seven-character quatrains are invested with profound meanings and worded in indirect expressions. They are unsurpassed and can truly exist incomparably for centuries.

李商隱七絕，寄托深而措辭婉，實可空百代無其匹也。

13

The following famous remark on Li’s poems by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) provides an example of the modern reader’s positive reaction to this characteristic:

What they [such poems as ‘The Ornamented Zither’, ‘The walls of Emerald’, and ‘The Holy Lady’s Temple’] are

about I cannot determine. I cannot even explain the literal meaning line by line. Yet I feel they are beautiful, and when I read them, they give me a new kind of pleasure in my mind. We must realize that Beauty is many-sided, that Beauty is mysterious by nature. If we still acknowledge the value of Beauty, we cannot lightly brush aside this kind of writing.

義山的錦瑟碧城聖女祠等詩，講的甚麼事，我理會不着。拆開一句一句叫我解釋，我連文義也解不出來。但我覺得他美，讀起來令我精神上得一種新鮮的愉快。須知美是多方面的，是含有神秘性的，我們若承認美的價值，對此種文字，便不容輕輕抹煞。 14

Although their understanding of the significance of ambiguity as a poetic mode remain very vague, these critics have shown the pervasiveness of this characteristic in the Li Shangyin corpus, especially poems composed in the form of regulated verse 律詩. "The Ornamented Zither" 錦瑟, the most famous poem of Li Shangyin, for example, contains things that give rise to multiple readings of it:

錦瑟無端五十弦，一弦一柱思華年。

莊生曉夢迷蝴蝶，望帝春心托杜鵑。  
 蒼海月明珠有淚，藍田日暖玉生烟。  
 此情可待成追憶，只是當時已惘然。

The ornamented zither, for no reason, has fifty strings.  
 Each string, each bridge, recalls a youthful year.  
 Master Chuang (Zhuang) was confused by his morning  
 dream of the butterfly:  
 Emperor Wang's amorous heart in spring is entrusted to  
 the cuckoo.  
 In the vast sea, under a bright moon, pearls have tears:  
 On Indigo Mountain, in the warm sun, jade engenders  
 smoke.  
 This feeling might have become a thing to be remembered.  
 Only, at the time you were already bewildered and lost. 15

Starting with the ornamented zither, a musical instrument which is both real and legendary, this poem conveys the poet's complicated feelings in a great passion as well as in a very ambiguous way. My detailed analysis of this poem concerning its ambiguous and associative characteristics will be undertaken in Chapter 4, but here I wish to point out that ever since the Song Dynasty, there have been many different interpretations of it which exclude each other. Some

say this is a love poem written for a maid or concubine named Jinse in the household of the poet's political patron Linghu Chu. Others think the poem a description of four kinds of music played on the zither. Still others regard the poem as a lament over the poet's misfortunes in life, just to mention a few. While the exclusiveness of these different interpretations shows that critics attempt to eliminate the semantic ambiguity of the poem, the divergence shows the very existence of ambiguity in the poem. Poems that contain this kind of multi-signification do not appear coincidentally in the Li Shangyin corpus, rather, they make a certain portion of it. Sometimes, however, different interpretations of a poem or a line, an image, of a poem by Li are caused by the varying subjectivities of individual commentators, not by properties of the poem.

Traditionally, critics usually linked ambiguity and associated phenomena in Li Shangyin's poetic composition with the social-political situation of the poet's time and his personal experiences. Shen Deqian 沈德潜 (1693-1769), for instance, holds this opinion when remarking on Li Shangyin's metaphorical features:

Li Yishan's [Shangyin] recent style poems are oblique and many-layered and excel in criticism and parable. In them often is metaphor used to express his feelings, because,

since he had encountered difficult times, he had to be enigmatic.

峯山近體，襲積重重，長於諷喻，中多借題隱抱，遭時之變，不得不隱也。 16

Following Traditional concepts, criticism like this only pays attention to external factors, ignoring intrinsic, artistic mechanisms of textual composition which usually play a far more important role in producing the poetic ambiguity. It needs to be pointed out that on the one hand, some of Li Shangyin's ambiguous poems, like "Wild chrysanthemums" 野菊, "Written on the Little Pine Tree" 題小松, and "Peonies" 牡丹, reveal in a symbolic way the poet's inner worlds which have little to do with the factional strife the poet was trapped in. On the other, some well-known "political" poems, such as "Lament for Registrar Liu Fen" 贈劉同戶 and "Lament for Liu Fen" 哭劉蕡, express explicitly his moral views on society and directly reveal his political criticisms against the government, showing that the poet need not express his ideas metaphorically or symbolically in order to avoid political trouble. It was therefore, I would emphasize here, more for artistic than for political considerations that Li Shangyin created highly ambiguous semantic structures in his poems. This point can be reinforced by the fact that when compared to other Tang poets such as

Li Bai 李白 (701-762) and Du Mu 杜牧 (803-852), both of whom, as Li Shangyin, were unsuccessful in their official careers and the latter of whom was also involved in factions. Li Shangyin is often found to be more symbolic and metaphoric in expressing his feelings.<sup>17</sup>

### **Interpretations of Li Shangyin and Their Limitations**

Both the ambiguity and the traditional treatment of it have given rise to widely divergent interpretations of Li Shangyin's poetry which can be traced back to the late Ming Dynasty when the Buddhist Dao Yuan 釋道源 started to annotate Li's works. Although brief critical comments are seen in some "remarks on poetry" during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, extensive commentaries and annotations did not appear until the early Qing Dynasty. In 1659, Zhu Heling's 朱鶴齡 (1606-1683) complete annotated edition, entitled Collected Poems of Li Yishan 李義山詩集, came into being. In the preface of this oldest existing edition of Li Shangyin's poetry, Zhu Heling argued that Li's works revealed social-political events and disclosed the poet's political situation and his ambitions in the language of romantic passion between a man and woman.<sup>18</sup>

Following Zhu, quite a few distinguished scholars have done comprehensive studies on Li Shangyin's poetry since the Qing Dynasty.<sup>19</sup> As some scholars of Li Shangyin have concluded,

however, there are mainly three schools each of which has contributed to a particular interpretation of Li Shangyin's poetry. The first school, in line with Zhu's view, is led by Feng Hao 馮浩 (1719-1801) and Zhang Ertian 張爾田 (1862-1945). In his well-known work A completed Annotation of Yuxisheng's Poetry 玉溪生詩集箋注, Feng Hao painstakingly collected and absorbed the studies by previous and contemporary scholars. However, in this fruitful annotation which surpasses all previous similar works and remains the standard edition of Li's poems, Feng basically sees in many of his poems veiled references to the Linghus, the poet's patrons. Zhang Ertian, in his A Comprehensive Commentary on the Biographical Chronology of Yuxisheng 玉溪生年譜會箋, still the most authoritative work on Li's life, developed Feng's view in his interpretations.<sup>20</sup> Both Feng and Zhang see Li Shangyin's ambiguous poems as personal allegory which involves the poet's relation with his political patron Linghu Tao. Some love poems that express powerful passion and feeling, for example, are taken either as revelation of the poet's ardent desire for Linghu Tao's patronage or reflection of his own frustrations in his official career. Scholars in this school thus believe that in his whole life Li Shangyin, as reflected in his ambiguous poems, "was dominated by his desire for official advancement and his remorse over having lost the patronage of the Ling-hu (Linghu) family by his marriage with

Wang Mao-yuan's (Maoyuan) daughter, and his most celebrated poems are reiterations of such feelings."<sup>21</sup>

Represented by some scholars in the first several decades of this century, the second school interprets Li Shangyin's ambiguous poems, especially the poems without titles, as personal accounts of various clandestine love affairs that the poet had in reality with certain Daoist nuns and Court ladies. The best-known advocates of this view are Su Xuelin 蘇雪林 and Zhu Xie 朱楔. Su's book Yuxi shimi 玉溪詩迷, which focuses on searching the love affairs of Li Shangyin rather than on interpreting texts, has had considerable influence among modern literary historians and critics.<sup>22</sup> In Su Xuelin's opinion, "every poem of his is an extremely amorous and extremely passionate love poem; and his poetry, except for a small portion, exclusively describes his adventures and love affairs" 他的詩一首首都是極香艷極纏綿的情詩, 他的詩除掉一部份之外, 其餘的都是描寫他一生奇遇和戀愛的事迹.<sup>23</sup> Holding this kind of theory, scholars of this group try hard to search for evidence for the "real" love affairs between Li and those nuns or Court ladies. In interpreting Li's poems, especially love poems, they take general words and images as specific "secret codes." According to Su, many of Li's ambiguous poems contain obscure references to a secret love affair between Li Shangyin and two Court entertainers, the sisters called "Flying Phoenix" 飛鸞 and "Agile Phoenix" 輕鳳. For instance, in her interpretation of the poem

“Written after a Dream, while Listening to the Rain together with Candidates Wang and Cheng, on the 28<sup>th</sup> Night of the Seventh Month” 七月二十八日夜與王鄭二秀才聽雨後作. Su says that the poem is about a dream which was written when the poet, after he left the Court, recalled in front of his friends what had happened there between him and the two sisters. Further, Su thinks that allusions to Daoist goddesses in many of Li’s poems refer to one of the sisters named Song who were Daoist nuns.<sup>24</sup> Zhu Xie, in his article entitled “A New Interpretation of Li Shangyin’s Poetry” 李商隱詩新詮, holds similar views except that he makes no attempt to identify these Court ladies and Daoist nuns by name.<sup>25</sup>

The third school includes contemporary scholars like Gu Yiqun 顧翊群 and Sun Zhentao 孫甄陶. Most scholars in this group share the view that “Li’s poems that involve Taoist (Daoist) nuns are not autobiographical love poems but satirical poems about imperial princesses who had taken Taoist (Daoist) vows.” and that “many of his other ambiguous poems are political in nature, alluding to imperial concubines, courtiers, and eunuchs.”<sup>26</sup> Both Gu and Sun are inclined to interpret Li Shangyin’s ambiguous poems either in the light of the poet’s personality and character or on the basis of historical and political background. To them, as pointed out by James Liu, many of Li’s poems are satires of the Court and political factions.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the three schools there are actually some other less known ones. Two deserve mentioning here. The first group is represented by two Qing scholars, Lu Kunceng 陸昆曾 and Qu Fu 屈復, who share a view which is different from all the others. Both Lu and Qu think that the reader of Li's poems should interpret Li's poems according to his subjective feeling 主觀情志, although they, too, think that there is a fixed meaning in the poem given by the poet. Their interpretation, to a certain extent, is therefore a decoding of the intended meaning of the poet through the poem itself rather than other sources. The second group is represented by Liang Qichao whose view we mentioned before. Instead of unriddling the meaning of Li's poems, scholars in this group simply advocate appreciation of the mystery or beauty evoked in Li Shangyin's ambiguous poems. According to these scholars, it is the mysterious beauty resulting from ambiguity that contributes to the aesthetic of Li Shangyin's poems.

These interpretations surveyed above show different concerns about Li Shangyin, and in each case, they are found biased towards certain characteristics of the man known to history. Taken together, however, these seemingly divergent interpretations are founded upon two reigning criteria in the tradition of exegesis: "zhiren lunshi" 知人論世 and "yiyi nizhi" 以意逆志. Both of the criteria are derived from the teaching of Mencius 孟子 (ca. 372-289 BC) whose use of

them, however, was for different purposes. In the Book of Mencius 孟子, Mencius says to Wan Zhang 萬章:

“The good knight in the village befriends the other good knights in the village. The good knight in the state befriends other good knights in the state. The good knight in society befriends other good knights in society. But, if the good knight in society finds that there are not enough good knights to befriend, he can still have converse with the men of antiquity, chanting their songs, and reading their works.

“Can he befriend them without knowing them? He can, for he can have converse with their world. Thus he still has friends.”

一鄉之善士，斯友一鄉之善士，一國之善士，斯友一國之善士，天下之善士，斯友天下之善士，以友天下之善士爲未足，又尚論古之人，頌其詩，讀其書，不知其人可乎！是以論其世也，是尚友也。 28

Here, we can see that the idea “知人論世” basically refers to the matter of morality; that is, through reading literary texts, one can experience and imitate the spiritual integrity of the ancient man. It is

obvious that the final purpose of reading is to improve the moral spirit, the text itself being no more than a medium by which the reader achieves that purpose. Further, Mencius here points out that to imitate the ancient man's spirit, one should not only read his works but also learn about his life, time, and other facts that are outside of his literary works but can be obtained from a context gained from other texts. While the concept “知人論世” is concerned with one's moral and spiritual cultivation, “以意逆志” apparently provides a method of reading the Book of Songs:

Therefore, one who explains the [*Book of*] *Poetry* must not rely on its embellishment so as to do violence to the language, nor on the language so as to do violence to the intention [of the poet]. If he uses his mind to trace the meaning to the intention [of the poet], he will be successful.

故說詩者，不以文害辭，不以辭害志，以意逆志，是為得之。 29

Our understanding of Mencius' idea here is that when one tries with his mind, his thought, to meet “what the author intended to say” 志, he should not be limited or misled by the rhetorical elements, ignoring

meanings conveyed in words: to be able to know what the author really meant, however, one should not just depend on what the words might seem to say, for it may not be the author's intention. To truly understand the author's intention, one should exercise his own thinking apart from taking care of the reading. The "yi" 意, in Zhao Qi's 趙歧 (died 201 AD) commentary, refers to one's "xinyi" 心意, or mind in English. In our understanding, the "xinyi," besides its comprehensive capacities, should have some ratiocinative ones. The "yi" is thus seen as referring to one's subjective relation to what is putatively on the author's mind.<sup>30</sup>

Historically, the establishment of the two criteria for literary interpretation began with the Han annotation of the Book of Songs. If there were any problems with the interpretation of the Book of Songs by the reputed author of the "Great Preface" and Zheng Xuan who used the two methods, as Yan Kuyang 顏昆陽 argues, it should be understandable since what these scholars tried to do with the Book of Songs does not fundamentally belong to literary activity, rather, it belongs to the activity of the studies of Classics 經學 which aims at establishing moral as well as political values through interpretations and explanations of the Confucian Classics.<sup>31</sup> After the Six Dynasties period, literary activity became self-conscious and it departed from the realm of the Classics. In the situation where literary features were taken as they were, literary criticism or interpretation should have also

adjusted itself in accordance with the new concepts. That is to say, when one uses such criteria as "zhiren lunshi" and "yiyi nizhi" to form his critical methods, he should realize their limits while practicing literary interpretation. However, as Yan further points out, the way the Han scholars interpreted the Book of Songs by means of these two criteria above had not developed throughout the dynasties and was used almost unchanged by scholars during the Qing Dynasty when they annotated Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), Li He 李賀 (790-816), and Li Shangyin.<sup>32</sup> Starting with Zhu Heling, the interpretation of Li Shangyin has followed this convention.

By applying these conventional criteria, the scholars in Li Shangyin studies mentioned earlier have tried to explain the anomalies in Li's poetry. More specifically, on the one hand they have tried to dig up the hidden references in Li Shangyin's ambiguous poems by depending on histories, biographies, and other kind of external materials, neglecting the function of the poetic language. On the other, they have attempted to twist or justify the discrepancy between a word, a line, or a whole poem and the "reality" they attempted to see by hypothesizing upon the poet's intentions. Thus, the first and the third kinds of interpretations dismiss the love topic in Li Shangyin's poetry and explain it as political allegories, seeing in Li Shangyin Qu Yuan's 屈原 (ca. 343-278 BC) "Encountering Sorrow" 離騷 which, by means of love expressions--such as the image of the "fairest" 美人.

reveals Qu's political wishes:<sup>33</sup> and the second school, trying not to read Li Shangyin allegorically, rebuilds, however, the poet's biographical life of love simply by reading Li Shangyin's poetry as autobiography. Because of their affiliation to the criticism of the Book of Songs and their unawareness of the fact that the ambiguity in the texts "simultaneously encodes the evidence that several interpretations are possible and that making a choice among them is impossible," these traditional interpretations to a great extent reduce or even destroy the complex and rich meaning inherent in the Li Shangyin corpus.<sup>34</sup>

To maintain what is actually in Li Shangyin's ambiguous poems so as to see the way Li Shangyin's poetry signifies, in our reading of them we need to allow flexibility in terms of their topical reference since "ambiguity is intrinsic, inalienable character of any self-focused message, briefly, a corollary feature of poetry. . . . Not only the message itself but also the addresser and addressee become ambiguous."<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, in our interpretation of these poems and poems in general, as Stephen Owen suggests, we should emphasize the "typological" aspect of poetic response because "the poem itself is essentially typological rather than particular and can be 'reused' in other circumstances."<sup>36</sup>

### Allusion as a Poetic Mode in Li Shangyin's Poetry

As we briefly mentioned before, one major factor that contributes to the ambiguous characteristics in Li Shangyin's poetry is the frequent employment of allusion. As in other issues regarding Li Shangyin's verse, we have found ambivalence among the critics about his use of allusion. In spite of their clear consensus on the fact that allusions exist pervasively in the Li Shangyin corpus, critics either admired or condemned the poet for his use of them. Zhang Jie, in his Suihantang shihua 歲寒堂詩話, is typical of the positive view:

The beauty of Li Yishan's [Shangyin] poetry is more or less like this, the description of natural objects seems trivial and the use of allusions obscure, but the meaning is profound.

…… 義山詩佳處，大抵類此，咏物似瑣屑，  
用事似僻，而意則甚遠。 37

While another Song Critic Cai Juhou's 蔡居厚 criticism in his Cai Kuanfu shihua 蔡寬夫詩話 exemplifies the negative attitude towards Li's use of allusion:

In the poems of Li Yishan [Shangyin], I believe, there is something that excels others' works. But the recondite allusions that he uses, and the crafted language which fails to express ideas clearly, are his notable shortcomings.

義山詩合處信有過人，若其用事深僻，語工而意不及，  
自是其短。 38

An extreme of this negative attitude toward Li's use of allusion is expressed in the derogatory term "ta ji yu" 獺祭魚, which was, though, originally used to refer to the way Li Shangyin manipulated allusion in his prose writing.<sup>39</sup> Obviously, these ambivalent comments on Li Shangyin's use of allusion reflect the general treatment of allusion in tradition which we discussed in the introduction.

However, most modern and contemporary scholars in Li Shangyin studies agree that allusion is a major constructive element that makes Li's poetic writing distinctive. A. C. Graham, for instance, speaks highly of Li Shangyin's allusiveness:

His use of allusion is the subtlest in T'ang (Tang) poetry--  
abrupt transitions in which an allusion provides the

unmentioned bridge. delicate variations on commonplace references, oblique glimpses of historical events, direct presentation of a scene before his eyes in which one senses elusive parallels with a scene in history or poetry.<sup>40</sup>

Although scholars in Li Shangyin studies have had little problem with viewing Li Shangyin's use of allusion as a conscious art, they have not paid enough attention to the reasons for his allusiveness.

In Li Shangyin's well-known "Shang Cui [Guicong] Huazhou shu" 上崔華州書, scholars of Chinese classical literature have seen a kind of later generation's anxiety toward literary influence and his disclaiming of the tradition:

At first, when I heard my elders say that in learning the Tao (Dao) one must seek it from the ancients and in composing literature one must follow rules, I felt greatly unhappy. Then I withdrew and thought to myself: How can what we call the Tao (Dao) be something that only the ancients called the Duke of Chou (Zhou) and Confucius were really capable of? For, inferior as I am, I can personally partake in it together with the Duke of Chou (Zhou) and Confucius. Therefore I have tried to practice

the Tao (Dao) without depending on the moderns or the ancients, and in writing I have directly wielded my brush, being loathe to plagiarize the Scriptures or the histories, or to avoid what may cause offense to the contemporary world.

始聞長老言，學道必求古，爲文必有師法，常慙慙不快，退自思曰：夫所謂道，豈古所謂周公，孔子者獨能邪？蓋愚與周，孔俱身之耳，以是有行道不係今古，直揮筆爲文，不愛攘取經史，諱忌時世。 41

The statement contains a double point. On the one hand, it shows the paramount demand for imitative writing in classical China: on the other, it indicates the burden of the tradition on the later generations of classical China. Proclaiming the poet free from such dependency can be seen to harbor an anxiety toward poetic precedents. In the Bloomian psychological perspective, poets like Li Shangyin and other late Tang and post-Tang poets who write in the shadow of prior excellent writers would be seen desperately attempting to emulate their poetic antecedents. Certainly, in the history of Chinese literature, we see passionate and learned confrontation between authors and preceding texts, and it is hard to imagine that emulation or

competition was not a part of the relationship between a later and previous works.

However, when we look at the issues of literary influence and imitation within the sphere of language as a system of communication and signification, we find that the poet from the succeeding generations writes in a dialectic (as well as dialogic) relationship with antecedent literature since they share a common literary codification with their predecessors. That Li Shangyin consciously employed many allusions in making his "own" poetic texts, as we shall see, can serve as a witness to this phenomenon. It seems that Li Shangyin tried to break away from the fetters of tradition, as stated in the above statement, by using that very tradition in poetic practice. Or, he tried to use the tradition only to intensify his break with it. Interestingly, therefore, a denial of the past in spirit turns out to be a demonstration of it in effect. In such demonstration, however, tradition not only confirms history but also guarantees the new history the poet is making. This kind of relationship between the discrete texts and the continuity of literary history is basically examined under the sign of language in the following discussion of Li Shangyin.

As a poet from the later generation, Li Shangyin identifies himself by trying to borrow from previous poetic texts. Here, let us start our discussion of this observation by pointing out the fact that not all Li Shangyin's poems are allusive. Some poems express

spontaneous feelings and contain explicit signification. The greatly-admired quatrain “Leyou Heights” 樂游原 is a good example of these poems:

向晚意不適，驅車登古原。  
夕陽無限好，只是近黃昏。

Toward evening I feel disconsolate:  
So I drive my carriage up the ancient heights.  
The setting sun has infinite beauty—  
Only, the time is approaching nightfall!<sup>42</sup>

Wandering at the ancient height, the poet watched the sun set. The temporary beauty of the setting sun, however, induced a feeling of sadness and regret. Some traditional commentators take this poem as an elegy of the Tang dynasty or that of the poet himself.<sup>43</sup> According to Liu Xuekai 劉學鍇 and Yu Shucheng 余恕誠, however, we may take the beautiful moment in the natural world captured by Li Shangyin as a symbol of the shortness of the prime time in one’s life.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, as James Liu remarks, “the poem may be taken as an illustration of the common Chinese notion that the extreme of joy leads to its opposite. Realization of the truth of this makes one appreciate even more what is precious and beautiful.”<sup>45</sup> This sort of notion that good things won’t

last actually occurs in many poems before and after Li Shangyin. There are more poems in the Li Shangyin corpus, such as "Lines to Be Sent Home, Written on a Rainy Night" 夜雨寄北, "Fallen Flowers" 落花, etc., that are also written with few or no allusions.

The fact that the poet is able to write very well "direct description," to quote Zhong Rong, but still chooses to write mainly through allusion supports the point we just made earlier that Li Shangyin's poetic creativity is accomplished by using the literary past and his various ways of borrowing from previous texts constitute a conscious art. Sometimes, though, especially when his use of overt or orthodox allusion ("ming yong" 明用 or "zheng yong" 正用) is under examination, we may prefer to see a more instinctive application of a casual talent informed by wide reading, taking for granted that his training in classical literature, like any literatus, taught him the refinements of the literary genres.

Nevertheless, when we consider other modes of allusion, such as the assimilative and inverted ones ("an yong" 暗用 and "fan yong" 反用), of which the "an yong" is one major mode in this poet's allusiveness and has often struck critics as a conscious process, we would think that Li Shangyin was consciously devoted to an art instituted by such Six Dynasties poets as Yu Xin 庾信 (513-581), or such Tang poets as Du Fu, and later adopted as the leading method of poetic composition by such post-Tang poets as Huang Tingjian 黄庭坚

(1045-1105).<sup>46</sup> Defining one's creativity by means of appropriating and manipulating past texts is encouraged by critics in traditional literary criticism. In The Poetic Exposition on Literature 文賦, Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303) says:

He gathers in writing omitted by a hundred generations.  
 Picks rhymes neglected for a thousand years:  
 It falls away—that splendid flowering of dawn, already  
 unfurled.  
 But there opens the unblown budding of evening.

收百世之闕文。  
 采千載之遺韻。  
 謝朝華於已披。  
 啓夕秀於未振。 47

Although what Lu Ji says here is to a certain extent that the belated poet should dig out something left undone by the ancients, it indicates that a poet should turn to tradition for his poetic expressions. During the Mid- and late Tang period, poets and critics also suggested the manipulation of prior literary material in poetic composition. Wang Changling 王昌齡 (690-756), for instance, has this to say:

Imitate old writings, but don't follow their old ideas, or you will never advance far. In all cases you must crisscross and zigzag, transform and appropriate the material in a hundred ways.

學古文章，不得隨他舊意，終不長進：皆須百般縱橫，  
變轉數出。 48

Similarly, Sikong Tu 司空圖 (837-908) says:

The more you go forward along with it,  
The more you understand it truly.  
If you hold to it without ceasing,  
You join with the old and produce the new.

乘之愈往，  
識之愈真，  
如將不盡，  
與古為新。 49

This kind of conscious concern with poetic transformation is best explained later in the Northern Song poet-critic Huang Tingjian's

famous statement which is recorded by the Chan Buddhist monk Huihong 惠洪 (1071-1128) in his Lengzhai yehua 冷齋夜話:

[The meaning of ] poetry is inexhaustible, and yet human abilities are limited. Even [Tao] Yuanming and Shaoling [Du Fu] were unable to achieve mastery using limited talent to pursue inexhaustible meaning. Not changing the meaning of a prior poet but creating language [by reformulating past phrases] that matches his [original] phrase [Zao qi yu] is called "the method of changing the bone." To penetratingly imitate the meaning of the prior poet and yet further nuance it is called "seizing the embryo."

山谷曰： “詩意無窮，而人之才有限。以有限之才，追無窮之意，雖淵明少陵不得工也。然不易其意而造其語，謂之換骨法；規模其意而形容之，謂之奪胎法。”

50

The idea that the poet of a later generation consciously uses literary models to create his own poetry emphasizes a dialectical relationship (or a paradox) between tradition and creativity: a poetic work's reflection of cultural significance and its deliberate recasting

of that significance into a new configuration. Li Shangyin seems to know this relationship very well. In his "Yu Tao Jinshi shu" 與陶進士書, for instance, he shows his realization that the unlimited resources for his poetic expressions lie nowhere else but in the tradition:

I am aware of the models and standards of the Chun qiu and the principles and regulations of the Sages, all of which I have admired for long and cherished deeply, daring not to look down upon them. Having arranged them in order, I write and recite them.

蓋嘗於春秋法度，聖人綱紀，久羨懷藏，不敢薄賤。聯綴比次，手書口誦。 51

Elsewhere, he talks about free experience and experimenting with making a new poetry of his own through appropriation and transformation of prior texts:

Rich colors are useful for painting; clear and lingering sound is what music is. Ideas should be appropriate to the profound and mysterious processes of Nature and eliminate trivial customs. One should be free at the "Four

Beginnings” and leisurely and carefree with the “Six Principles.”

夫玄黃備采者綉之用，清越爲樂者玉之奇。周已慮合玄機，運請俗累：涉降於西始之際，優游於六義之中。 52

By stating his conscious pursuit of poetic creativity within the tradition, Li Shangyin reveals his understanding of the dialectical relationship between tradition and creativity. Moreover, the above statement indicates that he legitimizes his experimenting project with terms of conventional ideas about literature. The suggestion is also held by Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫. In his introduction to the Collection of Li Shangyin's Poems and Proses 李商隱選集, Zhou notes that Li Shangyin already sees the “secret of Nature” 造化之秘 when Li mentions the “lu he xuanji” 慮合玄機. He further points out that Li Shangyin is aware of the importance that one’s ingenious craftsmanship should be appropriate to the “secret of Nature” which is represented by the “xuanji.” The term “xuanji” is used following Zhuang Zi’s idea that all ongoing and oncoming natural activities are in accordance with the “ji” 機.<sup>53</sup> In Zhou’s view, obviously, Li Shangyin understands this “secret of Nature” and wants to form his poetic strategy or thought in accordance with the signal of the change of the Nature.

Of the ways in which Li Shangyin transforms past poetic writings, one is that of inventing poetic diction with allusions to prior texts. By doing so, the poet assimilates his personal experience to that of tradition so as to confirm the poetic work as both a representation of the experiential world and an embodiment of cultural conventions. If the proceeding discussion helps us understand in a way why Li Shangyin is interested in allusive practice in poetic writing, then, the following examination will show the background where the formation of his poetic allusiveness emerges and how he, in his act of alluding, accommodates habits of imitation developed in the tradition.

### **Li Shangyin's Heritage of Literary Allusiveness**

Long before Li Shangyin's time borrowing words and phrases from the venerated literary past had become a habit among writers. By the time of the Six Dynasties, for instance, along with the current development of the parallel prose 駢文 which was full of allusions, poets were so enthusiastically engaged in the composition of allusive texts that critics represented by Zhong Rong launched attacks against them.<sup>54</sup> However, the rampant use of allusion in Six Dynasties literary writing, both poetic and prosaic, developed with a persistence and an intensity so that it lasted into the Tang time and became part of Li Shangyin's allusive heritage.

First of all, we find that Li Shangyin's penchant for allusive writing is connected with his practice of parallel prose. If allusion were not a necessary rhetorical vehicle for lyrical expression, as suggested by some traditional and modern critics, then it was an integral element for the composition of the parallel prose. However, featured with rhyme, antithesis, and high abstruseness, this subgenre of prose is much closer to the genre of poetry, especially the later regulated verse, than to the genre of prose.<sup>55</sup> This popular form of prose essays was vigorously practiced in the court and governmental offices from the Six Dynasties through High Tang to Late Tang time in spite of the opposition from the influential mid-Tang "ancient prose" 古文 movement led by Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), which aimed at returning to the straightforward, unrhymed style of pre-Qin and Han prose. Through his official career, Li Shangyin very often practiced parallel prose writing and was admired by his contemporaries for doing it so excellently.<sup>56</sup> In fact, Li Shangyin's high reputation for his parallel prose writing has also drawn the special attention of some modern scholars who have discovered a close relationship between his poetic and parallel prose writings. Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書, for example, once says: "Li Shangyin's parallel prose is related to his poetry, just as Han Yu's prosaic writing is related to his poetic writing" 樊南四六與玉溪詩消息相通, 猶昌黎文與韓詩也.<sup>57</sup> In the same vein, Zhou Zhenfu sees

many similarities between Li Shangyin's poems and parallel prose essays both of which share, as he remarks, such features as "ringing sound and rhyme, excellent application of trope, and harmonious joining of thoughts and nature" 音韻鏗鏘, 善用比喻, 思合自然.<sup>58</sup> These scholars think that Li Shangyin composed his poetry in the same fashion in which he composed parallel prose essays and they regard his frequent use of allusion in poems as the most striking sign of the connection.<sup>59</sup>

When reading Li Shangyin's poems, one notices his preference for regulated verse 律詩 over ancient style verse 古體詩, and the seven-character quatrain 七絕 over the five-character variety 五絕. As for the reasons behind this preference, James Liu has this to say:

Regulated Verse, with its exact rules, is both more restricting and more challenging, for although it imposes many restrictions, it also affords opportunities for subtle and ingenious verbal constructions not possible in Ancient Verse. The necessity for conciseness in this verse form often leads to highly compact, complex, and ambiguous structures which are well suited to the complex, elusive, and ambiguous worlds explored by many of Li Shang-yin's (Shangyin) poems. Thus we find that most of his poems concerned with esoteric worlds and complicated emotions

are in Regulated Verse, particularly the seven-syllabic variety. . . . Of the two kinds of Quatrains, the five-syllabic demands greater severity of expression, since it consists of merely twenty syllables. That is perhaps why Li Shang-yin (Shangyin), whose poetic genius inclines to the exuberant, prefers the seven-syllabic kind.<sup>60</sup>

Brief yet very sound, this comment draws our attention not only to Li Shangyin's poetic expression in these lyrical forms, but also to some major features of these forms, especially those of the regulated verse. We find that in those "highly compact, complex, and ambiguous structures" of the regulated verse, allusiveness is a striking feature. Although the form of regulated verse did not come to be applied until the Tang Dynasty, the rudiments of it can be found in poetic writing from the Six Dynasties on. This link leads us to another area of Li Shangyin's allusive heritage.

The frequent use of allusion in Six Dynasties poems can be explained in part as a result of poetic changes occurring at that time. Under the influence of literary theories represented by Liu Xie and Zhong Rong and the doctrine that "words do not exhaust meaning" 言不盡意, the primary concern of the current poetics was to express one's ideas or feelings with brevity and reserve.<sup>61</sup> The following

sentence from The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons exemplifies the concern:

When one is able through his work to induce in the reader a mood that persists beyond the limit of the description of the physical things, he may be considered a man who completely understands the art of writing.

物色盡而情有余者，曉會通也。 62

Given the limitations of words and lines in a poem, the Six Dynasties poet looked for something that could expand the power of a word or image. This strategy calls for allusion which is brief and sustained by nature in many ways. Allusion is an inevitable part of the developments of Six Dynasties verse especially in the couplet. The couplet functions "as a basic structural unit of the poem," according to Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin who regard the emergence of the couplet as a major feature of Six Dynasties poetry.<sup>63</sup> When the poetic development eventually led to poetry in the regulated verse form in the Tang Dynasty, it already had allusiveness in its background. As it was suitable for his poetic vision, Li Shangyin embraced this poetic form in which he surpassed most of his predecessors in use of deeper symbolic meanings and complex associations and in which he "brought

the art of allusion and symbolism to another plateau, which directly influenced the development of many Sung (Song) schools of poetry.”<sup>64</sup>

Traditionally, in discussions of Li Shangyin’s poetry, critics would attribute some of the poet’s achievements to his successful imitation of previous great poets, such as Qu Yuan, Li He, especially Du Fu. The Qing critic Shi Buhua 施補華, for instance, says:

Many of Li Yishan’s [Shangyin] seven-character regulated verse poems are strongly influenced by Du Fu. Therefore, the lushly ornamental texture of his poems is often couched with gloominess. Poems, such as “More Reflections” and “In the Camp of the Sketching Brush,” are ample in vitality and complete in spirit, and they directly achieve the status of Du Fu.

義山七律得於少陵者深，故儂麗之中，時帶沉鬱，如重有感，籌筆驛等篇，氣足神完，直登其堂入其室矣。<sup>65</sup>

Similar comparisons of Li Shangyin to Du Fu, with further elaborations, are frequently seen in contemporary Li Shangyin studies.<sup>66</sup> Given the facts that many of Du Fu’s poems show his love of the literary past and that his use of the tradition in his work has been seen as a modal for those poets who followed, this sort of view is

quite plausible.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, when one realizes that both Li Shangyin and Du Fu are notably allusive poets of the time and acknowledged masters of the regulated verse, comparing the two seems legitimate. In these comparisons it is generally emphasized that Li Shangyin consciously imitated Dufu. Such political poems by Li Shangyin as “Written while Traveling through the Western Suburbs” 行次西郊作一百韻, “In the Camp of the Sketching Brush” 籌筆驛, and “Offhand Poems” 漫成五章, for instance, are seen as imitations of Du Fu’s “Journey North” 北征, “Poetic Thoughts on Ancient Sites” 詠懷古迹, and “Playful Quatrains” 戲爲六絕句 respectively. The following comparison of Li Shangyin’s lines with Du Fu’s further illustrate this:

高江急峽雷逾斗，古木蒼藤日月昏。

In the swelling river and gulping gorges, thunders battle.  
Ancient forests and hoary vines darken the sun and moon.  
(from Du Fu’s “The City of White Emperor” 白帝)

江風催雁急，山木帶蟬暉。

The river wind blows hard on the wild geese:

The mountain trees sheltering cicadas, stand in the setting  
sun.

(from Li Shangyin's "Lament for Registrar Liu Fen"  
哭劉同戶)

萬里悲秋仍作客，百年多病獨登臺。

Ten thousand miles away in sad autumn, I often find  
myself a stranger:

My whole life afflicted by sickness, I mount alone the  
high terrace.

(from Du Fu's "Climbing the Heights" 登高)

萬里憶歸元亮井，三年從事亞夫營。

My thoughts return to Yuan-liang's well ten thousand  
miles away:

For three years I have been following General Ya-fu's  
camp.

(from Li Shangyin's "Second Day of the Second Month"  
二月二日)68

As shown in some of the studies mentioned above, Du Fu uses allusion frequently and with exceptional skill. He often quotes or paraphrases classical texts in shaping his poetic characteristics and reflecting his fate. He refers not only to earlier literary texts but also to historical personages. An acknowledged master of both ancient style and regulated verse, Du Fu successfully uses allusions in ancient style poems and is equally successful in his experiments with allusions in many of his poems in the restricted regulated verse form.<sup>69</sup> The following characteristics of Du Fu's use of allusion summed up by David McCraw show some common features with Li Shangyin's:

Among his more remarkable allusive variations are, first, the inverted allusion (what Chinese called "turning the tables"). . . . Second, he can achieve virtuosic effects with paired allusions. . . . Third, some allusions become "global" and govern an entire poem.<sup>70</sup>

Some of these are precisely the main ways Li Shangyin uses his allusion. Du Fu's allusions often resemble symbols, as is noted by McCraw: "If High Tang aesthetics used symbols from nature to convey personal feeling, in Du Fu's aesthetics the symbols of proper names or other coded words were used to convey a historical context and

meanings.”<sup>71</sup> This is also one of the characteristics of Li Shangyin’s use of allusion.

Despite the similarities of methods used by the two poets, Li Shangyin’s heritage of allusiveness from Du Fu or the whole prior poetic tradition should not be limited to the closed comparison of two individual poets nor to influence study. Thus, in the analyses of Li Shangyin’s allusive texts in the following chapters, when dealing with the poet’s resemblance with another poet, I will consider the shared conventions from which they both draw poetic inspiration and diction. Even when some resemblances show some form of intentional imitation or conscious emulation, I will be concerned with the common literary convention to which both poets have recourse.

### Notes

1 Wang Liqing 王禮卿, Yishan lunshi quanzheng 遺山論詩詮證 (Taipei: Zhonghua congshu, 1976) 85. Trans. John Timothy Wixted in John Timothy Wixted, Poems on Poetry: Literary Criticism by Yuan Hao-wen (1190-1257), diss., Oxford University, 1976. (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1978) 173.

2 At the beginning of the Song Dynasty, a group of poets made Li Shangyin's poetry the special model to imitate. These poets, including Yang Yi 楊億 (974-1020), Liu Yun 劉筠 (971-1031), and others, are known as the Xikun School 西昆派 because of the title of a collection of their poems, Collection of Poems and Replies on Mount Kunlun in the West 西昆酬唱集. Although the Xikun poets actually achieved only a superficial resemblance to Li Shangyin's stylistic idiosyncrasies, according to traditional views, the name "Xikun" has often been anachronistically applied to Li Shangyin's poetry. The Song critic Yan Yu, for instance, writes in his Canglang shihua: "The His-K'un (Xikun) style—this means the style of Li Shang-yin (Shangyin), but under this designation is also to be found that of Wen T'ing-yun (Tingyun) and such poets of our own era as Yang I (Yi) and Liu Yun" 西昆體，即李商隱體，然兼溫庭筠及本朝楊，劉諸公而名

之也。(Yan Yu 嚴羽, Canglang shihua 滄浪詩話, in He Wenhuan 何文煥, ed., Lidai shihua 歷代詩話, Taipei: Yiwen, 1974, 445. Trans. Timothy Wixted in Poems on Poetry, 105) Here, the “Xikun” in Yuan Haowen’s quatrain refers to Li Shangyin’s poetry rather than the Xikun School poetry, according to the Qing critic Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805), with whom many contemporary scholars share the view. Hence “Li Shang-yin’s (Shangyin) verse” in the English translation. See Wixted, 103-107.

3 As a matter of fact, this view has generally been shared by many scholars in Li Shangyin studies. See, e.g., Yan Kunyang 顏昆陽, Li Shangyin shi jianshi fangfa lun 李商隱詩箋釋方法論 (Taipei: Xuesheng, 1991) 154.

4 Quite a few scholars in Li Shangyin studies hold this view. Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, for instance, thinks that no one would have touched Li’s poems if they had not been attractively ambiguous. See Xu Fuguan, Zhongguo wenxue lun ji 中國文學論集 (Taipei: Xuesheng, 1980) 178. Also, as some studies show, Li Shangyin is one of a few Tang poets who has been extensively studied because of the ambiguity in his style. See, e.g., Yan Kunyang, Li Shangyin shi jianshi fangfa lun, 1.

5 Liu Xie 劉勰, Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍 (Sibu congkan 四部叢刊 ed.) 8.5a. Trans. Vincent Yu-chung Shih in Vincent Yu-chung Shih, The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons Chinese-

English ed. (Hong Kong: the Chinese University Press, 1983) 415.

The translation is modified by this writer.

6 A. C. Graham, Poems of the Late T'ang (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965) 37.

7 For detailed discussions on ambiguity, see William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity ( London: Chatto and Windus, 1963 ); Shlomith Rimmon, The Concept of Ambiguity: the Example of James (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977); and Donald N. Levine, The Flight from Ambiguity: Essays in Social and Cultural Theory. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

8 Empson, 1; James J. Y. Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-Century Baroque Chinese Poet (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969) 251.

9 See, e.g., Yeh Chia-ying 葉嘉瑩, Zhongguo gudian shige pinglun ji 中國古典詩歌評論集 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua, 1977) 139-149; and James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 252-253.

10 In the light of Empson's theory, Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 devotes one article to the discussion of equivocal characteristics of classical poems. In that article, by analyzing several other classical poems, such as Tao Qian's 陶潛 "Yin jiu" 飲酒 and Du Fu's 杜甫 "Qiu xing" 秋興, he traces the beginning of Chinese poetic ambiguity back to the Han poem "Xingxing chong xing xing." In Zhu's view, poetic ambiguity as a feature of poetry has its limitations. See Zhu Ziqing,

Zhu Ziqing gudian wenxue lunwen ji 宋自清古典文學論文集, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1981) 59-77.

11 Some scholars trace the beginnings of Chinese poetic ambiguity to Du Fu's poems after the poet arrived in Kuizhou in the year of 766. See, e.g., A. C. Graham, Poems of the Late T'ang, 20; in Poems of the Late T'ang, Graham also mentions that the Japanese scholar Kurokawa Voichi, in his "An Introduction to Tu Fu's 'Eight Autumn Poems'" (in Japanese: Journal of Chinese Literature, Kyoto University, April 1956), holds a similar view in discussing Du Fu's ambiguous characteristics. Although it is doubtful that the actual phenomenon of poetic ambiguity began with Du Fu as seen by these scholars, their views suggest the strong sensibility toward poetic ambiguity during the Tang Dynasty.

12 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 27.

13 Ye Xie 葉燮, Yuan shi 原詩, in Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, ed., Zhongguo gudian wenxue lilun piping zhuanzhu xuanji 中國古典文學理論批評專著選集 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1979) 74. My own translation.

14 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, Yinbing shi heji 飲冰室合集 (Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1937) 50. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 31-32.

15 Feng Hao 馮浩, ed. And annot., Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu 玉溪生詩集箋注, *juan* 2, 493. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 51.

16 Shen Deqian 沈德潛, Shuo shi zuiyu 說詩碎語, in Guo Shaoyu, ed., Zhongguo gudian wenxue lilun piping zhuanzhu xuanji 中國古典文學理論批評專著選集, 217. My own translation.

17 In contrast, for instance, Du Mu's 杜牧 seven-syllabic regulated poems often bear realistic characteristics, as pointed out by scholars. See, e.g., Zhao Qian 趙謙, Tang qilu yishu shi 唐七律藝術史 (Taipei: Wenjin, 1992) 216.

18 See Zhu Heling 朱鶴齡, ed. And annot., Li Yishan shiji 李義山詩集, 序 1-7. Although Zhu Heling held this kind of opinion, he did not render detailed interpretations of those poems. His opinion, however, threw great influence on later commentators. For detailed discussions of Zhu's work, see Yan Kuniyang, Li Shangyin shi jianshi fangfa lun, 84-87.

19 According to the Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao 四庫全書總目提要, the earliest editions of Li Shangyin's poems were the ones by Liu Ke 劉克 and Zhang Wenliang 張文亮. These editions were lost a long time ago. It is said that the Ming Buddhist Dao Yuan annotated Li's poems once. However, Zhu Heling's Li Yishan shiji 李義山詩集 is now the oldest existing edition of Li Shangyin's poetry. Based upon this edition, quite a few new editions appeared later in the

Qing Dynasty among which are Lu Kunceng's 陸昆曾 Li Yishan shi jie 李義山詩解 (1724), Yao Peiqian's 姚培謙 Li Yishan shiji jianzhu 李義山詩集箋注 (1739), Qu Fu's 屈復 Yuxisheng shiyi 玉溪生詩意 (1739), and Cheng Mengxing's 程夢星 Chongding Li Yishan shiji jianzhu 重訂李義山詩集箋注 (1744). During the years of Qianlong 乾隆, approximately from 1736 to 1763, the well-known Li Shangyin scholar Feng Hao 馮浩 did tremendous studies on previous editions and researches on Li Shangyin's biography and works. By rearranging the chronicle of Li's life, editing Li's poems in accordance with possible chronology and comprehensively annotating all poems, Feng Hao produced the Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu 玉溪生詩集箋注, an important edition of Li Shangyin's poetry. Among modern studies of Li Shangyin, the most important works are Zhang Ertian's 張爾田 Yuxisheng nianpu huijian 玉溪生年譜會箋, which provides many corrected and lost records of Li Shangyin's life, background material for Li's poems, and detailed annotations as well, and Li Shangyin shige jijie 李商隱詩歌集解, edited by Liu Xuekai 劉學鐸 and Yu Shucheng 余恕誠, which collects all the above works' and others' important annotations of Li Shangyin in five volumes.

20 For further discussions on Feng's and Zhang's works, see Yan Kunyang, Li Shangyin shi jianshi fangfa lun, 90-93.

21 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 27.

22 Even recently published works bear this kind of view. See, e.g., Bai guanyun 白冠雲, Li Shangyin yanqing shi zhi mi 李商隱艷情詩之迷 (Taipei: Mingwen, 1991).

23 Su Xuelin 蘇雪林, Yuxi shimi zhengxu hebian 玉溪詩迷正續合編 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu, 1988) 2. My own translation.

24 See Su Xuelin, 43-51, 36.

25 See Zhu Xie 朱楔, He Panfei 何潘飛, and Liu Pansui 劉盼遂, Li Shangyin he tade shi 李商隱和他的詩 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng, 1971) 1-2, 59-108.

26 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 28.

27 See, e.g., Gu Yiqun 顧翊群, Li Shangyin pinglun 李商隱評論 (Taipei: Zhonghua shiyuan, 1958) 1-5, 156-59.

28 Mengzi 孟子, 萬章下 (Sibu congkan 四部叢刊 ed.) 5B.8. Trans. W.A.C.H. Dobson in W.A.C.H. Dobson, Mencius (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1966) 72.

29 Mengzi, 萬章上, 5A.4. Trans. Chow Tse-tsung in Chow Tse-tsung, "The Early History of the Chinese Word *Shih* (Poetry)," Wen-lin: Studies in the Chinese Humanities, ed. Chow Tse-tsung (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 156.

30 "Zhi" 志 in Chinese poetry is the correlative of "shi" 詩: poetry expressing intention in words 詩言志. As Chow Tse-tsung demonstrates, Mencius, like most Confucian philosophers who define "shi" in terms of "zhi," shows here his agreement to the traditional

concept of “shi.” There has been controversy over the exegesis of the “wen” 文 in Mencius’ speech. To support his interpretation of “wen” as embellishment or rhetoric, Chow Tse-tsung uses a passage from the Zuo Zhuan 左傳, 襄公二十五年, which I quote here: “Confucius said, ‘The record has this: “Language is to complement one’s intention, and embellishment to complement the language.” Without language, who can know one’s intention? If one expresses himself in language without embellishment, he will not go very far.’” 仲尼曰: “志有之: ‘言以足志, 文以足言.’ 不言, 誰知其志? 言之無文, 行而不遠。” (Chow Tse-tsung, 156.) Here, “yan” 言, according to Chow, is similar to Mencius’ “ci” 辭.

31 Yan Kunyang points out that by interpreting the meaning of a poem through fixing its background, the “Great Preface” 大序 to the Shi jing by Mao showed the tendency of the literary interpretation in accordance with his understanding of the “zhiren lunshi” 知人論世. This interpretive frame was then established by Zheng Xuan when he interpreted Mao shi. The “Shi pu” 詩譜, for instance, obviously functioned as that of “論世.” In terms of the “yiyi nizhi” 以意逆志, both Mao and Zheng used it to interpret those poems or parts of poems in the Shi jing that communicate with the reader through “comparison and affective image” 比興; while using this criterion, they often went beyond the limit that Mencius’ original idea had set up. For a detailed discussion of the distortion of Mencius’ original meaning and the

function and limitation of the two criteria in the interpretation of the Shi jing, see Yan Kunyang, Li Shangyin shi jianshi fangfa lun, 107-118.

32 See Yan, 3-31.

33 For a detailed discussion of this image and other images and metaphors in "Encountering Sorrow," see Pauline Yu. The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 84-117.

34 Michael Riffaterre, Text Production trans. Terese Lyons (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 10.

35 Roman Jakobson, Language in Literature, eds. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) 85. Later, Riffaterre talks about poetic ambiguity in a similar way: "The fact is, however, that obscure and ambiguous passages are as much a part of the text's semantic structure as its clearest passages." (Riffaterre, Text Production, 10)

36 Stephen Owen, "Poetry and Its Historical Ground," Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews 12 (1990): 117. In Owen's view, poetry has its normative aspect which "allowed it to be flexible in reference to a variety of particular situations" and to be reused by another person—e.g., a reader of it—for his personal circumstances. Viewed in this light, a poem's "mode of meaning is given as essentially typological" and cannot be entirely reduced "to the poet's

own particular circumstances.” “By not seeking to determine the particular historical ground (though assuming in a general way that some poems may have referred to *some* historical ground),” our understanding or interpretation of poetry can become active and remain open. See Owen, 117-118.

37 Zhang Jie 張戒, Suihantang shihua 歲寒堂詩話, in Ding Fubao 丁福保, ed., Xu lidai shihua 續歷代詩話, vol. 1 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1974), 556. My own translation.

38 Cai Juhou 蔡居厚, Cai Kuanfu shihua 蔡寬夫詩話, in Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, ed., Song shihua jivi 宋詩話輯佚, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980) 399-400. My own translation.

39 “Ta” 獺, or “shuita” 水獺, refers to otter which, having caught fish, usually puts them one by one in front of it before eating them, as if offering sacrifices to its “ancestors.” It is said that when Li Shangyin was writing, he spread old books around him to search for words and phrases in them: this scene was like otter’s offering fish to its ancestors. For a brief historical account of this phrase, see Shen Qiuxiong 沈秋雄, “Shilun Li Yishan shi de yongdian” 試論李義山詩的用典, Li Shangyin shi yanjiu lunwen ji 李商隱詩研究論文集, ed. Guoli Zhongshan daxue Xhongwen xuehui 國立中山大學中文學會 (Taipei: Tiangong, 1984), 619.

40 A. C. Graham, Poems of the Late T’ang, 143.

41 Feng Hao 馮浩, ed. And annot., Fannan wen ji xiangzhu 樊南文集 詳注, *juan* 8, in Li Yishan shiwen quanji 李義山詩文全集, vol. 6, 417. Trans. James Liu in James J. Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975) 127. For a brief discussion of Li's anxiety to ward literary influence and his disclaiming of the tradition indicated in this letter, see Joseph R. Allen, In the Voice of Others: Chinese Music Bureau Poetry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992) 30.

42 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 749. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 160.

43 See, e.g., Feng Hao's quotation from the Shihua leibian 詩話類編 in Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 749; Cheng Mengxing's and Wu Yangxian's 吳仰賢 comments, included in Liu Xuekai 劉學鍇, and Yu Shucheng 余恕誠, eds. And comps., Li Shangyin shige jijie 李商隱詩歌集解 vol. 5, 1944-1945.

44 Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol. 5, 1945.

45 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 160.

46 For a discussion of Yu's influence on Li, see Wu Tiaogong 吳調公, Li Shangyin yanjiu 李商隱研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1982) 168-172; for a comprehensive discussion of Huang's notions of using past literature, see David Palumbo-Liu, The Poetics of

Appropriation: The Literary Theory and Practice of Huang Tingjian (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) 156-172.

47 Lu Ji 陸機, Wen fu 文賦, in Wen Xuan 文選, comp. Xiao Tong 蕭統 (Changsha: Shangwu, 1939) 17. 349. Trans. Stephen Owen in Stephen Owen, Readings in Chinese Literary Thought (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 102.

48 Quoted from Zhou Weide 周維德, trans. And annot., Wenjing mifulun 文鏡秘府論, by Henzo Kinko 遍照金剛 (Beijing: Renmin, 1975) 139. Trans. Richard Bodman in Richard Bodman, "Poetics and Prosody in Early Mediaeval China," diss., Cornell University, 1978. 397.

49 Sikong Tu 司空圖, Ershisi shipin 二十四詩品, in Lidai shihua, 24. Trans. Stephen Owen in Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 310. In interpreting the last line, Owen says: " 'Old' here implies what is constant and permanent rather than what simply comes from the past." Interestingly, by emphasizing the association between the "old" and the "constant and permanent," Owen shows from a different angle the necessary continuity of poetic techniques.

50 Huihong 惠洪, Lengzhai yehua 冷齋夜話 (Changsha: Shangwu, 1939) 5. Trans. David Polumbo-liu in The Poetics of Appropriation, 156. Another remark of Huang's is "spotting iron and turning it to gold" 點鐵成金. (Trans. Polumbo-Liu)

51 Feng Hao. Fannan wen ji xiangzhu, *juan* 8, in Li Yishan shiwen quanji, vol. 6, 418. My own translation.

52 Li Shangyin. "Xian Cilang Ju Lu Gong qi" 獻伺郎鉅鹿公啓. Feng Hao. Fannan wen ji xiangzhu, *juan* 3, in Li Yishan shiwen quanji, vol. 5, 171. My own translation. In the same letter, Li Shangyin points out some of his contemporaries' weakness in poetic composition, especially their unbalanced imitation of their predecessors: he suggests that one should absorb all strong points of previous poetry, including diction and composition rules, and integrate them into one's own work.

53 See Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫, ed., introduction, Li Shangyin xuanji 李商隱選集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986) 15.

54 As mentioned in introduction, Zhong Rong 鐘嶸 criticizes the abusive use of allusion by such poets as Ren Fang 任昉 and Wang Rong 王融.

55 For a detailed discussion of the features of this prosaic form, see Zhang Renqing 張仁青, Pianwen xue 駢文學 (Taipei: Wenshizhe, 1984) 137-201.

56 For further discussions of Li's parallel prose writing, including his reputation for it, see Dong Naibin 董乃斌, Li Shangyin de xinling shijie 李商隱的心靈世界 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1992) 208-224.

57 Quoted from Zhou Zhenfu, Li Shangyin xuanji, 8. My own translation.

58 Zhou Zhenfu, 8. My own translation.

59 See Dong Naibin, Li Shangyin de xinling shijie, 188.

60 James Liu, The Poetry of Li shang-yin, 229. As Liu's statistics show, among Li's extant poems (602 in all), there are 146 in five-character regulated verse, 120 in seven-character regulated verse, 52 in five-character multiple regulated verse, 32 five-character quatrains, and 201 seven-character quatrains. The preference for regulated verse is actually a tendency in Late Tang poetry, as Stephen Owen notes. See Stephen Owen, The Poetry of Meng Chiao and Han yu (New Haven: Yale University, 1975) 240-241.

61 For a brief discussion of the influence of the theories of Liu Xie and Zhong Rong upon Six Dynasties poetry, see Kao Yu-kung, and Mei Tsu-lin, "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion in T'ang Poetry," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 38 (1978): 321-324.

62 Liu Xie, Wenxin diaolong, 10. 1b. Trans. Vincent Yu-chung Shih, 483.

63 Kao Yu-kung, and Mei Tsu-lin, 323.

64 Kao Yu-kung, "The Aesthetics of Regulated Verse." The Vitality of the Lyric Voice eds. Lin Shuen-fu and Stephen Owen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) 384.

65 Cited in Wu Tiaogong, Li Shangyin yanjiu, 177. My own translation.

66 See, e.g., Wu Tiaogong, 173-183; and Zhang Shuxiang, Li Yishan shi xilun, 247-251.

67 As Ye Xie points out: “the poetry of Tu (Du) Fu encompasses both source and stream, includes both norm and mutation, and nothing that went before him is left out of the scope of his poetry—from the simplicity and ancient dignity of Han and Wei poetry to the lushly ornamental texture of Six Dynasties poetry, or the limpid serenity that is also found in the poetry of that period. However, whatever Tu (Du) Fu produced was Tu (Du) Fu’s own: there was not a word or a line that was not his poetry but the poetry of some predecessor” 杜甫之詩，包源流，綜正變。自甫以前，如漢魏之渾樸古雅，六朝之藻麗穠纖，澹遠韶秀，甫詩無一不備。然出於甫，皆甫之詩，無一字句為前人之詩也。（Ye Xie, Yuan shi, in Guo Shaoyu, ed., Zhongguo gudian wenxue lilun piping zhuanzhu xuanji, 8. Trans. Owen in Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 555-556.) See also Chen Wenhua 陳文華, Du Fu shilu tanwei 杜甫詩律探微, MA thesis, Guoli Taiwan shifan daxue guowen yanjiu suo 國立臺灣師範大學國文研究所, jikan 22 (Taipei, 1977) 121-122.

68 For Du’s poems, see Quan Tang shi 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985) 2505, 2467. Trans. Liu Wu-chi in Liu Wu-chi and Irving Yucheng Lo, eds., Sunflower Splendor: three Thousand Years

of Chinese Poetry (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1975) 138, 140. For Li's poems, see Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 198, *juan* 2, 515. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 133, 162. For further discussions of Li's imitating Du, see, e.g., Wu Tiaogong, Li Shangyin yanjiu, 173-183.

69 Many books contain discussions on Du fu's use of allusion in regulated verse. See, e.g., David Palumbo-Liu, The Poetics of Appropriation, 148-172; for Du's use of allusion in ancient style poems, see, e.g., Shan Chou's intensive study on Du Fu's famous "Ba ai" 八哀 in Shan Chou, "Allusion and Periphrasis as Modes of Poetry in Tu Fu's "Eight Laments." Harvard journal of Asiatic Studies 45 (1985): 77-128.

70 David R. McCraw, Du Fu's Laments from the South (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992) 223.

71 McCraw, 223.

## CHAPTER 2

### “Clouds and Rain”:

#### Modes of Li Shangyin’s Allusiveness

Like some pre-Qing critics, the famous Qing critic Yuan Mei, who is known to have been particularly averse to the excessive use of allusion, holds a positive view of Li Shangyin’s use of allusion:

Since the appearance of the Book of Songs, poetry depends on the poet’s nature and sensibility for its expression and communication. It has nothing to do with rhetorical erudition. Although there is a rather excessive application of allusion in Li Yishan’s (Shangyin) poems, those allusions are not irrelevant decorations, but are fused by his talents and refined sensibility into the poetic structure.

自三百篇至今日，凡詩之傳者，都是性靈，不關堆垛，  
惟李義山詩稍多典故，然皆用才情驅使，不專砌填也。

Indeed, Li Shangyin, often by employing allusion, evokes subtle yet powerful feelings in many of his poems. Furthermore, he is famous not only for using allusions in a large portion of his poetry, but also for using many allusions in one poem. An oft-quoted example of the latter is the poem "Tears" 泪:

永巷長年怨綺羅，離情終日思風波。  
 湘江竹上痕無限，峴首碑前灑幾多。  
 人去紫臺秋入塞，兵殘楚帳夜聞歌。  
 朝來瀟水橋邊問，未抵青袍送玉珂。

The court lady long kept in the "Deep Lane" resents her fine clothes.

The wandering man's nostalgia mingles with his thought of the windy prospect.

The bamboo by the River Hsiang (Xiang) is tainted with infinite traces [of tears].

How people weep in front of Yang Hu's monument on Mountain Hsien (Xian).

In Autumn Wang Chao-chun (Zhaojun) sighs in despair at Purple Terrace before she departs for the desert.

Hsiang (Xiang) Yu, defeated, with remaining few soldiers  
 in his tent, hears the Tzu (Chu) songs being sung.  
 In the morning people say good-bye by the bridge over  
 River Pa (Ba).  
 Of all the sad things it's saddest for one to see his friend  
 off.<sup>2</sup>

Line 1/ The "fine clothes" (qiluo) stands for Court ladies

Line 4/ Yang Hu is said to have loved so much to roam  
 about Mountain Xian. After he died, people there built a monument  
 (Xianshou Bei) in his memory on Mountain Xian and held memorial  
 ceremonies in front of the monument at fixed time ( Cf. Jin shu,  
Yang Hu Zhuan, *juan* 34 )

Line 5/ Purple Terrace (Zitai), a palace with purple walls  
 In Jiang Yan's "Heng Fu," Purple Terrace is referred to the palace  
 where Wang Zhaojun lived before leaving for the desert ( Wen xuan,  
 16 342 )

Line 7/ "The bridge over River Pa ( Ba )" refers to Ba Qiao,  
 also called Baling Qiao, which was located in east to Chang'an, a  
 place where people of Chang'an in the Tang time often saw off one  
 another

Line 8/ The Chinese word "qing pao" ( green gown )  
 indicates a man of lower rank ( in Tang times, colors of official  
 gowns imply different ranks ); the word "yuke" ( white agate ) is a  
 kind of ornament on the horse saddle. Here, Zhang Ertian claims

that "yuke" indicates a lofty noble who is departing ( Cf. Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol. 4, 1642 )

Although the title of this poem is "Tears," nowhere does the poem use the word tears. Seven of the eight lines in the poem, however, contain allusions and they all symbolize a sort of sadness. In the first six lines, the allusions tell of six different kinds of tearfulness. The first line suggests frustrated tears of palace ladies in the allusion to "Deep Lane" 永巷 which is where disgraced Court ladies were kept. The second line refers to a traveler who shed tears because of homesickness. In the third line the allusion is to Emperor Yao's 帝堯 two daughters who were said in the legend to have drowned themselves in River Xiang at the news of their husband's death and became goddesses of the river; the tears they shed on the bamboos by the river turned speckled. Line four alludes to the story of Yang Hu 羊祜 in which, after Yang Hu died, people wept in front of the monument in his memory whenever they went to see it. Wang Zhaojun's 王昭君 going north to marry the barbaric Khan is alluded to in the fifth line and the sixth line refers to the story of Xiang Yu 項羽 who, when surrounded by Liu Bang's 劉邦 army at Gaixia and realizing the inevitability of his defeat, wept in his tent upon hearing the Han soldiers singing Chu folk songs. With these six tearful stories as a preamble, the scene of an unsuccessful master's farewell to a

noble man, indicated by the allusions in the last couplet, is ever sadder.

Of various interpretations, Feng Hao and Zhang Ertian regard this as a poem written for Li Deyu, the leader of the "Li Faction" to which Li Shangyin's father-in-law Wang Maoyuan belonged; Zhu Heling, together with He Zhuo 何焯 and Ji Yun, prefers to take it simply as a poem of which the central theme is parting; but Lu Kunceng and Chen Fan 陳帆 both think that the central theme of the poem is the sadness of an unsuccessful master's farewell to a noble man.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars in Li Shangyin studies have extended the theme to the point that by emphasizing the bitterness of parting, the poet indicates that life is sad and valuable things in life are hard to hold for long. Although Li Shangyin has been criticized by some critics for merely showing off his erudition through the abundance of allusions in this and other poems, the allusions in this poem, as a matter of fact, "serve as a poetic device of compression, for they are used as an economical means of presenting a chain of situations, which are the objective correlative of the emotion intended by the poet."<sup>4</sup>

Li Shangyin not only borrows often in his poetic writing, but also distinguishes his practice from that of others by appropriating conventional allusions so skillfully that they are naturally intermingled with the rest of a poem. His ability to range widely throughout the literary tradition in search of images and voices for his poetic project

is great and some scholars have noticed that he frequently alludes to out-of-the-way tales and anecdotes, mythological and legendary stories.<sup>5</sup> Not only these but also the Classics and histories are among his sources and in scope Li Shangyin's use of allusion is unlimited and unconventional. This is especially true when we compare him to pre-Tang and his contemporary poets most of whom usually allude to canonical works. Even though mythological and legendary allusion had been used in pre-Tang and other Tang poems, notably in Li He's poems, the frequency of their appearance in Li Shangyin's poems is much higher.<sup>6</sup> In terms of allusive techniques, he presents in his poetry a continuum of forms that starts with the use of overt allusions, and moves on with a tendency to reduce the more visible marks of borrowing through subtly internalizing his allusions.

To explain the puzzling strength of Li Shangyin's poetic presence and, at the same time, the poetic significance of allusion in classic poetry in general, we need to direct our critical attention to some of the allusive modes and the effect they produce, especially assimilative modes with which Li Shangyin subtly incorporates his erudition into his poems and explores ways to manipulate and extend existing poetic material. The task will be undertaken in this chapter and the next two. In this chapter, I shall focus on one allusion which Li Shangyin favors, namely, "clouds and rain" 雲雨. There are two reasons for this: first, it provides us with a conveniently limited

sample for discussing Li's allusive modes in a general way; secondly, examining one particular allusion in different variations in several model instances will show that in Li Shangyin's poetry one allusive instrument can produce borrowed tones of different quality and depth.

### **"Clouds and Rain:" Allusion to the Goddess of Mount Wu**

As we mentioned earlier, Li Shangyin often alludes to myths and legends which embody popular stories such as those about the Goddess of the moon, about the Goddess of the Mount Wu, and so on. In the formation of the allusions to these myths and legends, there are certain archetypal words that haunt poetic lines in the Li Shangyin corpus.<sup>7</sup> Many scholars have noted that Li Shangyin favors certain words in expressing his feelings or exploring his poetic worlds. Words like "powerless" 無力, "wither" 殘, "death" 死, "end" 盡, "ashes" 灰, "dry" 干, and "cold" 寒 in one poem by Li Shangyin, as James Liu notes, "suggest exhaustion and despair."<sup>8</sup> Among the poet's favorite words there are many that are wrought from allusions. The words, "clouds" 雲, which is associated with erotic love, and "rain" 雨, which means sexual love when used together with "clouds," are among one certain group of words that is "associated with intimacy, feminine beauty, and amorous atmosphere," as James Liu observes.<sup>9</sup> These two words, used together or separately, serve as allusion markers in a great number of

Li's poems for the several dimensions of the story about the amorous Goddess of Mount Wu 巫山神女 and her mysterious love affair with the King of Chu.

Allusion to the Goddess of Mount Wu, triggered by the marker "clouds and rain," was repeatedly used by previous literati poets to express their feelings of love or to refer generally to love affairs. The repetitive use of this mythical allusion thus became conventionalized in pre-Tang literature. This allusion was especially often employed by court poets during the Southern Dynasties. It originated in an old myth about the goddess Yao Ji 瑤姬 and was developed in the mythical prose poems, the "Rhapsody on Gao Tang" 高唐賦 and the "Rhapsody on the Divine Woman" 神女賦, attributed to Song Yu 宋玉 (the third century BC). From Song Yu's preface of the "Rhapsody on Gao Tang" we know that Xiang, King of Chu 楚襄王, saw a cloud-spirit in constant shape when he was strolling in the company of Song Yu on the Cloud-dream Terrace 雲夢臺. When he asked about this spirit, the poet told him that long ago a former king was wandering upon this mountain of Gao Tang and when he disposed himself lazily there for a rest he dreamed a girl visited him and offered him "the service of pillow and mat." Having received his favor, the girl said to the king before leaving:

My home is on the southern side of the Witches Hill,  
 where from its rounded summit a sudden chasm falls. At  
 dawn I am the Morning Cloud; at dusk, the Driving Rain.  
 So dawn by dawn and dusk by dusk I dwell beneath the  
 southern crest.

妾在巫山之陽，高丘之岨，旦爲朝雲，暮爲行雨，朝朝  
 暮暮，陽臺之下。 10

Later the king built a temple to her and named it "Morning Cloud"  
 朝雲. The image of the Goddess in the preface as well as in the poems  
 has seductive characteristics attributable to both a human being and  
 goddess. Song Yu "comments on the mystic powers of the deity  
 herself, embroidering the facets of her beauty, her protean shapes, and  
 her evanescent charms in scintillating language. She appears almost as  
 a meteorological phenomenon, sparkling and trembling, darting and  
 quivering. . ."<sup>11</sup>

About the origin of the myth and characteristics of this goddess  
 in Chinese culture, Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899-1946) wrote an article  
 entitled "An Analysis of the Legend of the Goddess of the Gao Tang"  
 高唐神女傳說之分析 about fifty years ago. And one decade later  
 Wen added more important points regarding this story in his article  
 "On Fish" 說魚. In his discussion, Wen Yiduo points out that the

Goddess of Mount Wu actually appears in the Book of Songs under the epithet "nubile girl" 季女. "In a number of odes she displays her charms to entice a lover. She often appears as a sheet of rain or a cloud of morning mist. Whatever her guise, her worship was that normally owed to a clan ancestress and fertility goddess. Her cult was closely associated with the tribal mating rites held each spring in antiquity."<sup>12</sup> Having much in common with other Chinese ancestresses, such as Nuwa 女媧 and Jiangyuan 姜嫄, the goddess of Mount Wu is an ancient Chu deity who represents the power of fertility for the land through ritually mating with a shaman-king.

This Chu deity's sexually charming and seductive characters, which were originally kept in her as indicated in Song Yu's poems, had been fettered in the civilized society for a long time. Hypothetically, the Goddess did not get into the written culture and was well out of use before she was revived by antiquarian literati who were possibly outsiders and who romanticized her and missed the real point that she was performing a religious function in the community. Thus the image of the Goddess in Song Yu's poems became a revenant of the armorous figure which returned in later literature, though changed, from a mental hiding place to assume a place once again in active consciousness.<sup>13</sup> As a metaphorical impulse, then, the spirit of the Goddess is firmly established in medieval literature, especially in

poetry, most obviously through the allusive image of “morning clouds and evening rain.”

In poetry, “clouds and rain” is thus conventionally used to allude to romantic passions, or even used as a substitute for sensual love. Between Han and Tang dynasties, Six Dynasties poets depict various pictures of love—its sensuousness, frustrations, and reverses—in many poems that bear the words “clouds and rain.” According to Qian Zhongshu, these expressions were not taken as “obscene words” 褻詞 at all at that time.<sup>14</sup> Reflecting the manner and matter of the Han poem “Mount Wu high” 巫山高 in the “yuefu” 樂府 genre, the following poem by the Southern Dynasties poet Fei Chang 費昶 (fl.ca. 510) is one of these poems.

巫山光欲晚，陽臺色依依。  
 彼美岩之曲，寧知心是非。  
 朝雲觸石起，暮雨潤羅衣。  
 願解千金貲，請逐大王歸。

Mount Wu glimmers grow late,  
 Sun Terrace colors dwindle, dwindle.  
 The lovely woman's vertiginous eyrie,  
 How to tell if her heart is true or false?

Dawn clouds strike rocks rising,  
 Dusk rain soaks clothes sheer.  
 I long to loosen her thousand gold dirdle  
 And escort her back to the great king.<sup>15</sup>

The allusion of “clouds and rain,” however, does not become very commonly used until the Tang Dynasty. Starting with Early Tang poets, such as the “Four Talents of the Early Tang” 初唐四杰, many Tang poets, both major and minor, make their contributions to the development of the allusion which appears in different form and structure. Lines like 雲雨巫山枉斷腸 “The Mount Wu with clouds and rain inspires a hopeless heart-broken longing.” 朝雲暮雨連天暗 “Dawn clouds and evening rain—linked through the dark of the sky,” and 暮雨朝雲幾日歸 “Evening rain and dawn clouds, when do you return?” are seen in hundreds of Tang poems with the love them and themes of others.<sup>16</sup>

When comparing dictions in Song and Tang poetry, Qian Zhongshu points out that Li Shangyin’s creative use of the allusion to the love between the King of Chu and the Goddess of Mount Wu spawns on enormous progeny of imitations in later poems.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, throughout his career of poetic writing, Li Shangyin seems proud of his subtly incorporating it into his poetic expressions. Hence the line, 衆中賞我賦高唐 “I am admired to my songs on the Gao Tang.”<sup>18</sup>

Beside his frequent use of the allusion to the goddess, Li Shangyin also alludes to Song Yu in quite a few poems; furthermore, he directly expresses his admiration for Song Yu in a poem with "Song Yu" 宋玉 as its title. Noting Li's fondness of the "Rhapsody on Gao Tang" and "Rhapsody on the Divine Woman" and their author, some scholars have tried to search for the reason. Wu Tiaogong 吳調公, for instance, remarks:

The elegant style of Song Yu's "grief of decay and decline"... and the description of the love story in the "Rhapsody on the Divine Woman" which is so rich in mythic color, these all are akin to Li Shangyin's style and character. May we further say that Li Shangyin draws on the experience of Song Yu in terms of the blend of intricate beauty and grief?

宋玉的“搖落之悲”...的憂美風格，而神女賦中愛情故事的描繪，更富於神話色彩，這都和李商隱的風格相近，是否還可以更進一步地說，在“怨刺”和“奇靡”兼而有之方面，宋玉為李商隱提供了一定的借鏡呢？<sup>19</sup>

These remarks indicate the extent of Li Shangyin's interest in this myth and his allusion to it.

### *Ming yong* (The Overt Mode)

As defined earlier in the introduction, an allusion marker is the trigger of the actualization of an allusion and is always identifiable as an element belonging to another text no matter whether it takes a conventional form or a new one. When using the marker “clouds and rain” for the Gao Tang myth, Li Shangyin varies the form of the marker. Sometimes he employs the allusion fully in its conventional form, which in Chinese is called “*ming yong*” 明用. In the poem “The Chu Palace” 楚宮, we encounter the allusion triggered by its conventional and straight forward marker:

十二峰前落照微，高唐宮暗坐迷歸。  
朝雲暮雨長相接，猶自君王眼見稀。

The sun sets in front of the Twelve Peaks.

Gao Tang Palace merges with the dusk.

The morning clouds and evening rain unite again and  
again,

But the King of Chu regrets how rare a sight is his love.<sup>20</sup>

These four lines in the quatrain are read as the poet's nostalgic feeling, or, as his personal response to an ancient site, normally seen in a "huaigu" 懷古 poem that looks back upon the past. In the title the Chu Palace 楚宮 was a palace located on Mount Wu where Song Yu and Xiang, King of Chu strolled. The first line describes the view of the twelve peaks of Mount Wu in the sunset, immediately giving a touch of serenity and forelornness to the poem. In the second line, by alluding to the Gao Tang myth through another marker, the poem introduces an amorous yet uncertain atmosphere which is suitable for remembrance of the meeting of the king with the Goddess of Mount Wu in the last two lines. "The morning clouds and evening rain," serving as the main marker of the allusion here, symbolizes erotic love: the phrase "chang xiangjie" 長相接 depicts very well the king's desire. The word "youzi" 猶自 in the last line functions as a turning point for the whole poem by which the poet, through emphasizing the king's endless, unfulfilled want, expresses the sadness of unfulfilled love.

Like other marking elements of the allusion in the poem, "the morning clouds and evening rain" is easily identified for it takes its most conventional form. This is a good example of Li Shangyin's overt employment, or "ming yong," of the allusion. Similar uses of this allusion can be seen in the following lines from other poems by Li Shangyin:

淡雲輕雨拂高唐，玉殿秋來夜正長。

Pale clouds and light rain stroke the Gao Tang,  
Autumn comes to Jade Palace and nights grow long.

豈知爲雨爲雲處，只有高唐十二峰。

Isn't that where there are rain and clouds,  
There are only the twelve peaks of the Gao Tang?<sup>21</sup>

Sometimes allusions used this way function in poetic writing no more than stock images or conventional symbols since their specific strength is reduced or lost through long and repetitive use. Like other great Tang poets, however, when Li Shangyin employs these allusions, he “endows them with specific significance. For instance, when he alludes to the goddess of the moon or to the story about the Weaving Maid and Cowherd, these common allusions often appear to have special references and are not merely substitutes for ‘a beautiful woman’ and ‘a pair of lovers’ respectively.”<sup>22</sup> The following quatrain illustrates this kind of allusive effect although it does not contain the “clouds and rain” allusion:

常娥

雲母屏風燭影深，長河漸落曉星沉。  
常娥應悔偷靈藥，碧海青天夜夜心。

Against the screen of "mother-of-clouds" the candle  
throws its deep shadow:

The Long River gradually sinks, the morning star sets.  
Ch'ang-o (Chang E) should regret having stolen the elixir:  
The green sea—the blue sky—her heart every night!<sup>23</sup>

As pointed out above by James Liu, the allusion to Chang E does not serve as a mere substitute for a beautiful woman. Rather, by alluding to this mythological figure, who, having stolen her husband's elixir, now faces the eternity alone, Li Shangyin borrows a kind of well-known loneliness to compare to the loneliness of a woman of his acquaintance. The allusive effect is that the allusion gives focus to the images—now the more general images like the sea, the sky, and even the screen and the candle are associated with the image of Chang E and her unhappiness and solitude brought out by the allusion: the loneliness of the woman at present is thus reinforced.

The allusive mode in Li Shangyin's poetry is not always overt. In fact, like many other great poets, he often turns away from this kind

of mode and assimilates (“an yong” 暗用) allusions through distorting the markers and integrating them into his poems. When presented this way, his allusive art leads us into a context where the addressing voice is deepened, often attained with a shadow of mood.

### *An yong* (The Assimilative Mode)

In dealing with an allusion employed in an assimilative mode, we are often asked to pause so we can recognize the marking elements and measure the alluding text with the evoked text: guided by conventional hermeneutics, we then close the momentary break and see the poetic meaning as well as the higher point the alluding text tries to make. The poem entitled “Thoughts during Separation” 離思 shows an instance in Li Shangyin’s poems of “clouds and rain” where the marker of the allusion is distorted and embedded in a sentimental mood describing life in a moment of peculiar disappointment and despair:

氣盡前溪舞，心酸子夜歌。  
 峽雲尋不得，溝水欲如何。  
 朔雁傳書絕，湘篁染泪多。  
 無由見顏色，還自托微波。

My breath is exhausted by the Dance of the Front Brook;  
 My heart aches at the Midnight Song.  
 I seek but cannot find the cloud from the Gorge;  
 What am I to do with the water in the ditch?  
 The northern wild goose has ceased to bring letters;  
 The bamboos by the Hsiang (Xiang) are stained with many  
 tears.  
 I have no means of getting to see your face.  
 But let me still entrust the tiny ripples with a message!<sup>24</sup>

Line 1/ Dance of the Front Brook (Qianxi Wu) is an ancient dance tune ( Cf. Jin shu, yue xia, juan 23 ) Also, the Front Brook Village (Qianxi Cun) is said to be a famous place which produced dancing girls. ( Cf. Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, juan 1, 119 )

Line 2/ Midnight Song ( Ziyè Gē ) refers to a Jin song allegedly written by Ziyè ( “Midnight” ), a singing girl of the Jin Dynasty ( Cf., Jin shu, yue xia, juan 23 ) Later, many “yuefu” love songs were also called Midnight Songs

Line 3/ The Gorge ( Xia ) refers to the Wu Gorge, one of the three famous gorges on the upper Yangtze River

Line 4/ “Water in the ditch” alludes to Zhuo Wenjun’s “Song of White Hair” ( “Baitou yin” ) in which she expresses her fears of being deserted by Sima Xiangru when she grew old, in Zhuo’s poem we see the following lines:

Today I'm here, drinking wine with you.

Tomorrow I'll be at the ditch water, alone by myself

( Guo Maoqian, Yuefu shiji, *juan* 41, 600 My own translation )

Line 5/ "Northern wild goose" is derived from the story that when Su Wu was detained by the Xiongnu tribes, a Chinese messenger informed the Khan that the Chinese Emperor shot down a wild goose whose leg was tied with a letter telling the Emperor of Su's whereabouts. ( Cf. Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol. 2, 765 )

Line 8/ This line echoes Cao Zhi's "Ode to the Goddess of the River Luo "

I commit my message to the care of the tiny ripples

( "Luoshen fu," Wen xuan, 19-403 My own translation )

Almost every line in this poem contains an allusion. Because Li Shangyin here synthesizes most of the allusions in metonymic and metaphoric play, it is difficult to correlate the significance of an allusion as it appears in the poem and the meaning it conventionally generates. Traditional commentators' interpretations, such as that of Cheng Mengxing and Zhang Ertian, take the poem as a representation of Li Shangyin himself, who allegorically expresses his political complaint and disappointment;<sup>25</sup> whereas James Liu thinks that the poem is simply a depiction of an imaginary woman's feeling of loneliness. Since the poetic mood of the poem delivers a sort of feminine "pathetic note," James Liu's interpretation is more sound, at

least at the linear level. According to Liu, the first couplet suggests that she is a professional dancer and singer; the second couplet expresses her lovesickness. Liu paraphrases these couplets and the succeeding ones like this:

"I seek but cannot find traces of our former love, and I fear I am deserted." (The allusion to the goddess of Mount Wu [in line 3], who appeared to the King of Ch'u [Chu] in an amorous dream, arouses erotic associations, while the allusion to Chuo Wen-chun's [Zhuo Wenjun] song [in line 4] strikes a pathetic note.) Lines 5-6 might be paraphrased, "I have had no news of you, and the bamboos are stained with tears." The last two lines mean, "Although I have no way of getting to see you, I will not complain but will still try to send a message to you."<sup>26</sup>

Through the allusions to such figures as dancing and singing girls, romantic and widowed goddesses, and deserted wives, Li Shangyin's poem describes a deserted woman's fear and despair.

In the allusive structure of this poem, the allusion to the Goddess of Mount Wu is evoked by means of revised marker in which the conventional form, "clouds and rain," is reshaped into "gorge clouds" 峽雲. Allusions in this kind of structure are presented through

the poet's playing on the original source—lifting scattered words and phrases from the original material and synthesizing them in the new text. Employed so, Li Shangyin's allusion establishes a complicated interplay of connecting and disconnecting forces for it builds up a link while enforcing a difference simultaneously. One can sense in such poems a deliberate discontinuity and a subterranean continuity. That is, without recognizing the allusion, one can still feel the sorrowful mood—the dominant mood of the poem—conveyed by the allusion together with other allusions and images in the first two couplets; yet a competent reader cannot be blind to the image of “gorge clouds” and is naturally led by its possible connotation to a larger context where the image's significance is fully revealed.

To a certain extent, Li Shangyin inherits this kind of allusive technique from other Tang poets. Looking into the actual scene of the Tower of the Prince of Teng 滕王閣 before him, Wang Bo 王勃 (650-676) seems to see a world of sensual pleasure which he describes by alluding to the Goddess of Mount Wu:

畫棟朝飛南浦雲，珠簾暮卷西山雨。

Morning—its painted beams send flying Southbank's  
clouds.

Evening—beaded curtains roll up the rain on western  
mountains. 27

On his trip through the three Gorges of the Yangzi River, Du fu wrote quite a few poems which contain the “clouds and rain” allusion. Among them, we have these lines:

峽雲行清曉，烟霧相徘徊。

When daylight comes, clouds in the Gorge drift.

Along with them, are wandering smoke and mist. 28

The following famous lines from Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779-831) “Poems about Miscellaneous Thoughts” 雜思詩五首 also allude to the Goddess of Mount Wu:

曾經滄海難爲水，除卻巫山不是雲。

When I have the experience of seeing vast sea, I can not  
appreciate other waters.

Except for those in Mount Wu, clouds are less than clouds.

And in writing about the old theme of "Mount Wu High," Li He depicts in an unusual fashion the pathos of the ghost of the King of Chu, who is seen in his poem to try to recapture the Goddess in his dream:

楚魂尋夢風颯然，曉風飛雨生苔錢。

The King of Chu's soul sought a dream

In a bitter wind.

In dawn wind and flying rain.

Grow coins of moss. 30

Compared to Li Shangyin's, these Tang poets' uses of this allusion are equally assimilative, most of the allusive processes being fully internalized, avoiding an overt pointing to the source. However, Li Shangyin seems especially interested in this kind of allusiveness. He frequently uses the allusion through distorting its marker in different ways. Let us read two lines from the poem entitled "Again Sent Playfully to Ren, the Gifted Scholar, After Writing Two Poems" 題二首后重有戲贈任秀才:

峽中尋覓常逢雨，月里依稀更有人。

Often when he searches in the Gorge it rains.  
 Dimly in the moon, there someone is seen. 31

Here there is an activation of two texts—the alluding text and the evoked one, if one recognizes the allusion marker to the myth of the Goddess of Mount Wu.<sup>32</sup> However, because the conventional form of the marker for the allusion is so much twisted, and the marker produces a sense on its own in the context and does not force a connection to the allusion, the allusive link is very inconspicuous.<sup>33</sup>

Allusion to the Mount Wu story, thus subtly presented in different variants, refers to love in some poems and in others it functions symbolically. Read the “Revisiting the Holy Lady Temple”  
 重過聖女祠:

白石岩崖碧蘚滋，上清淪謫得歸遲。  
 春夢雨常飄瓦，盡日靈風不滿旗。  
 尊祿華來無定所，杜蘭香去未移時。  
 玉郎會此通仙籍，憶向天階問紫芝。

The white stone on the cliff is overgrown with green moss:  
 Banished from the Upper Pure Sphere, she is delayed in  
 her return.

Throughout the spring, a dream-rain often flooded the  
tiles;

All day long, the spiritual wind has not filled the banners.

Green-calyxed Bloom comes from no fixed place:

Magnolia Fragrance has not been gone for long.

The Jade Lad, encountering this, becomes related to the  
immortals,

And recalls asking for the purple magic herb from the  
steps of heaven.<sup>34</sup>

Title/ the Holy Lady's Temple ( Shengnu Ci ) was situated on the Qingang Mountain in Wudu district ( modern Baoji in Shanxi province ) It is said that on the side of a cliff of the Qingang Mountain there was the image of a goddess with miracle power and local people often went to pray to her ( Cf. Shui jing zhu, 20 6a )

Line 2/ Upper Pure Sphere ( Shang Qing ), one of the three "Pure Spheres" of heaven in Daoist legends

Line 5/ Green-calyxed Bloom ( Eluhua ) is a goddess, who was said to be a beautiful young girl and appeared to Yang Quan, a young man, teaching him how to become immortal ( Cf. Zhu Heling, Li Yishan shiji, *juan shang*, 2a. )

Line 6/ Magnolia Fragrance ( Dulanxiang ) is also a goddess who was said to have lived with Zhang Shuo as his wife and then vanished ( Cf. Shu Heling, *juan shang*, 2a-b )

Line 7: Jade Lad ( Yulang ) is a junior official in the Daoist hierarchy of immortals. ( Cf. Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2. 370 )

Vividly described with concrete imagery and appropriate allusion, this poem is able to move the reader. The first couplet is dominated by a tone of perplexity and lamentation. The second couplet, to which I shall return soon, is among the most famous lines of Li Shangyin's poems. The third couplet, neatly crafted, delivers a melancholy note: I have nothing in terms of space and time. In the last two lines, as he does in quite a few poems, Li Shangyin expresses a kind of hopeless hope by means of dream or fantasy of the supernatural world.<sup>35</sup>

Commentators and scholars hold different opinions on the meaning of this poem, which can be divided into two views. One suggests that the poem refers to a Daoist nun by talking about the Holy Lady: the other thinks that it expresses the poet's own political disappointment through the description of the temple.<sup>36</sup> James Liu, for instance, takes the poem as a recalling of a past romantic encounter which took place at the temple and explains the first two couplets this way:

The first line suggest that a long time has elapsed, since the stone gate is overgrown with moss. Line 2 could mean either that the nun, unable to free herself from human passion, is like an immortal banished from heaven, or that she has been delayed from her return to this temple. Lines 3 and 4 together might be paraphrased thus: "Throughout the spring she has had many amorous meetings with her lover(s), as the Goddess of Mount Wu made love to the King of Ch'u (Chu) in his dream; and she has neglected her religious duties so that all day long there has not been sufficient spiritual wind to fill the banners."<sup>37</sup>

Given the illusory tone of the poem, especially in the second couplet, I suggest that we read the poem as a love poem which, however, conveys a passion more indefinite than just referring to a specific love affair. The couplet that contains the allusion to the Goddess of Mount Wu is the most vague and difficult one to understand. In this couplet, Li Shangyin's symbolism is deepened. With the concrete and appropriate images of rain, tiles, wind, and flag, the couplet realistically describes the speaker's sorrowful recalling of the past in front of the temple, or his conflicting attitude towards this love affair: "On the one hand, his conscious convictions oblige him to disapprove the secret and licentious love of Taoist nuns; on the other

hand, his subconscious desire for them cannot be suppressed, whether he actually had affairs with them or not.”<sup>38</sup> But given such elaborate images as “dream” and “spirit,” the couplet, and so does the whole poem, suggests a more general meaning. As Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 points out:

... “wind” and “rain,” besides serving the immediate purpose of describing the natural phenomenon, stand for something abstract, something impalpable, something larger than themselves. They convey respectively longing and unfulfilled passion. Spring refers to the season. But it may also have the connotation of “spring heart.” Thus the third line may be rendered as: All the time the floating longing of his “spring heart,” like the rain, sweeps over the tiles. It is a dream-rain because the longing is fruitless and leads only to a void. It sweeps over the tiles and is nowhere to be seen. In line four his frustrated passion, like tempered wind, fails to swell the flag. . . . It is spirit-wind, because, the passion, once frustrated, seems so insubstantial, so incorporeal. The imagery, with its studied suggestiveness, works upon a wide range of possible associations, yet, in the light of the poetic context, leaves curiously lucid an impression.<sup>39</sup>

Since most critics agree that the “dream-rain” 夢雨 alludes to the story about the amorous encounter of the King of Chu with the Goddess of Mount Wu in a dream, we may say that this is another good example of Li Shangyin’s assimilative use of this allusion. Here again the meaning of the allusion, “dream-rain,” goes beyond the original and symbolically refers to a kind of despair which is just like the faded dream of the King of Chu. However, James Liu explains the complex of this allusion this way: “The tension between moral disapproval and physical desire is discernible in many of these poems. . . . The first line, which contains associations with the amorous Goddess of Mount Wu, suggests the flood of erotic passion, whereas the second line appears to condemn the nun for her spiritual failings.”<sup>40</sup>

Because the marker of the allusion, “dream-rain,” in this poem is twisted and communicates a sensory experience, similar to the allusive characteristics in the “gorge-clouds” of the poem discussed earlier, the allusion obtains a sense of the immediate present, as a concrete image usually does. Again, the allusion is inconspicuous. Nevertheless, the image, the line, and by extension his poem as a whole make an implicit call for a comparative recourse to the myth of Gao Tang. As demonstrated in the discussion of the poem, the mode of “an yong” usually allows thickening of a mood in a poem. It is precisely this kind of thickened mood that deepens Li Shangyin’s

poetic world. In many ways, we may say that Li Shangyin does not incorporate an allusion, rather, he incorporates a mood by drawing on the atmospheric quality of an allusion.

The examples of Li Shangyin's use of the "clouds and rain" allusion in this chapter have illustrated some overt and assimilative modes of the allusiveness in Li Shangyin's poetry. In the next two chapters which discuss the poet's historical poems and untitled poems, our focus on the allusions in them will demonstrate the ways Li Shangyin's allusions generate meaning and the extent to which he manipulates and twists the semiotics of allusions.

### Notes

1 Yuan Mei 袁枚, Suiyuan shihua 隨園詩話, vol. 1 (Taipei: Guangwen, 1971) 4. Trans. Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 in Wang Qiugui, Objective Correlative in the Love Poems of Li Shang-vin, Jiaxin Theses Ser. 204 (Taipei: Jiaxin shuini gongsi, 1970) 96. The translation is modified by this writer.

2 Feng Hao 馮浩, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu 玉溪生詩集箋注, *juan* 2, 329. Trans. Wang Qiugui, 24-25.

3 See Liu Xuekai 劉學鍇, and Yu Shucheng 余恕誠, Li Shangyin shige jijie 李商隱詩歌集解 vol. 4, 1638-1641.

4 Wang Qiugui, Objective Correlative, 29. Since the Song Dynasty, however, criticism of Li's frequent use of allusion has been prevalent..

5 See, e.g., Shen Qiuxiong 沈秋雄, "Shilun Li Yishan shi de yongdian" 試論李義山詩的用典, Li Shangyin shi yanjiu lunwen ji 李商隱詩研究論文集, ed. Guoli Zhongshan daxue Zhongwen xuehui 國立中山大學中文學會 (Taipei: Tiangong, 1984) 621.

6 In Li He's 李賀 famous "Sing Loud" 浩歌, for example, one can read lines like

南風吹山作平地，帝遣天吳移海水。  
 王母桃花千遍紅，彭祖巫咸幾回死？

The south wind blows to level the hill.

By God's behest T'ien (Tian) Wu shifts the waters  
 of the sea:

When Queen Mother's peach-blossoms turn red the  
 hundredth time.

How many deaths will Grandpa P'eng (Peng) and  
 Wizard Hsien (Xian) have died?

(Quan Tang shi 全唐詩, Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985, 4399. Trans. Chi ch'iu-lang in Chi Ch'iu-lang, "A Comparative Approach to Late T'ang Poetry," Tamkang Review, 1 1971/72, 272-273.)

7 See Zhang Shuxiang 張淑香, Li Yishan shi xilun 李義山詩析論 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1974) 44-57.

8 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-Century Baroque Chinese Poet, 221.

9 James Liu, 222.

10 Song Yu 宋玉, "Gao Tang fu" 高唐賦, 序, Wen xuan 文選, comp. Xiao Tong 蕭統 (Changsha: Shangwu, 1939) 19.393. Trans.

Arthur Waley in Arthur Waley, trans., The Temple and Other Poems (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923) 65.

11 Edward H. Schafer, The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens in T'ang Literature (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) 38.

12 Schafer, 36. To a great extent, Schafer here echoes Wen's viewpoint. For detailed discussions in Wen's articles, see Wen Yiduo 聞一多, Wen Yiduo quanji 聞一多全集, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Sanlian, 1982) 81-138.

13 Before Song Yu, words like "clouds" and "rain" had been used in association with women. It was the "Rhapsody on Gao Tang," however, that established the texture for the "clouds and rain" allusion because ever since this prose poem was collected in the Wen xuan, it inspired later poets in composing love poems. The talented poet Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232), for example, composed his well-known "Ode to the Goddess of the River Luo" 洛神賦 because he "was moved by the event that Song Yu told the King of Chu about the story of the divine woman" 感宋玉對楚王神女之事，遂作 斯賦. (Cao Zhi, "Luoshen fu" 洛神賦, 序, Wen xuan, 19.402. My own translation.)

14 See Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書, Guan Zhui bian 管錐編, vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979) 1071.

15 Fei Chang 費昶, "Mount Wu high" 巫山高, Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩, Yuefu shiji 樂府詩集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979) *juan* 17.

239. Trans. Anne Birrell in Anne Birrell, trans., New Songs from a Jade Terrace (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982) 176.

16 The first line is from Li Bai's 李白 "The tune 'Clear Happiness'" 清平調詞, Quan Tang shi, 1703. Trans. Soame Jenyns in Soame Jenyns. trans. A Further Selection from the Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty (London: John Murray, 1959) 89. The translation is modified by this writer. The second is from Zhang Zirong's 張子容 (fl. 728) "Mount Wu" 巫山, Quan Tang shi, 1178. Trans. Edward H. Schafer in The Divine Woman, 73. The third from Yang Ping's 楊憑 "Spring Feeling" 春情, Quan Tang shi, 3296. My own translation.

17 See Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書, ed. and comp., Song shi xuanzhu 宋詩選注 (Beijing: Renmin wenzue, 1982) 14.

18 From Li Shangyin's "Oucheng zhuanyun qishier ju zeng si tongshe" 偶成轉韻七十二句贈四同舍, Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 426. My own translation.

19 Wu Tiaogong 吳諷公, Li Shangyin yanjiu 李商隱研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1982) 159.

20 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 701. My own translation.

21 The first couplet is from the poem "Xishang zuo" 席上作; the second one from "Shen gong" 深宮, Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 288, 353. Both translations are mine. Further

examples of the allusion used this way and in other different ways can be found in poems like “Yueyang lou” 岳陽樓, “Shaonian” 少年, “Lizhou Jiangtan zuo” 利州江潭作, and “Zhongyuan zuo” 中元作, just to name a few.

22 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 247. The categories and names of literary allusions given by Liu are slightly different from the traditional ones as well as from that in Western allusion theories. To avoid confusion, I do not use Liu’s terms whenever applying his insightful views to Li’s allusiveness.

23 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 717. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 99.

24 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 187. Trans. James Liu, 116.

25 See Cheng’s and Zhang’s comments included in Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol. 2, 766-767.

26 James Liu, the Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 117. The square brackets in the quotation are added by this writer.

27 Quan Tang shi, 673. Trans. Stephen Owen in Stephen Owen, The Poetry of the Early T’ang (New Haven and London: Yale university Press, 1977) 136.

28 Du Fu, “Rain” 雨, Quan Tang shi, 2345. My own translation.

29 Quan Tang shi, 4643. Trans. Tang Zi-chang in Tang Zi-chang, 唐子長 trans., Poems of T'ang 唐詩選譯 (San Rafael, Calif.: T. C. Press, 1969) 179. The translation is modified by this writer.

30 Li He, "Mount Wu High" 巫山高, Yuefu shiji, *juan* 17, 243. Trans. J. D. Frodsham in J. D. Frodsham, trans., Goddesses, Ghosts, and Demons: the Collected Poems of Li He (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983) 155.

31 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 63. My own translation.

32 As suggested by many commentators and critics, such as Feng Hao and Lu Kunceng 陸昆曾, the allusive link here exists and is not a forced critical invention. See their comments included in Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol. 1, 181-183.

33 Partially because of this, scholars' interpretations of this poem are very different from each other. For example, in the article, "An Interpretation of Four Quatrains by Li Shang-yin—Love Affairs between Men and Goddesses," Ch'en Tsu-wen explains the two lines mean that the poet seeks in vain for his favorite goddess Chang E. See this article in Tamkang Review 9 (78-79): 469-482.

34 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 369. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 95.

35 The allusion to Blue Bird in the last couplet of one of the untitled poems, for instance, has a similar effect. See my discussion of it in Chapter 4.

36 For the different views, see Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol. 3, 1335-1337.

37 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 95-96.

38 James Liu, 213.

39 Wang Qiugui, Objective Correlative in the Love Poems of Li Shang-yin, 64.

40 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 213.

## CHAPTER 3

### Analogy and Contrast:

#### Allusion in Li Shangyin's Poems on History

Historically, Li Shangyin is known mainly for his love poems: such generalization of his poetry as "intricate and erotic characteristics" 綺才艷骨 is commonly seen in traditional remarks on poetry.<sup>1</sup> The fact is, however, that he is excellent not only at composing love poems but also other kinds of poetry. To a large extent, many of his poems on historical themes, "yong shi" 咏史, are outstanding among works in this subgenre done by other great Tang poets as well as poets of previous ages.<sup>2</sup> Liu Xuekai informs us that there are over sixty poems on historical events in Li Shangyin's oeuvre passed down to us. And even compared to Du Mu, who is well known for his poems in this subgenre in the Late Tang period, Li Shangyin surpasses him in the number produced and the proportion it takes of the poets' total poetic works.<sup>3</sup>

As a subgenre in classic verse, poetry on historical themes, or "yongshi," originally contained descriptions of historical figures or events and evaluations of them by the poet. Most poems in this subgenre are, however, didactic and digressive since they generally

function as judgments upon actions in both past and present. The earliest poetic work that deals mainly with historical character is Ban Gu's 班固 (32-92) five-character poem entitled "On Historical Themes" 咏史. During the Wei, Jin, and the Six Dynasties periods, more poems on historical themes were produced. Among these poems, Zuo Si's 左思 [(ca. 250-ca. 305) "On Historical Themes" and Tao Yuanming's "Celebrating Jing Ke" 咏荆轲 are the ones most discussed in literary history. Although "yong shi" was established as a subgenre in classic verse ever since the Wen xuan had one particular section, "Yong shi," devoted to it, historical poetry did not fully develop either in quality or quantity until the Tang Dynasty.

It is common knowledge that the Chinese literatus had a strong sense of history. Seeing himself as a public figure, the literatus liked to use history as a mirror to his present position as well as the direction the nation was to take. The literatus was highly educated and a great part of his education was in history. To a large extent, history was essential in his life since it could provide moral standards as well as guidelines for his decision making in his political career. This importance of history for the Chinese literatus and its appearance in poetry is briefly summed up by Hans Frankel:

One of the uses of history was to take it as a guide for moral behavior. In the words of The Record of Etiquette,

one of the Confucian Classics, "the Confucian lives among men of the present and studies the men of old. What he has learned he practices in the present age, and later generations will take him as their model." The writing of history was done by the same class of men who wrote literary prose and poetry. It is therefore not surprising that Chinese poetry abounds with evocations of historical events, situations, and personalities.<sup>4</sup>

In the Early Tang and especially High Tang periods, the belief in the significance of history became stronger and this is seen in many poetic writings.<sup>5</sup> A literati poet of the High Tang, "if asked for a list of notable historical figures in his poetry, would add moral notations that indicated the traditional Chinese judgments of each figure. Such a list would include both political giants and writers; for a poet, his literary predecessors were not just authors of texts to be studied but significant models for his own life."<sup>6</sup>

Although in the Early and High Tang periods, the poetry on historical themes as a subgenre actually developed in the shadow of other popular subgenres, namely the poetry about the frontier 邊塞詩 and landscape and bucolic poetry 山水田園詩, many well-known Tang literati poets, such as Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (661-702), Wang Wei 王維 (701-761), Li Bai, Du Fu, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), Liu Yuxi

劉禹錫 (772-842), and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), wrote poetry on historical themes. With their strong historical sense, these poets produced some excellent poetic works in this subgenre such as Chen's "Impressions of Things Encountered" 感遇, Li's "Ancient Airs" 古風, Du's "The Temple of the Premier of Shu" 蜀相 and "The Eight-sided Fortress" 八陣圖. In these poems, historical events and characters are used either as comparison with contemporary political life or to make some philosophical statement. Moreover, Du Fu's "The Temple of the Premier of Shu" and "The Eight-sided Fortress," which combine history with the present and the attitudes of historical characters with his own feelings, set a good example for later poets in composing historical poems.

In the Late Tang period, historical poetry reached a high point in its development. This happened thanks in part to the rhetorical techniques developed by previous poets and in part to the psychological crisis in the contemporary political life. Faced with a corrupted empire and a declining dynasty, the Late Tang poet, unlike earlier writers, was losing his confidence in the present and therefore cultivated a skeptical attitude toward history. When discussing the poetry of Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (812-866), a contemporary of Li Shangyin, Paul F. Rouzer talks about this kind of skepticism toward history in Late Tang historical poetry:

A painful historical skepticism did in fact emerge in the ninth century, partially because the polity itself (the focus for history's significance) was increasingly beset by internal and external crises, and partially because the literate classes (those who knew how to use history as a tool for ruling) had become more and more anxious about the preservation of their beliefs and their lives. Historical poetry from this period has a tone different from that of all other ages."<sup>7</sup>

This sort of skepticism, together with the technical maturity, increased the power of historical poetry and its popularity in the Late Tang period. It was in such circumstances that Li Shangyin's historical poetry was written. One major feature of his historical poetry is, as scholars have noted, the combination of traditional attitudes toward history with his philosophical irony. In other words, while using historical events as a moral mirror that reflects the political present, the poem usually has a metaphorical and allegorical 比興 effect and that of praising and blaming 美刺. This significant feature of Li's poetry will be seen through the analysis of the poet's historical allusions, or "gushi" 故事, in a few poems on historical themes in this chapter.<sup>8</sup>

A historical allusion in a historical poem is an allusion which "has two poles, one related to a contemporary topic and the other to a historical event. The two are compared, and the purpose of the comparison is to bring out the similarity between the two and thereby provide the opportunity to characterize or comment on the contemporary event."<sup>9</sup> Li Shangyin's use of historical allusion is essentially what Kao Yu-kung and Mei Tsu-lin describe, though the comparison is seen in several other different ways rather than just that of similarity. In the following discussions of Li Shangyin's allusions, especially historical allusions, our focus is on two modes which are traditionally termed as "zheng yong" 正用 (orthodox) and "fan yong" 反用 (inverted), and the former is further divided into analogy and contrast according to the different effects the mode produces.

### ***zheng yong* ( Orthodox Allusion ) as Analogy**

In his poems on history, Li Shangyin often defines himself and his contemporaries through comparison with historical figures, especially those of the Han and the Six Dynasties, and for that reason the bulk of his richest allusions in these poems are to pre-Tang stories and events. Among those historical figures for whom he shows admiration and with whom he draws analogy in his poems, are Wang Can 王粲, Liu Bang, and Zhu Geliang 諸葛亮, but especially Jia Yi

賈誼, the famous Han scholar and statesman, whom the poet mentions in quite a few poems. On the one hand, he admires Jia Yi's intelligence, on the other, he has sympathy for Jia whose talents were wasted. In the following poem, "The Tower on the City Wall of Anding" 安定城樓, we have a good example of the way Li Shangyin alludes to him:

迢遞高城百尺樓，綠楊枝外盡汀洲。  
 賈生年少虛垂涕，王粲春來更遠遊。  
 永憶江湖歸白髮，欲回天地入扁舟。  
 不知腐鼠成滋味，猜意鸚鵡竟未休。

The high city wall stretches far: the tower stands a  
 hundred feet.

Beyond the green willow branches, I see nothing but banks  
 and islets.

Master Chia (Jia) in his youth in vain shed tears:

Wang Ts'an (Can) in spring once more went on a distant  
 journey.

For ever remembering the rivers and lakes to which I  
 would return, white-haired,

I yet wish to turn round heaven and earth before entering a  
 tiny boat.

Not knowing the rotten rat was considered tasty.

The phoenix unwittingly aroused endless suspicions!<sup>10</sup>

Here, after a description in the first couplet of the scene viewed from the tower on the city wall, Li Shangyin uses two allusions to compare himself to Jia Yi and Wang Can, one of whom believed that there were things in the government that deserved weeping about and the other who always travelled far because of his duties and expressed his homesickness in his poems. Li Shangyin's comparison of himself to these two historical figures gives the reader the image of a young man--the poet himself--who, with unrecognized literary talents and frustrated political ambitions, was lonely and depressed. If without these allusions, "shedding tears and travelling far away" could still express the poet's loneliness and frustration, but the analogy he makes between himself and the two great men through the allusions raises Li Shangyin out of his own times and his own situation. The analogy legitimates the poet's complaint, it dignifies him and it offers a salvation even beyond defeat as these men were great men the memory of whom lived on far beyond that of their tormenters. Furthermore, these comparative allusions function as complement to the meaning of the whole poem--they provide, e.g., an essential background for the famous lines in the third couplet: "For ever remembering the rivers

and lakes to which I would return, white-haired, I yet wish to turn round heaven and earth before entering a tiny boat."

The lines here express the traditional scholar's ambition, to be actively engaged in worldly affairs before he withdraws from the world to lead a free life--an ideal for almost every traditional Chinese literatus. Hence James Liu's paraphrase of the couplet: "Though I always bear in mind my ultimate wish to withdraw from the world and roam freely over rivers and lakes in a tiny boat, I would only do so in my old age, having accomplished the task of setting the world right."<sup>11</sup>

In the last couplet, the poet reveals his attitude toward the envy of others toward him by alluding to the fable about the phoenix and the owl in the Zhuangzi 莊子:

Master Hui was prime minister of Liang and Master Chuang (Zhuang) went to see him. Someone said to Master Hui, "Master Chuang's (Zhuang) intention, in coming here, is to replace you as prime minister." Master Hui was afraid and searched the kingdom for three days and three nights. Master Chuang (Zhuang) went to see him and said, "In the south there was a bird called yuan-ch'u (phoenix): it set out from the south sea to fly to the north sea; unless it was a wu-t'ung (wutong) tree, it would not rest on it; unless it was the fruit of bamboo, it would not

eat: unless it was the water from a sweet spring, it would not drink. Then there was an owl that had got hold of a rotten rat, and when the phoenix flew past it, it looked up at the phoenix and cried, 'Ho!' Now, do you, sir, wish to ho me with your kindom of Liang?"

惠子相梁，莊子往見之，或謂惠子曰：“莊子來，欲代子相。”於是惠子恐，搜於國中三日三夜。莊子往見之，曰：“南方有鳥名鸚鵡，發於南海，而飛於北海，非梧桐不止，非練實不食，非醴泉不飲。於是鸚得腐鼠，鸚鵡過之，仰而視之曰：‘嚇！’今子欲以子之梁國而嚇我耶！”<sup>12</sup>

Through the allusion to this Daoist fable, Li Shangyin is seen by some commentators to have expressed his disdain for political life: "Official positions mean no more to me than the rotten rat means to the phoenix, but others, judging me by their own standards, suspect me of having political ambitions, as the owl suspects the phoenix of wishing to rob it of its rotten rat."<sup>13</sup> In my reading, however, this couplet does not so much show his disregard for political ambitions as it does indicate his ridicule on others' mistaken envy of him in his political career.

The analogical effect produced by the allusions to Jia and Wang is reinforced by the two adverbs, "xu" 虛 and "geng" 更. By asserting

them to the conventional markers. Li Shangyin emphasizes his subjective feeling--he expresses his sympathy for his predecessors' political life and thereby legitimates his own complaint about his political situation. Meanwhile, as Dong Naibin 董乃斌 points out, the two adverbs make a strong effect in the formal structure--it helps produce an ingenious and exact antithesis in the parallel couplet.<sup>14</sup>

The poem is a fine example of orthodox allusion in Li's allusive poems. It satisfies not only the "zheng yong" but also the most traditional employment of allusion, "ming yong" 明用. Quite often, though, as shown above, Li Shangyin adds something subjective to this kind of orthodox allusions and can therefore produce special poetic effects with them. Sometimes Li uses this kind of allusion to describe historical events which may not be disclosed otherwise. This can be seen in his well-known five-character regulated poems, the "Two Poems Written When Moved by a Certain Event" 有感二首. The poems, as indicated in the poet's note, were written in 836 referring to the notorious Sweet Dew Incident 甘露事變 that took place a year earlier.<sup>15</sup> Since more than one poem under examination in this chapter are about this incident, it is helpful for us to know the story of this incident before we read and discuss the poems.

Having recognized that the eunuchs had gained too much power in the government, Emperor Wenzong 文宗 (r. 827-840), by secretly discussing and planning a plot with one chief minister Li Xun 李訓

and the physician Zheng Zhu 鄭注, launched an intrigue to eliminate the eunuchs. At a dawn court audience late in December 835, an official reported by pre-arrangement that "sweet dew" 甘露, an auspicious omen of prosperity and stability from heaven, had descended on a tree in the quarters of the Jinwu Guards 金吾 of the Left during the previous night. Fully aware that soldiers of the Jinwu Guards were lying in ambush for the eunuchs, the Emperor then ordered the chief eunuch Qiu Shiliang 仇士良 and other eunuchs to go out and investigate. When the eunuchs reached the courtyard where the trap was to be sprung, a gust of wind accidentally lifted a tent curtain and disclosed the armed Jinwu men. The plot failed. Most of the eunuchs were able to withdraw into the inner palace before the gates were closed against them. Inside the inner palace, the eunuchs succeeded in forcing Wenzong to return to the harem, beyond the reach of Li Xun and other government officials. The eunuchs quickly summoned several hundred men of the Divine Strategy Armies 神策軍, a force under their control, to massacre all suspected courtiers in the official precincts. Li Xun escaped but was caught and executed two days later. Two other chief ministers, including Wang Ya 王涯 who did not take part in the plot but was tortured to "confess," were executed together with their families. For weeks afterwards the eunuch troops rounded up the clans of many high officials as well as many innocent people.<sup>16</sup>

The event is depicted in the poetic form, called "extended form of regulated verse" 排律, which, although requiring rigid metrical rules, is structurally loose and technically provides a poet with a form in which poets conventionally demonstrate knowledge of the classics and ability to use obscure and erudite vocabulary.<sup>17</sup> Of the classical and erudite vocabulary, allusion is certainly an important form. For the most part of these two poems, Li Shangyin uses allusions to substitute for the real names and situations of those concerned, according to the accepted poetic conventions. That is, on the one hand, by using allusions a poet can avoid directly naming contemporary characters in his poem, weakening the possibility of political involvement; on the other, it is a common poetic practice for a Tang poet to use historical names and institutions anachronistically for Tang ones. It also makes for a terse and economical style.<sup>18</sup> Let us read the first of the two poems:

其一

九服歸元化，三靈葉脊圖。  
如何本初輩，自取屈釐誅。  
有甚當車泣，因勞下殿趨。  
何成奏雲物，直是滅雀符。  
證速符書密，辭連性命俱。

竟緣尊漢相，不早葬胡籬。  
 鬼錄分朝部，軍烽照上都。  
 敢云甚動哭，未免怨洪爐。

The nine domains should submit to the King's virtue.  
 The Three Spiritual Lights accord with his sagacious plan.  
 How did it happen that men like Pen-ch'u (Benchu)  
 Brought death upon themselves like Ch'u-li (Quli)?  
 There was more than "weeping before the imperial  
 carriage":  
 Therefore some were made to "rush from the hall."  
 Was this "reporting to the throne on the color of clouds"?  
 It was more like destroying the bandits of Reedy Marsh!  
 Arrests were made on the evidence of secret letters:  
 Lives were lost for guilt by association.  
 All this because the premier of Han was esteemed.  
 But the Barbarian Lad was not discovered in time!  
 The register of ghosts reduced the ranks of Court officials:  
 The beacons of war shone in the noble capital.  
 Dare one say this deserves loud lament?  
 Still, one cannot help blaming the Huge Furnace! 19

Line 1: Nine Domains ( Jiufu ) is an ancient term used to refer to the royal metropolis and to the various fiefs and dependencies ( Cf. Zhou li, Xiaguan xia, 4B 14 )

Line 2: Three Spiritual Lights ( Sanling ) refer to the sun, the moon and the stars

Line 3: Pen-ch'u ( Benchu ) is the courtesy name of Yuan Shao of the Han Dynasty, who made great efforts and managed to eliminate the eunuchs ( Cf. Hou Han shu, Yuan Shao zhuan, *juan* 74 *shang* )

Line 4: Ch'u-li ( Quli ) is Liu Quli, son of Emperor Wu's half-brother. Being prime minister, he was executed because of the eunuchs' backbiting ( Cf. Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 42 )

Line 5: The allusion is to the story: Emperor Wen of Han ( r. 179-157 BC ) once shared his carriage with the eunuch Zhao Tan. An official named Yuan Yang protested and the Emperor immediately ordered the eunuch to get out of the carriage. Zhao Tan descended and wept in anger and shame ( Cf. Han shu, Yuan Yang zhuan, *juan* 49 )

Line 6: "Rush from the hall" alludes to the once powerful eunuch Zhang Fang under Emperor Shun of Later Han ( r. 126-144 ). Zhang was forced to rush away from the throne hall because of the accusation by other eunuchs ( Cf. Hou Han shu, Yu Xu zhuan, *juan* 58 )

Line 8: Reedy Marsh ( Huanfu ) was the name of a pond in the state of Zheng where a notorious gang of bandits killed people. As recorded in the Zuo zhuan, the government forces completely

destroyed the bandit gang later ( Zuo zhuan, Shaogong ershi nian cited in Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, juan 1, 43 )

Line 11/ Premier of Han refers to Wang Shang, prime minister of Han, who had an imposing appearance and enjoyed respect from the Emperor ( Cf Han shu, Wang Shang zhuan, juan 82 ) Here Wang Shang stands for Li Xun who also had an imposing appearance

Line 12/ Barbarian Lad ( Huchu ), an allusion to Shi Le, the founder of the Later Zhao Dynasty. When Shi Le, who had Turkish origin, was a boy, he was seen by Wang Yan who later told someone that the barbarian lad he saw showed strange ambitions. Being in fear that the empire could be in trouble in the future because of Shi Le, Wang Yan then sent people to catch him in vain ( Cf. Jin shu, Shi Le zaiji shang, juan 104 )

Line 16/ Huge Furnace ( Honglu ) The universe is compared by Zhuang Zi to a huge furnace in which everything is fashioned by nature ( Nanhua jing, neipian, 4 12b )

The first poem begins with an overt allusion "Jiufu," and therefore immediately shows the allusiveness of the poem. Through this and other allusions, the first couplet recalls the united empire of the High Tang: the Emperor ruled over all the Nine Domains by his virtue and was protected by the celestial lights. By recalling the well-being of the High Tang, Li makes a strong contrast between the past and present. As soon as Li Shangyin symbolizes the High Tang's prosperity, he raises the incident in the second couplet pointing out the

failure of Li Xun's plan. Since the incident involved Emperor Wenzong and other important figures, the criticism is presented through the use of the allusions to the two historical figures: the Emperor should not trust the chief minister Li Xun who tried to excel Yuan Shao in vain and, after failing to eliminate the eunuchs, brought death upon himself and others like Liu Quli. With strong emotional resonances in each, the following six couplets pair up allusions and other poetic expressions. Except the sixth couplet, the lines in this part are paraphrased by James Liu as this:

They tried to inflict even greater punishment on the eunuchs than that which Chao T'an (Zhao Tan) suffered, the humiliation of having to descend from the imperial carriage, and they forced the eunuchs to leave the hall in haste, like Chang (Zhang) Fang. What began as the reporting to the throne of an auspicious omen, following the custom in ancient times when the color of clouds would be reported, developed into a general slaughter, like the destruction of the bandits of Reedy Marsh recorded in history. People were arrested on the evidence of secret letters, and killed for their guilt by association . . . Many courtiers entered the register of ghosts, and beacons of war (or perhaps glittering blades) shone in the capital. I

dare not openly lament, yet I cannot help complaining against heaven, the great artificer who fashions all things as if in a huge furnace."20

Only in the sixth couplet does Li Shangyin give us the reason that caused the incident: all this took place because Li Xun was wrongly esteemed and trusted by the Emperor partially due to his handsome appearance and because the dangerous opportunist Zheng Zhu, like the "Barbarian Lad," was not discovered to be what he was.21

Dealing with the same incident, the second poem gets into a deeper discussion by embarking on another long catalogue of allusions and other poetic images:

其二

丹陛猶敷奏，彤庭欲戰爭。  
 聖危對虛植，始悔用龐萌。  
 御仗收前殿，凶徒劇背城。  
 蒼黃五色棒，掩過一陽生。  
 古有清君側，今非乏老成。  
 素心雖未易，此舉太無名。  
 誰瞑銜冤目，寧吞欲絕聲。  
 近聞開壽宴，不廢用咸英。

Memorials were still being presented to the vermilion  
steps,

When suddenly a battle began within the scarlet court.

Faced with danger, the Emperor summoned Lu Chih (Zhi).

And regretted, too late, employing P'ang (Pang) Meng.

The imperial guards withdrew from the front throne hall.

While the vicious scoundrels fought with their backs to  
the wall.

In hurried confusion came the Five-colored Clubs:

The growth of the unique spirit of yang was checked and  
choked.

In ancient times rogues were purged from the sovereign's  
side:

Even now there is no lack of elder statemen.

Though the heart did not change its former intent.

This act is really too dishonorable!

Who is to close the eyes of those wrongfully killed?

Should one gulp down heartbreaking sobs?

Recently I heard that at the royal birthday banquet

They did not fail to play the tunes Hsien (Xian) and

Ying.22

Line 1/ " Vermilion steps " refers to the steps of the throne hall which in Han times were painted with vermilion lacquer. This expression became merely conventional later on.

Line 2/ " Scarlet court " refers to the central court of the palace which was painted red in Han times.

Line 3/ Lu Chih ( Lu Zhi ) was a minister who helped Yuan Shao in eliminating the eunuchs. ( Cf. Hou Han shu, Lu Zhi zhuan, juan 64 ) Here, according to a note by Li Shangyin himself, Lu Zhi stands for Linghu Chu, who, as a chief minister, was summoned by the Emperor to the palace after the incident took place.

Line 4/ P'ang Meng ( Pang Meng ) was a general who launched a rebellion though he was at first trusted by Emperor Guangwu of the Later Han ( r. 25-57 ) ( Cf. Hou Han shu, Liu Yong zhuan, juan 12 ) Here the poet means Li Xun, who proved to be unworthy of the Emperor's trust.

Line 7/ Five-colored Clubs alludes to the story that Cao Cao, when in charge of the imperial guards, used five-colored clubs to punish those who violated the law. ( Cf. Sanguo zhi, Wei shu, juan 1 ) Here, the phrase refers to the Jinwu Guards.

Line 8/ Spirit of yang ( yang sheng ) The incident took place at the time of the winter solstice, which usually marked the return of the spirit of yang--the active force of life.

Line 9/ " Rogues were purged from the sovereign's side " is an expression originally used by Zhao Yang of the state of Jin. ( Cf. Chunqiu Gong Yang zhuan, 11 11a )

Line 13/ People who died with grievances are said to have died with their eyes open

Line 16/ Hsien ( Xian ) and Ying are abbreviations for Xianchi and Liuying, which respectively refer to music of the legendary Yellow Emperor and Emperor Ku. According to Feng Hao, apart from representing Court music in general, Xian and Ying here also indicate the tragic irony that Wang Ya, wrongfully killed in the incident, had himself supervised the revision of Court music. ( Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 46 )

Here, as in the first poem, allusions, together with common poetic images, are used not only to express the poet's attitude toward the incident but also to narrate the event. "Memorials were still being presented to the vermilion steps, When suddenly a battle began within the scarlet court" tells us how the incident broke out in the palace. The third couplet goes on to describe the development of the conflict: protected by his guards, the Emperor withdrew from the throne hall to the inner palace as the vicious eunuchs were fighting with their backs to the wall. These lines, however, are too brief to tell exactly what happened in the incident. Moreover, this brief narration is often fused with allusive descriptions like "In hurried confusion came the Five-colored Clubs; The growth of the unique spirit of yang was checked and choked," meaning "the Chin-wu (Jinwu) Guards came in hurried confusion with their weapons, as if these had

been the five-colored clubs with which Ts'ao Ts'ao (Cao Cao) chastised all offenders. The fighting smothered the growth of the spirit of *yang*, which normally would have begun at this time of year, the winter solstice."<sup>23</sup>

Although the poem displays Li's talent for combining allusions into a sustained narrative, reading these lines, one can hardly know the overall incident. But one will certainly understand the poet's comments and attitude. To a large extent, therefore, the poem mainly expresses the poet's feelings rather than tells the story of the incident. And Li Shangyin does this in a concise and oblique fashion. This can be seen by comparing the following paraphrased couplets:

In ancient times, Chao [Zhao] Yang purged wicked men from the side of his sovereign, and even now there is no lack of elder statemen (such as Ling-hu Ch'u [Linghu Chu] ) who might have been entrusted with the task of eliminating the eunuchs, instead of men like Li Hsun [Xun]. Though Li Hsun [Xun] did not change his intent, which was good, the means he adopted was really too dishonorable. Now, who can console the spirits of those wrongfully killed so that they might close their eyes and rest in peace? And should one suppress one's heartbreaking sobs? Recently I heard that at the royal

birthday banquet they played solemn music as usual, the same music that the murdered chief minister Wang Ya had himself helped to revise!<sup>24</sup>

These two poems show how Li Shangyin uses orthodox allusions to reveal a subjective feeling or attitude. The main effect of deliberately introducing a sense of subjectivity--a striking character always seen in his poems--is to shape a strong lyricism which defines Li Shangyin's historical poetry and distinguishes it from that of his predecessors and contemporaries. Compared to other poets' poems on historical events, e.g., Du Fu's poems termed "San li" 三吏 and "San bie" 三別 and Bai Juyi's "Mai Tan Weng" 賣炭翁 and "Duling Sou" 杜陵叟, these two poems, as we have noted, are more expressive than narrative:<sup>25</sup> even in the few lines in which the poet uses allusions to describe the incident indirectly, there is little chronological coherence from the first poem to the second poem, nor even from line to line in one poem.<sup>26</sup> To a certain extent, the poems display Li Shangyin's ability to draw on some well-known allusions and combine them in a lyrically narrative structure that imbues them with a different identity without changing nonetheless the root meanings of these allusions.

Also, elsewhere in the Li Shangyin corpus, we encounter this kind of allusion. In another poem on history, the "Crooked River"

曲江, for example, Li Shangyin uses orthodox allusions in an analogical way. Here are two lines from the poem:

死憶華亭聞唳鶴，老憂王室泣銅駝。

... dying remembered Hua-t'ing (huating), heard the  
whoop of cranes. . .

... grown old, fearful for a royal house, wept by the  
bronze camels. . .27

The first line in the couplet alludes to the story that Lu Ji, before he was executed, sighed. "Shall I ever again hear the cranes call at Huating" 華亭鶴唳，豈可復聞？ The second line alludes to the story that Suo Jing 索靖, knowing that rebellion was imminent, pointed at the bronze camels in front of the gate of the Luoyang Palace and sighed: "The time is coming when we shall see you covered with brambles" 會見汝在荊棘中耳.<sup>28</sup> Here Li reorganizes the two allusions in one couplet and which not only constructs a neat parallelism but also vividly expresses the poet's lament over "desolate heaven and discordant earth" 天荒地變 and his ominous presentiment for the fate of the state. Employed thus, historical allusion, or "gushi," in Li Shangyin's historical poems brings into focus the otherness of multiple subtexts and therefore establishes the alluding

text as an evolution of insight of all the evoked texts. This gives his poems a distinctive voice.

### *zheng yong* ( Orthodox Allusion ) as Contrast

In applying historical allusions in his poems on historical themes, Li Shangyin does not always draw an analogy between the present and the past as a complement although many preceding or contemporary poets confined themselves to this sort of analogic use of allusion. Sometimes, he expands the power of these allusions by establishing a contrast between the present text and the subtext to which it alludes. Commentators and scholars regard the second couplet of his "More Reflections" 重有感, for instance, as a good example of this kind of usage:

竇融表已來隴右，陶侃軍宜次石頭。

Tou Yung's (Dou Rong) memorial has already reached  
West of the Pass.

T'ao K'an's (Tao Kan) army should be camped by Rocky  
City.<sup>29</sup>

Together with "Two Poems Written When Moved by a Certain Event," which we analysed above, "More Reflections" is another poem Li Shangyin wrote on the Sweet Dew Incident of 835. The couplet refers directly to this historical juncture. Here we see once again the Tang poet's habit of replacing his contemporaries with historical, particularly Han, figures. As we knew from previous description, loyalist Jinwu soldiers were hidden at the scene with orders to attack the eunuchs and take the emperor away, according to the plan. The soldiers, however, were discovered before they were able to attack, the eunuchs fled with the emperor as their hostage, and the plot was a total failure. The only hope was for regional commanders to come to the aid of the emperor. One regional commander in particular, a man by the name of Liu Congjian 劉從諫, had already presented a memorial in which he said, "I will carefully improve the territory assigned to me, ready arms and men, and serve as a confidant to Your Majesty. If the evil subordinates are hard to control, I vow unto death to clean up the emperor's quarters" 謹修封疆，繕甲兵，為陛下腹心。如奸臣難制，誓以死清君側。<sup>30</sup> But having vowed his loyalty to the emperor, Liu did not take further action.

The allusions in the couplet are made to two historical actions. Dou Rong 竇融 was a general of the Han dynasty; as a regional commander of Liangzhou, he presented a memorial to Emperor Guangwu 光武帝 (r. 25-57) and put his army at his disposal. Tao Kan

陶侃, a general of the Jin Dynasty, met up with the armies of Wen Qiao 溫嶠 and Yu Liang 庾亮 at the Rocky City to attack Su Jun 蘇峻, a leader of the insurgent troops, who was killed in the battle.<sup>31</sup> By alluding to Dou Rong, Li Shangyin in the first line tells of the fact that Liu Congjian presented a memorial to the emperor, just as Dou did. "West of the Pass" refers to the capital. In the second line the poet uses the allusion to Tao Kan to emphasize a contrast between "what T'ao (Tao) did in a previous dynasty (and) Liu Ts'ung-chien (Congjian) had not yet done when the poem was written. Thus Li Shangyin (Shangyin) expressed his hope that Liu would act as decisively as T'ao (Tao)."<sup>32</sup> Since two different allusions are used to refer to one contemporary event and these allusions significantly differ from the present situation, Li Shangyin effectively expresses his hope for a special result in the incident. Also, as we have seen in examples of his analogical use of orthodox allusion, Li is able to reinforce the allusive power in an orthodox allusion for a contrast by subtly employing grammatical particles. In this couplet, the two particles, "already" 已 and "should" 宜, strengthen the contrast between past and present, especially the second particle which Kao and Mei take as the key word. Referring to the importance of this word, they explain:

T'ao K'an's (Tao Kan) army should be camped by Rocky City" means, in this context, that Liu's army should be

camped by the T'ang (Tang) capital Ch'ang-an (Changan) to attack the eunuchs, instead of remaining at its border outpost. In fact, the fate of the T'ang (Tang) dynasty was held in suspense between Liu's intention and his action, between presenting the memorial pledging allegiance to the emperor and leading his army to the capital.<sup>33</sup>

If the contrast between the present and past seen in these lines indicates that Li Shangyin uses orthodox allusion to be sharply critical, in some other poems he can use it to be ironic or sympathetic. A good example of the latter is the second of the famous "Mawei Slope" poems 馬嵬二首, in which the poet produces a contrast between the present and the past by using a traditional "yuefu" figure in the last couplet:

海外徒聞更九州，他生未卜此生休。  
空聞虎旅傳宵柝，無復雞人報曉籌。  
此日六軍同駐馬，當時七夕笑牽牛。  
如何四紀爲天子，不及盧家有莫愁。

"What is the good of learning that nine other continents  
lie beyond the seas?

One cannot prophesy about the next life, but this one is all  
over!

In vain does one hear the tiger-like nightwatches beat  
their wooden bells:

No more will the palace-crier announce the arrival of  
dawn!

On this day, the Six Armies together stopped their horses:

Formerly, on Seventh Night, we laughed at the Cowherd!"

Why was it that a Son of Heaven who had reigned four  
dozen years

Could not emulate the man from the Lu family with his  
Sans Souci?<sup>34</sup>

Line 1/ Nine other continents The philosopher Zou Yan ( third century BC ) believed that in addition to the continent occupied by China there were nine other continents beyond the seas.

Line 4/ The " palace-crier " ( Jiren ) refers to an officer in Zhou times who was supposed to wake up the Court officials at dawn before important sacrificial ceremonies ( Cf. Zhou li, Chunguan shang, 3A 14 ) In some later times, palace guards, after hearing the cock crow from outside the palace ( no cock was allowed to be kept inside ), were supposed to pass on the message

Line 5/ Six Armies ( Liu jun ) refer to the imperial guards though in fact at the time they consisted of only four armies: the Left and Right Longwu Armies and the Left and Right Yulin Armies Bai Juyi had used the expression in his "Changhen Ge" to refer to

Xuanzong's guards, probably following the tradition which nevertheless allowed the emperor to be entitled to six armies

Line 6: Seventh Night refers to the seventh night of the Seventh Month on which, according to mythology, the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd have their annual reunion across the Heavenly River

Line 7: Four dozen years ( Siji ) Each " ji " was equal to twelve years. Strictly speaking, Xuanzong only reigned for 43 years.

Line 8: This line alludes to the Yuefu poem by Emperor Wu of Liang (reigned 502-490), in which the young woman called San Souci ( Mochou, meaning " don't worry" ) is unhappy, after married into the rich Lu family, because she regrets not having married the next door young man. ( Liang Wudi, " Hezhong zhishui ge," Guo Shaoyu, *Yuefu shiji, juan* 85, 1204 )

Together with the first one of the "Mawei Slope," this poem is written on the historic event that Emperor Xuanzong's 玄宗 (r.712-756) lover, the Honorable Consort Yang 楊貴妃, was killed by his imperial guards at the Mawei Slope right after the An Lushan Rebellion broke out in 756. Li Shangyin actually reverses the events in the poem: Xuanzong, returning to Changan after the An Lushan Rebellion, looked around him and found himself surrounded by guards and mutinous troops, but not by his beloved Yang Yuhuan 楊玉環, then recalled what had happened to her at the Mawei Slope.

According to the official history, the first several decades under Emperor Xuanzong's reign were peaceful and prosperous. However, the emperor took less and less interest in the state's matters after he fell in love with Yang Yuhuan whom he later set up as his chief concubine and gave the title "prized consort" 貴妃. It is said that Xuanzong spent much of his time with Yang for immoderate pleasure at the luxurious Huaqing Palace 華清宮 on Mount Li 驪山, paying no serious attention to administrative matters. Li Linfu 李林甫, the Emperor's chief minister, was then replaced by Yang Yuhuan's cousin Yang Guozhong 楊國忠, who, compared to Li Linfu, was less competent and much more greedy. It was at this time that An Lushan 安祿山, a half barbarian general who obtained Xuanzong's trust by flattering Yang Yuhuan and playing the buffoon at court, was appointed to be the commander of the border area of Yuyang 漁陽 to the northeast. In 755, An Lushan launched a rebellion. He and his army first of all captured the eastern capital of Luoyang; then they moved westward to Changan. Having easily defeating the imperial troops which were torn by dissenting political powers, An Lushan occupied the crucial pass to the capital, the Tong 潼 Pass. Xuanzong and Yang had no other ways out but to flee south to Shu. At the Mawei Station 馬嵬驛 on their way to Shu, Emperor Xuanzong was forced to agree to his bodyguards' demand that both Yang Guozhong and Yang Yuhuan be executed. Yang Yuhuan was thus strangled and

buried by the roadside. Later when the now-retired Xuanzong went back to Changan after his son, Emperor Suzong 肅宗 (r.756-762), restored most of China under his reign, he sent his men for Yang's grave where they found her remains decayed.<sup>35</sup>

The story of the love affair between Xuanzong and Yang Yuhuan was already a favorite subject of literary writing in the Mid- and Late Tang periods. Of the numerous pieces that tell the story, Bai Juyi's highly romanticized poem, "The Song of Eternal Grievance" 長恨歌, and its complementary prose romance by Chen Hong 陳鴻 (fl. 805), are the most famous. A "yong shi" poem like this one by Li Shangyin, however, depicts certain aspects of the story in its own way. In addition, known references, such as allusions, relating to names, places, and events involved in Xuanzong's reign and his love affairs are passed down from these many shorter poems. From line one to line six, Li's poem is written from the Emperor's point of view, as suggested by James Liu:

The first line possibly contains an allusion to the story . . . that after Lady Yang's death the Emperor sent a Taoist magician to search for her soul, and that the magician finally found her as an immortal on a fairy mountain beyond the seas. Whether this allusion is intended or not, the first two lines may be paraphrased thus: "What is the

good of knowing that there might be other worlds than ours, since I cannot be reunited with my love? I cannot foretell what my next reincarnation will be like and whether I shall be reunited with her, as we vowed we would be, but as far as this life is concerned, all is over with me!"<sup>36</sup>

If the allusion is intended, Li's use of "learns uselessly" 徒聞 brings out a negation of the fairy mountain beyond the seas and the vow Xuanzong and Yang Guifei had made before her death. Thus, the poet at the very beginning gives an ironic tone to the whole poem. The couplets formed by lines three to six dramatically portray a Xuanzong after his beloved died, whose remembrance of the past and present experiences is seen in contrasting parallels: the first line in each couplet is concerned with the present, while the second line in that couplet is about the past. "In vain he hears" 空聞 in line three not only describes the Emperor's lost mood at the Mawei Slope but emphasizes the Emperor's helpless, contradictory attitude towards his guards--it was these brave guards who demanded her death as a condition for their protection of him. Line four, as Feng Hao suggests, can be understood this way: since Yang is now dead, in sleep for ever, she cannot hear the palace-crier announcing the dawn any more ("長眠不復曉矣.").<sup>37</sup> Or, as suggested by James Liu, it means that the

Emperor wishes never to see another morning again.<sup>38</sup> In lines five and six, after telling that the imperial guards refused to move on until the Emperor let her be executed, Li Shangyin expresses his sympathetic feeling for the Emperor's eternal separation from his favorite by using the allusion to the Weaving Maid and the Cowherd. James Liu paraphrases the sixth line in this manner: "Formerly, on the seventh night of the Seventh Month, when the stellar lovers--the Cowherd and the Weaving Maid--had their annual reunion, we even laughed at them, thinking that we were for ever united and would never part!"<sup>39</sup> The sympathy is not simply produced by the reference to the stellar lovers, but rather by what he says about it: they laughed perhaps not so much at the Weaving Maid and Cowherd in their tragic circumstances but in relief that, after their own vows, they were secure.

In the final couplet, Li Shangyin speaks in his own person, giving his response to the Mawei Incident. Here, by comparing the Emperor with the husband of Mochou (Sans Souci), Li Shangyin makes a contrast between the former, who is the most powerful but unable to protect the woman he loves, and the latter, though comparatively powerless, who can maintain his wife. The underlying meaning of the contrast seems complicated and contradictory. On the one hand, the poet sympathetically describes Xuanzong's personal grief over the death of Yang and his recognition that his private happiness is over

because of his public role: on the other, he critically emphasizes that it should be the Emperor not Yang who should take the responsibility for the turmoil of the state. The sympathy and criticism conveyed by the contrast here are reinforced when seen in the context of the contrasting patterns of the whole poem: that Xuanzong ordered Yang executed, yet afterwards sent a Daoist magician to search for her soul displays a contrast between affection and coolness; that in this life he could never again be with his lover after she died, yet trusted their reunion to the other world suggests an opposition between reality and fantasy; the regular announcement of dawn by the palace-crier contrasts with the irregular halt of the army and Xuanzong's miserable life thereafter; and the vow never to parting on the Seventh Night before ends up as a forced execution vow.

In fact, the contradictions seen by Li Shangyin represent the Tang attitude towards the relation between the Emperor and Lady Yang. It is not only that different poets hold different attitudes but that conflicting views are fused within one poet's mind. In the art of poets like Du Fu and Liu Yuxi, who hold the more traditional view that historical events have ethical meaning, Yang is accused of being the cause of the An Lu Shan Rebellion and the turmoil afterwards, whereas poets, who depict history by playing down its political implications, show more interest in picturing the Emperor's personal loss or Yang's victimization in the incident sympathetically.<sup>40</sup>

*fan yong* ( Inverted Allusion )

When alluding, Li Shangyin is able to broaden or deepen the conotation of his allusions by means of focussing and mutation. This leads him into more subtle yet powerful allusiveness. One particular practice of this kind of allusiveness is to invert the allusion. Traditionally, as discussed in Introduction, this kind of employment of allusion is called "fan yong" 反用, or, "turning the tables" 翻案. For our convenience, we also use "inverted allusion" in the following discussion.

Li Shangyin does not use inverted allusion very often. However, he is one of those Tang poets who are skillfull with it, and in his poems on history we see quite a few ways of inverting. In the following famous quartrain "Master Jia" 賈生, the poet reverses the valuation of the allusion to Wendi's 文帝 appreciation of Jia Yi:

宣室求賢訪逐臣，賈生才調更無倫。  
可憐夜半虛前席，不問蒼生問鬼神。

To the audience hall the worthy banished minister was  
recalled;

Master Chia's (Jia) talents were matchless in the world.

Alas, in vain did the Emperor move his seat forward at  
midnight-

Instead of asking about the people, he asked about the  
gods!<sup>41</sup>

The name in the title of the poem, "Jia sheng," is the familiar Jia Yi discussed before in the poem "Tower on the City Wall of Anding." According to "The Biography of Jia Yi" 賈誼傳 in the Han shu 漢書, Jia Yi was banished from the court of Emperor Wen of Han but was later recalled. In the Audience Hall 宣室, the main hall of the Weiyang Palace 未央宮 where Jia was summoned, the Emperor asked him about the gods and spirits. Since Jia Yi talked so long on the subject and his stories interested the Emperor so much, the meeting went on until midnight and the Emperor moved his sitting mat forward.<sup>42</sup>

Previously, the story was often used to imply a superior's deference to his inferior and thereby imply as well an inferior's being greatly trusted and best used by his wise ruler. Instead of using the allusion in the conventional way, Li Shangyin proposes a satire by focusing on the "問鬼神" aspect of the allusive source. The satire, however, is not seen in the first couplet. Here, by describing how great the banished minister's talents were and for them Emperor Wen

of Han called to meet him. Li is seemingly telling us that the Emperor, as a wise ruler, thought highly of Jia who, on the other hand, was lucky to be appreciated. "Alas," in the second couplet we see negation of the preceding significance. What the Emperor wanted to know from Jia Yi is the spirits and gods but not the living condition of the people, nor the ideas of managing state affairs. By emphasizing the Emperor's only interest at the meeting with Jia Yi, Li Shangyin is actually questioning: Did Jia Yi meet a truly wise ruler who listened to good men? Were his great talents wasted by talking about only spirits and gods? Through the words, "kelian" 可憐 and "xu" 虛, in this couplet, we know the underlying answers. As Qu Fu comments: "Wendi's virtue thus lies in what he asked [about spirits and gods]. Does this also mean that the recognition of the worth of Jiasheng by Wendi is not such recognition" 文帝之賢，所問如此，亦有貴生遇而不遇之意歟？<sup>43</sup>

By negating the point that Jia's talents were really appreciated by the Emperor, Li Shangyin inverts the conventional implication of the allusion. And through the image of Jia Yi thus presented in this poem, he not only deplores his own wasted talents but also that of other literati. For the inverted use of the allusion in this poem, traditional critics give Li Shangyin a high compliment.<sup>44</sup>

In reversing the meaning of an allusion that is used by predecessors, Li Shangyin expresses deep respect for his literary

tradition and at the same time renders his allusion dialectical, establishing his own signifying habits different from those of the evoked text in a way that celebrates the source and invites its criticism. Such dialectical presentation of factual allusions can be seen as a result of Li's preference of irony and fictionality over the didactic value of historical events. Although this kind of preference is manifested only in a small number of his poems, it is part of his practice of manipulating prior material.

In exercising his ability of manipulating allusion through inversion for the purpose of irony and satire in his historical poems, Li Shangyin's attention is seen to be on the Southern Dynasties and Sui Dynasty. As suggested by Wu Tiaogong, there are some factors that contribute to Li's turning to those dynasties in his historical poems. First, he alluded to the history of the Southern Dynasties and Sui because he might have realized that these dynasties resembled his own time in terms of social anarchy and political decline. Secondly, Li Shangyin was attracted to these ages because of his aesthetic inclinations and poetic interests that were akin in some way to that of these dynasties. Third, since these dynasties were closer to the Tang, it would be easier for the poet to draw materials for analogy or contrast.<sup>45</sup>

One distinctive characteristic of Li Shangyin's inverted allusion is its function as atmosphere that can be used to satirize the present

situation. This is quite different from the "zheng yong" of allusion, or orthodox allusion, which, as discussed earlier, normally makes reference to past actions as a guideline for moral judgments. Two examples of the more liberal technique of reversing prior use of allusion will illustrate this characteristic of Li's inverted allusion in his poems on history. The first one is the quatrain "On History" 咏史.

北湖南埭水漫漫，一片降旗百尺竿。  
三百年間同曉夢，鐘山何處有龍盤？

Northern lake, southern dike: the water stretches far.  
A single flag of surrender from atop a hundred-foot pole.  
A span of three hundred years--all the same early morning  
dream.  
In what way does Mount Zhong possess a dragon coiled?46

Line 1 Northern lake refers to the Xuanwu Hu ( Lake Xuanwu ), located north of Jinling, the Tang name for Jiankang, the capital of the Southern Dynasties. The dike may refer to the Jiming Dai ( Cockcrow Dike) named by Emperor Wu ( r 483-494 ) of the Southern Qi Dynasty ( Cf. Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol.3, 1384 )

Here, sighing over the fall of the Southern Dynasties, Li Shangyin at the very beginning of the poem describes the natural surroundings of the old capital during the Six Dynasties. By connecting the two once lovely lakes with the vast and vague expansion of water, however, the poet also portrays a by-gone scene-- the glory and pride of these dynasties are long past. If the pride and weakness of the Southern Dynasties are abstractly suggested in the image of the vague stretch of water, the suggestion is strengthened by the more specific image of the banner of surrender, which Li visualizes in his imagination. This image allusively echoes Liu Yuxi's "一片降幡出石頭" "Flags of surrender rose in a file over the Wall of Stone" in his famous "Sorrowing for the Past at Western Pass Mountain" 西塞山懷古.<sup>47</sup> In that poem, Liu Yuxi pictures the naval invasion of the Wu State led by Wang Jun 王浚, a commander of Western Jin, in 280. The second couplet, where the quoted line is contained, describes how the Wu army was forced to surrender at Shitou outside the capital after Wang's ships destroyed the chains which had been made across the Yangzi River by the Wu defense forces. The allusion to Liu's poem indicates the link between the image of the banner of surrender and the old capital city. Liu Yuxi uses this image to describe specifically Wu's conquest by Western Jin. Whereas Li Shangyin's "a single flag of surrender" 一片降旗 here

symbolizes in general the failure of political power of all the Southern dynasties.

The images in the first two lines all contribute to the enunciation of the poet's general skepticism toward history in line three: for Li Shangyin the historical glory and pride are nothing more than a broken morning dream. With such a skeptical attitude toward history, Li Shangyin denies the rugged solidity of Mount Zhong in line four. Mount Zhong is Mount Zijin 紫金山, near Jiankang. It is said that Zhu Geliang, when he saw the majestic appearance of the Jiankang area, said: "Mount Zhong are coiled dragons and Stone City crouched tigers: this is truly a dwelling place for emperors and princes" 鐘山龍蟠，石頭虎踞，帝王之宅也.<sup>48</sup> By questioning Mount Zhong's legendary imperial aspect, Li Shangyin implicitly ridicules the root meaning of the allusion and therefore negates the connection between cosmology and the strength of a political power. Li's denial of the "kingly aura" 王氣 of Jiankang sounds like the tone in another poem by Liu Yuxi in which his negation is explicit:

興廢由人事，山川空地形。

The rising and falling depend on man's actions,  
Mountains and rivers are nothing but topography.<sup>49</sup>

This approach to historical allusion offers certain ways for the poet to use allusive sources creatively. Sometimes, Li Shangyin simply alters the original meaning of an allusion: sometimes he "turns the table" by fictionalizing the scenes in the original allusions. Very often, the ironic or condemning tone issuing from an allusion spreads throughout the poem and the power of allusion pervades the whole poetic effect. Moreover, this use of allusion lets Li Shangyin introduce into a historical poem a fusion of scenery and emotion, characteristic of the subgenre of "huaigu" 懷古, or meditation on the past.<sup>50</sup> Read the following poem in regulated verse form, the "Sui Palace" 隋宮, one of the poems on the Sui Dynasty:

紫泉宮殿瑣烟霞，欲取蕪城作帝家。  
玉璽不緣歸日角，錦帆應是到天涯。  
於今腐草無螢火，終古垂楊有暮鴉。  
地下若逢陳後主，豈宜重問後庭花！

In clouds and mists was locked his Palaces of Purple  
Spring:

Emperor Yang fancied Wu City as a new home to take.

Had the Jade seal not fallen in the Sun Corner's hand,

His brocade sails would have brought him across the land.  
 In the dead grass now are no glowing fireflies.  
 But in the willows are always the crows at dusk.  
 If he ever meets the Last Lord of Chen in the underworld,  
 Would he bear to ask again for the "Flowers of the Rear  
 Court"?<sup>51</sup>

Line 1/ Palaces of Purple Spring. According to Zhu Heling, the "Purple Spring" is borrowed from Sima Xiangru's "Shanglin Fu" in which "Zi yuan" is said to flow through the imperial hunting domain. Li Shangyin uses the elegant "Zi' quan" here to refer to Emperor Yang's palaces in Changan. "Zi quan" is used instead of "Zi yuan," according to convention, for the avoidance of relating to the name of Li Yuan, the first emperor of the Tang Dynasty. ( Cf. Zhu Heling, Li Yishan shiji, *juan shang*, 37b )

Line 2/ Wu City ( Wu Cheng ) refers to Yangzhou. Because it was earlier believed that Bao Zhao's ( 414-466 ) " Wu Cheng Fu " described Yangzhou, that city is here referred to by "Wu Cheng " ( Cf. Li Shan's annotation to the " Wu Cheng Fu. " Wen xuan, 11 227. )

Line 5/ Glowing fireflies. For personal enjoyment, Emperor Yang is said to have ordered his officials to gather all the fireflies among the rotten grass to light up the valley at night. ( Cf. Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 686 )

This poem is a good example that shows how Li Shangyin applies a kind of fictionality to his historical allusion. By comparing Sui Emperor Yang 隋煬帝 (r.605-618) with the incompetent last ruler of the Chen, Chen Houzhu 陳後主 (r.583-589), the poet is here denouncing the former's dissipation and corruption. With very limited space, Li Shangyin in the poem skillfully manages to recount some notorious facts linked with Emperor Yang. The first couplet tells us that though the Emperor already possessed the palaces in Chang'an which, in the synecdoche of "Purple Spring," were so huge that they seemed to be locked in mist and smoke, he still wanted to take Yangzhou, the beautiful southern terminus of the Grand Canal, for his capital. In the following couplets we learn that as Emperor Yang was away, Chang'an fell and so did the Sui Dynasty. The "jade seal" 玉璽 is the symbol of imperial authority. Li Shangyin uses it to refer to the passing of the Sui and the establishment of the Tang by Emperor Gaozu 唐高祖 (r. 618-626), whom we know in the poem as the "Sun Corner" 日角. The things, such as Emperor Yang's journey to the site of Southern Dynasties luxury in his brocade ships, his boating parties, and his collecting several pecks of fireflies for lighting in an evening stroll, are also vividly depicted here.

The final couplet makes a parallel between Emperor Yang and the Last Ruler of the Chen: " If he ever meets the Last Lord of Chen in the underworld, / Would he bear to ask again for the 'Flowers of the

Rear Court'?" As popular interpretations of history go, both the Emperors lost their empires "because they indulged in sensual pursuits to the point of neglecting affairs of state."<sup>52</sup> "Flowers of the Rear Court" 後庭花 is the name of a seductive tune composed by the Last Ruler of the Chen. According to the legendary anecdote in the Sui yi lu 隋遺錄, Emperor Yang is said to have met the ghost of the Last Ruler and watched one of Houzhu's concubines, Zhang Lihua 張麗華, dance to the "Flowers of the Rear Court."<sup>53</sup> Li Shangyin fictionalizes a meeting of the two emperors again in the underworld but instead of discussing with Chen Houzhu the seductive music again, Emperor Yang, in Li Shangyin's art, is embarrassed in this situation in the underworld. The phrase "would he bear to" 豈宜 not only suggests that Emperor Yang, through his own dissipation and decadence, duplicated the tragedy of Chen Houzhu, but it also shows Emperor Yang in a picture of shame and regret. Thus, Li's portrayal of Emperor Yang combines irony with pity and contempt.

In Li Shangyin's use of inverted allusion, the meaning produced by the allusion in the alluding text is quite different from that of the text alluded to. In other words, some particular denotations of the allusive sign in the evoked text are different from and, to a certain extent, even incompatible with the reconstructed significance of the same sign in the alluding text. Using allusion this way, as we have

seen. Li Shangyin has not reduced the power of its allusiveness, rather, he has strengthened it.

Differently used, historical allusion, or "gushi," in Li Shangyin's poems functions as a medium by which the poet creates an analogy or contrast between past and present. Emphasis on the irony of the rise and fall of dynasties in history and of the Tang is often achieved through the poet's manipulation of the language of the allusions. And for that purpose, as we have seen, Li Shangyin has paid more attention to the allusive tone or atmosphere than to specific acts or scenes of an allusion.

### Notes

1 He Shang 賀裳, Zaijiuyuan shihua 載酒園詩話, in Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, ed. and comp., Qing shihua xubian 清詩話續編, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1983) 374.

2 See Liu Xuekai 劉學鐸, "Li Shangyin yongshi shi de zhuyao tezheng" 李商隱咏史詩的主要特徵, Wenxue yichan 文學遺產 1 (1993): 46-54; and Wu Tiaogong 吳調公, Li Shangyin yanjiu 李商隱研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1982), 135-137.

3 See Liu Xuekai, "Li Shangyin yongshi shi de zhuyao tezheng," 48.

4 Hans H. Frankel, The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976) 104.

5 Xu Zong 許總 also advances this opinion while discussing Li Bai's 李白 poetic characteristic and its relation to the stable and prosperous situation of both the nation and empire. See Xu Zong, Tang shi shi 唐詩史, vol. 1 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu, 1994) 575-608.

6 Paul F. Rouzer, Writing Another's Dream: The Poetry of Wen Tingyun (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993) 95.

7 Paul Rouzer, 98.

8 Historical allusion is used by Li Shangyin in not only historical poems but also other types of poems. It is in his poems on history, however, that the poet shows his great mastery of this kind of allusion.

9 Kao Yu-kung, and Mei Tsu-lin, "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion in T'ang Poetry." Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 38 (1978): 328.

10 Feng Hao 馮浩, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu 玉溪生詩集箋注, *juan* 1, 115. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 129. Anding 安定 is another name for Jingzhou 涇州, where the poet stayed once.

11 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 130. According to Cai Kuanfu shihua, the Song poet and statesman Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) was fond of this couplet very much at his old age. See Cai Juhou 蔡居厚, Cai Kuanfu shihua 蔡寬夫詩話, in Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, ed., Song shihua jiyi 宋詩話輯佚, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980) 399.

12 Zhuang Zi 莊子, Nanhua jing 南華經, 外篇, 秋水, 10.22a. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 129.

13 James Liu, 130.

14 See Dong Naibin 董乃斌, Li Shangyin de xinling shijie 李商隱的心靈世界 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1992) 191.

15 The poet's note goes: "The event which moved me to write these poems occurred in the year of yi-mao (yimao) and the poems were completed in the year of ping-ch'en (bingchen)" 乙卯年有感，丙辰年詩成。(Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 40. Trans. James Liu, 129.)

16 This description of the incident is based on the account by Michael T. Dalby in Denis Twitchett, ed., The Cambridge History of China III: Sui and T'ang China 589-906, Part 1 vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 656-657.

17 "Pailu" is one of the most difficult Tang poems to appreciate today. The form demands that a poet maintain tonal regulation and a single rhyme over dozens of lines. In long "pailu," couplets often form a sequence which vaguely connects units that extend indefinitely solely through the poet's ability to sustain a rhyme. Most examples Wang Li 王力 uses in his explanation of "pailu" contain many allusions. For a further explanation, see Wang Li, Hanyu shilu xue 漢語詩律學 (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu, 1958) 23-33.

18 Wu Tiaogong points out that It was under dangerous circumstances that Li Shangyin wrote the two poems to lament the victims of the Sweet Dew Incident and to express his indignation against the eunuchs. See Wu Tiaogong, Li Shangyin yanjiu, 63. As for the accepted conventions in the use of allusion, see James J. Y. Liu,

The Art of Chinese Poetry (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962) 132-136.

19 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 40. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shangyin, 168.

20 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shangyin 170. Liu here gives an optional interpretation of this line, 軍烽照上都 "The beacons of war shone in the noble capital," because Feng Hao suspects that 烽 ( beacons ) is a misprint for 鋒 ( blades ). Liu thinks that it was not possible for people to light beacons in a palace coup and this word should therefore read "blades." However, since "the poet could be using the expression as conventional way of describing a battle," Liu remains open for two interpretations. See James Liu, 261.

21 See James Liu, 170.

22 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 40. Trans. James Liu, 170-171.

23 James Liu, 171-172.

24 James Liu, 172. The square brackets are added by this writer.

25 Representing history or events. Du Fu's 杜甫 poems are traditionally called "poetic history" 詩史 and Bai Juyi's 白居易 are often called "narrative poems" 敘事詩: this indicates the narrative feature of these poems. In the Li Shangyin corpus, we can encounter similar poems, such as "Written while Traveling through the Western Suburbs" 行次西郊作一百韻, but poems like these take such a small

portion in the Li Shangyin corpus that they can hardly represent Li's poetic characteristics.

26 Du Fu, for instance, in his "Eight Laments" 八哀, writes about eight men's lives in chronologically narrative fashion. See Shan Chou, "Allusion and Periphrasis as Modes of Poetry in Tu Fu's 'Eight Laments,'" Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 45 (1985): 79-80.

27 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 144. Trans. A. C. Graham in A. C. Graham, Poems of the Late Tang (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965)162.

28 Jin shu 晉書, 陸機傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974) *juan* 54; Jin shu 晉書, 索靖傳, *juan* 60. Trans. A. C. Graham, 162.

29 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 46. Trans. Kao Yu-kung, and Mei Tsu-lin in "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion," 326.

30 Xin Tang shu 新唐書, 仇士良傳 ( Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975) *juan* 207. Trans. Kao and Mei, "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion," 327.

31 For Dou Rong 竇融, see Hou Han shu 後漢書, 竇融傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965) *juan* 23. For Tao Kan 陶侃, see Jin shu 晉書, 陶侃傳, *juan* 66.

32 Kao and Mei, "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion," 327.

33 Kao and Mei, 328.

34 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 604. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 186.

35 For more background information on this historical period as well as a well-balanced criticism of the event in English, see Denis Twitchett, ed., The Cambridge History of China III: Sui and T'ang China 589-906, Part I vol. 3, 447-463.

36 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 186-187.

37 See Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 606.

38 See James Liu, 187.

39 James Liu, 187.

40 See, e.g., Du Fu's "Journey North" 北征 and Liu Yuxi's 劉禹錫 "Traveling to Mawei" 馬嵬行. While in Wen Tingyun's 溫庭筠 poem "Mawei Station" 馬嵬驛, which shares a similarity with Li Shangyin's poem in aesthetics and poetic focus, we see a juxtaposition of ironic blame and an empathetic feeling for the dispossessed emperor:

穆滿曾爲物外游，六龍經此暫淹留。  
返魂無驗青烟滅，埋血空成碧草愁。  
香輦卻歸長樂殿，曉鐘還下景陽樓。  
甘泉不得重相見，誰道文成是故侯？

King Mu once traveled beyond the ordinary world;

His six dragons passed here and tarried for a time.

No sign of the returning soul in the dark mist that melts:  
 Sunken blood vainly turns to grief in green grass.  
 The fragrant palanquin returned to the Palace of Lasting  
 Joy.  
 And morning bells descended again from the Jingyang  
 mansions:  
 But he's not able to see her again at Sweet Springs:  
 Who says the General of Peaceful Accomplishments was  
 indeed a lord of old?

( Quan Tang shi 全唐詩. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985, 6721. Trans. Paul Rouzer in Paul F. Rouzer, Writing Another's Dream, 151.)

41 Feng Hao. Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 314. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 189.

42 See Han shu 漢書, 賈誼傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1970) *juan* 48.

43 Cited in Liu Xuekai 劉學鍇, and Yu Shucheng 余恕誠, Li Shangyin shige jijie 李商隱詩歌集解, vol. 4, 1519. My own translation.

44 See, for instance, Yan Youyi's 嚴有翼 comment cited in Wei Qingzhi's 魏慶之 Shiren yuxie 詩人玉屑 (vol. 1, 148) which I quoted in Introduction of this study.

45 See Wu Tiaogong, Li Shangyin vanjiu, 137.

46 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 687. Trans. Paul Rouzer in Paul F. Rouzer, Writing Another's Dream, 115-116.

47 Quan Tang shi, 4058. Trans. Daniel Bryant in Wu-chi Liu and Irving Yucheng Lo, eds. and trans., Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975) 196. The translation is modified by this writer.

48 Zhang Bo 張勃, Wu lu 吳錄. Cited in Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol.3, 1385. My own translation.

49 From Liu Yuxi's "At Jinling, Cherishing the Past" 金陵懷古, Quan Tang shi, 4118. My own translation.

50 In Wu Tiaogong's opinion, Li Shangyin blends "yong shi" and "huai gu" in many of his historical poems by means of imagination and detachment from the scene of the poem. See Wu, Li Shangyin vanjiu, 136.

51 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 686. My own translation.

52 Quoted from Kao Yu-kung, and Mei Tsu-lin, "Meaning, Metaphor, and Allusion in T'ang Poetry," 343.

53 See Feng Hao's citation of Sui yilu 隋遺錄 in Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 687.

## CHAPTER 4

### Intensification and Interpretation:

#### Allusion in Li Shangyin's Untitled Poems

In his Poems of the Late T'ang, A. C. Graham says:

From about 800 poetry began to move indoors, in particular behind the doors of courtesans, from which the tz'u (ci) was emerging. Nature is seen increasingly in terms of the artificial: Tu (Du) Mu's ducks wear crimson coats, his pool is covered with a brocade of chickweed, he hears the crackle of forming ice as the tinkle of jade. In some poems of Li Ho (He) there is already a foretaste of the feminine, silken, flower-decked, phoenix-infested imagery of the ninth century, glittering with pearls and jades, heavily scented with cassia or incense, dripping with the tears of wax candles. Women are at the centre of this sumptuousness, if only as the most luxurious article of all; and the love of women is the major theme of the one great poet of the period, Li Shang-yin (Shangyin).<sup>1</sup>

The quotation tells us a few things about Late Tang poetry: it is indoor-oriented; it focuses on love affairs; and Li Shangyin is the representative of this poetry. To a large extent, Graham's summery echoes previous views of Chinese scholars on Late Tang poetry and is echoed by other contemporary scholars of Chinese classic poetry. Especially on the last point scholars generally agree. They think that Li Shangyin is mainly famous for his love poems in Chinese literary history and that he distinguishes himself from other Tang poets and poets before Tang by presenting love poems in a unique way. One major aspect of the uniqueness lies in his composing the "untitled" poems 無題詩 which deliberately bear no titles to frustrate readers' conventional expectations for thematic clarity.<sup>2</sup>

These untitled poems, among love poems of Li Shangyin, are especially admired by readers and later poets. Generally, they have love as their subject and passionate feeling as the theme. Compared to other love poems as well as other kinds of poems in Li Shangyin's oeuvre, most of the untitled poems are more difficult to understand. They have caused great controversy among commentators and scholars. Some think they are pure love poems. Others take them as allegorical poems. Still others argue that these untitled poems are threnodies for the poet's wife. And in the opinion of the well known Qing scholar, Ji

Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805), they are in two kinds, some are love poems and others are allegorical:

Some of the Untitled Poems are really allegorical, such as "Coming is an empty word: going, you leave no trace": some are amorous verse addressed to no particular persons, such as "Recently knowing that his name is A Ho (Hou)": some are poems which describe the emotions and feelings he has actually experienced, such as "Last night's stars, last night's winds" . . . . Readers should observe their difference and study them separately according to the category. They should not try to make out the meanings which are not implied in the poem itself. . . .

無題諸詩有確有寄托者，“來是空言去絕踪”之類是也；有戲為詭體者，“近知名阿侯”之類是也；也有實有本事者，如“昨夜星辰昨夜風，” . . . . 宜分別觀之，不必概為穿鑿。 3

As we pointed out earlier in Chapter 1, the dissimilar views held by traditional commentators resulted from the conventional hermeneutics. In the light of some recent studies of Li Shangyin, however, we see

that in most of the untitled poems Li Shangyin expressed some frustration, subtle and deep.<sup>4</sup> What develops from this is that Li Shangyin ignores the physical excitement of love in these poems.

In this chapter, we discuss Li Shangyin's different kinds of allusion in some of the untitled poems. As his signature poetic works, Li Shangyin leaves us seventeen untitled poems. Of them, there are seven in the seven-character regulated verse form, two in the five-character regulated verse form, five seven-character quatrains, and three old style poems. Some of these untitled poems are identical to each other in terms of described situations and emotional patterns. Some are related to one another in groups according to shared thematic ideas. Almost every untitled poem, however, presents an independent world. Interestingly, besides these poems called "Untitled," there are quite a few poems which have as their titles two words taken either from the first line in a poem or from any line of a poem. For instance, the first two words in the first line of the poem entitled "Wei you" 爲有 are the words in the title: 爲有雲屏無限嬌 "A mother-of-clouds screen partially hides the reclining beauty."<sup>5</sup> As a matter of fact, these poems are traditionally taken as untitled poems, too.<sup>6</sup> In our discussion of Li Shangyin's allusions here, I focus on untitled poems of both kinds that are written in the seven-character regulated verse form, first because they are the most popular ones--six of the seven untitled poems written in the seven-character regulated

verse form are collected in the Three Hundred Tang Poems 唐詩三百首, second, because Li Shangyin stood out among Tang poets as a writer of regulated verse, and third, because these poems are rich in allusions.<sup>7</sup>

Usually, the meanings of these poems are revealed at different levels. In his need to draw on prior voices to help him establish the texture or feel of this kind of subtleness and depth, however, the poet often turns to familiar mythical and legendary stories. The following untitled poem, for instance, illustrates this allusive habit in the poet's dealing with love motifs:

來是空言去絕踪，月斜樓上五更鐘，  
 夢爲遠別啼難喚，書被催成墨未濃。  
 蠟照半籠金翡翠，麝熏微度綉芙蓉，  
 劉郎已恨蓬山遠，更隔蓬山一萬重！

"Coming" is an empty word; going, you leave no trace.

The moonlight slants over the roof; the bells strike the  
 fifth watch.

Dreaming of long separation, I can hardly summon my  
 cries:

Hurried into writing a letter, I cannot wait for the ink to  
 thicken.

The candle's light half encircles the golden king- fishers:  
 The musk perfume subtly permeates the embroidered lotus  
 flowers.

Young Liu already resented the distance of the P'eng  
 (Peng) Mountain:

Now ten thousand more P'eng (Peng) Mountains rise! 8

Line 2/ Fifth watch ( wu geng ) Throughout the night five " gengs " were used to tell about the time, and the fifth geng ( watch ) meant dawn

Line 4/ To " wait for the ink to thicken " means that to rub an ink-stick with water on an ink-slab takes some time for the ink to reach the desired degree of thickness.

Line 5/ The " golden kingfishers " ( jin feicui ) refers to a kind of bed-curtain with kingfisher patterns that are embroidered with golden thread. ( Cf. Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol. 4, 1469 ).

This is the first of four untitled poems given together in the collection of Li Shangyin's poems. It seems to express the speaker's frustration with the inaccessibility to his beloved. The feeling is brought to its highest intensity through the analogy to the Peng Mountain, a fairy mountain in Daoist mythology, and to Young Liu in the story Anecdotes about Emperor Wu of Han 漢武故事. Young Liu refers to Liu Che 劉徹, Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r.140-87 B.C.), who longed

for Lady Li 李夫人, his favorite, so much after her death that he asked a Daoist magician to summon her spirit which, according to the magician, the Emperor could see but could not get close to.<sup>9</sup>

Different from this case, however, Li Shangyin's modes of allusion in untitled poems are sometimes "an yong" 暗用, or assimilative. No matter what kind they are, allusions in these poems are seen to be used by him according to a scheme. The scheme is based on the eagerness to acknowledge and reinforce the mood of his poems, the tone of voice or attitude with which he wishes to speak. A working principle as broad and indefinite as this, is impossible for us to deal with completely here. In discussing features and aspects of Li Shangyin's allusiveness, however, we can partially explain it. In order to see Li's actual practice of different allusions clearly, we try to sort the untitled poems under examination into a few groups divided as "allusions to prior poetic texts," "allusions with mythical and legendary figures," and "a highly poeticized world."

### **Allusions to Prior Poetic Texts**

As we have noted before in this study, most of Li Shangyin's allusive poems construct an ambience or vague mood; even when the poet is making some definite point through the allusion, the poems are usually subtle and evocative. Such characteristics are seen more often

and more evidently in these seven-character untitled poems in which the poet tries to convey a strong feeling of frustration. The feeling is often broader than just love's passion and is more universal than particular. When describing this kind of feeling in an allusive structure, Li Shangyin, instead of using past events, or "gushi" 故事, sometimes employs words and expressions that were used in previous literary material, especially poetic texts. In spite of their varied forms, these words and expressions are identifiable by a reader with an ear well-tuned to an earlier voice, and with a meaning originally fixed in the identified alluded poem, they bring into Li Shangyin's poems certain reference that conveys a mood similar to that of Li's own in one way or another. Traditionally, this kind of allusion is called "chengci" 成辭, or, in English, textual allusion. As he does with other kinds of allusive instruments we discussed earlier, Li Shangyin, by using this mode of allusiveness, puts into his rhetorical mix the stances and imaginative atmosphere of his poetic antecedents so to enrich his poetic expressions. The effect of this fusion is either to make cling to the surface an old flavor at once familiar and evocative or to incorporate that flavor, assimilating it so thoroughly that it adds only a subtle essence. Read the following poem, one of the most well-known untitled poems by Li Shangyin:

無題

相見時難別亦難，東風無力百花殘。  
 春蠶到死絲方盡，蠟炬成灰淚始干。  
 曉鏡但愁雲鬢改，夜吟應覺月光寒。  
 蓬山此去無多路，青鳥殷勤爲探看。

It is hard for us to meet and also hard to part:

The east wind is powerless as all the flowers wither.

The spring silkworm's thread will only end when death  
 comes:

The candle will not dry its tears until it turns to ashes.

Before the morning mirror, she only grieves that her dark  
 hair may change:

Reciting poems by night, would she not feel the  
 moonlight's chill?

The P'eng (Peng) Mountain lies not far away:

O Blue Bird, visit her for me with devotion! 10

The poem starts with an obvious borrowing from a line in the  
 second poem of Cao Pi's 曹丕 (187-226) "Yan ge xing" 燕歌行:

別日何易會日難。

How easy parting is, but the day of meeting is difficult. 11

By immediately calling forth Cao Pi, Li Shangyin announces the allusiveness of his poem. This borrowing, however, is not allusive for the sake of allusiveness. Rather, it enhances the atmosphere of the present situation of the poem since Cao Pi's line reminds one of the image of a lonely woman cherishing a vain hope.<sup>12</sup> If Cao Pi's line stresses the misery and despair waiting for another meeting, a love theme repeatedly appearing in Chinese literature, Li Shangyin adds to it the difficulty of parting as well. The repetition of the word "hard" 難 in Li's poem contains a double point. On the one hand, it is hard for the lovers to meet one another and, because of the difficulty in their meeting each other, it is unendurable for them to part. On the other hand, the first "nan" also indicates a doubt about the meaning of meeting or the pain aroused by a meeting. By echoing and mutating Cao Pi, Li Shangyin here develops the theme of parting and expresses a deeper and more powerful feeling than just heartbreak caused by separation. As soon as Li evokes Cao Pi's poem, however, he leaves it and takes on other modalities.

The second line describes the scenery and indicates the season: it is the late spring. But, in addition to the function of describing the actual environment, as James Liu points out, the images in this line

evoke the feeling of helplessness: "the powerless wind probably represents the poet, and the flowers represent his beloved: he is as powerless to prevent her youth and beauty from passing away as the wind is to stop the flowers from withering."<sup>13</sup> As in the natural environment, the human circumstances are cruel enough. Contrasting the image of powerless east wind, which is usually tender enough to blow the flowers into bloom in the spring, with the image of withered flowers in late spring, Li Shangyin laments the shortness and fragility of life as well as of love.

The next famous couplet depicts the lovers' self-consuming passion. "The spring silkworm's thread will only end when death comes." The word "si" 絲 in this first line of the couplet sounds exactly like the word "si" 思, meaning, thinking or longing, and therefore functions as a pun. Here, by manipulating the homophony of the two words, the poet is expressing his irrepressible passion metaphorically. As some commentators have noted, Li Shangyin borrows the image of the spring silkworm and the technique of playing on the punning from one of Southern dynasties "yuefu" songs:

春蠶易感化，絲子已復生。

The spring silkworm is easily moved to change;

## Its silk-thread once more grows:14

As we can see, in these lines, too, the image of silk thread functions as a pun on "thinking" or "longing." Further, an association can also be made between the word "thread" and the compound word "love-thread 情絲," meaning "endless love," and "sorrow-thread 愁絲," meaning "endless sorrow," with the puns on "love-thoughts 情思" and "sorrowful thoughts 愁思."<sup>15</sup> Here, Li Shangyin once again makes no pretense that his poem is a simple and direct tribute to a former text: rather, by echoing those traditional folk songs, he shows that a powerful way to convey one's passion to others is to let the borrowed familiar expressions speak for him. However, Li Shangyin once again alludes with mutation. Instead of believing that love-thoughts are "easily moved to change," to grow, as is sung in the echoed folk song, the poet believes in constant and devoted love. This, again, renders additional power to the allusive images and therefore expands the world of love. Furthermore, since both the word "silk thread" and the word "death" are pronounced "si," although with different tones, the poet may play on the punning again for the purpose of expanding the poetic image.<sup>16</sup> The commitment to love and life, fused in the imagery of the spring silkworm, is also contained in the image of candle in the fourth line: "The candle will not dry its tears until it turns to ashes." And the candle will keep on burning until it becomes

ashes. This self-destructing and self-extinction symbolically expresses the poet's passion and yearning that will not stop until the whole heart turns to ashes. Intratextually, this kind of symbolization is seen in the last couplet of the last poem of the poet's famous "Terrace of Yan, Four Poems" 燕臺四首:

風車雨馬不持去，蠟燭啼紅怨天曙。

Wind carriage and rain steeds will not take you there:

The wax candle weeps red, grieved that the sky grows  
light.<sup>17</sup>

Here, the poet compares himself with a burning candle: the smouldering fire burning in the heart melting into drops of red tears. As Yeh Chia-ying remarks: "If you take a burning candle as a symbol of life, it burns its own heart's blood to produce a brief flame, changing into blood-red tear-drops as it progresses toward extinction and death. And the light of dawn outside is the signal for the approaching end of the candle."<sup>18</sup> Like the image of the burning candle in the line above, which is symbolically rendered, the famous couplet in the poem under examination is taken "as universal symbols of heart-rending sorrow and hoping against hope, no matter how such feelings are induced."<sup>19</sup>

The next couplet reminds one of Du Fu's couplet in his "Moonlit Night" 月夜:

香霧雲鬢濕，清輝玉臂寒。

Her perfumed hair will be dampened by the dew.

The air may be too chilly on her delicate arms.<sup>20</sup>

If it is clear that Du Fu in this couplet imagines that his wife, while watching the moon and concerned about the poet himself, must feel sad and suffer of loneliness, Li Shangyin's lines present an ambiguity in point of view. While James Liu supposes that the poet in this couplet "imagines how his beloved sits alone before the mirror in the morning, grieving that her beauty may fade away, or recites poetry at night, feeling lonely in the chilly moonlight," Wang Qiugui disagrees by saying that "one may presume that in this poem, the poet adopts an omniscient point of view. It is someone in love rather than a man or a woman that fears the fading of the cloudy hair, that is chilled by the cold moonlight."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the point of view is ambiguous: although the images of "morning mirror" and "cloudy hair" in line five seem to be an attribute of a woman, especially when one is reminded of Du Fu's poem, and the word "should feel" in line six is in subjunctive mood which indicates the feeling of the other, the word "only grieve"

in line five yet sounds like a statement of the speaker in the poem who may be taken as a young man or even the poet himself in the other lines of the poem. The ambiguous point of view here, however, does not do harm to the coherence of the poem since the couplet, coated with feminine complication and sophistication, suggests a deep concern between the lovers and a longing for each other day and night. Both the image of "morning mirror" and that of "night recital" reflect the endless thoughts of love implied in the second couplet. In a rather tender tone, the couplet serves to intensify the unyielding passion implied in the preceding lines of this poem. And this intensified tenacious passion is continued in the final couplet.

Two mythical allusions are employed in the final couplet, the Peng Mountain and the Blue Bird. The Peng Mountain is also called Penglai Mountain 蓬萊山, which is a fairy mountain in Daoist mythology. The allusion implies that the place where the lover lives is within reach, not beyond reach as in the situation of the other untitled poem mentioned before. The "Blue Bird" 青鳥 is a messenger of the Daoist goddess, Queen Mother of the West 西王母.<sup>22</sup> Through the image of the bird, the speaker's resolve is vividly shown: he has not completely given up hope of meeting his lover. The use of these mythical allusions gives the poem a comforting, mysterious, and perplexing touch and the poem ends with a beautiful wish engendered of despair.

Another example of Li's use of textual allusion occurs in the untitled poem below:

鳳尾香羅薄幾重？碧文圓頂夜深縫。  
扇裁月魄羞難掩，車走雷聲語未遲。  
曾是寂寥金燼暗，斷無消息石榴紅。  
班駒只系垂楊岸，何處西南待好風？

The scented silk and phoenix-tail are in many folds.  
The round-top canopy with green patterns she's stitching  
in the late night.  
Her fan, in the shape of the moon, couldn't veil her  
shyness.  
His carriage, running with the noise of thunder, drove  
away so soon.  
Lonely she is with the golden candle-light growing dim,  
No news from him will announce the Red Pomegranate  
Wine!  
The piebald horse is only tethered on a bank with willows,  
Where can she enjoy a kind southwest wind?23

Through the details of description, as often seen in these poems, the first couplet describes the time and the actual setting of the poem and

suggests an atmosphere as well. The place is an interior chamber: the lady is possibly a bride-to-be, as believed by most commentators and scholars. She is obviously not able to fall asleep and, to idle away time, she is sewing a bed-curtain late at night.<sup>24</sup>

Literally, the second couplet details the heroine's shyness, the shyness of a young woman who, we imagine, would use the fan to cover her face when she meets her lover for the first time. When the allusions are actualized, however, one realizes that the word "xiu" 羞 not only describes her shyness but also indicates her feeling of shame, which is suggested by the two evoked poems. One is the "Song of Complaint" 怨歌行 of Court Lady Ban 班婕妤, the abandoned concubine of the Emperor Cheng of Han 漢成帝 (r. 32-7 BC):

裁爲合歡扇，團團似明月。

Sliced to make a fan for joyful unions.

Round, round, like the full moon.<sup>25</sup>

In that song, Lady Ban further expresses her fear of being deserted when autumn approaches. Thus the young woman's "xiu" in the alluding line is associated with the shame of deserted women. Another is the "yuefu" poem "Song of the Circular Fan" 團扇郎歌:

白團扇，

辛苦五流連，是郎眼所見，

白團扇，

憔悴非昔容，羞與郎相見。

White circular fan!

The hardships and bitterness you've gone through

Have all been seen by your young man.

And again,

White circular fan!

Haggard and worn, unlike in days of old,

You are ashamed to see your young man!

From the Gujin yuelu 古今樂錄 we know the story behind the song: One day when Wang Min's 王珉 sister-in-law was severely caning her maid with whom Wang had a love affair, he asked her to stop: as a further punishment, then, the mistress asked the maid to sing a song which she sang is this song.<sup>26</sup> Since the story behind the song contains a girl's feeling of shame and so does the song itself, the allusive echo to this "yuefu" poem adds another dimension of shame to the heroine's "xiu" in the present poem. As for the allusion in the next line to Sima Xiangru's 司馬相如 (179-117 BC) "The Long Gate"

長門賦 in which the sound of the imperial carriage is compared to thunder, James Liu has this to say: "In line four, the allusion to 'The Long Gate,' which was written on behalf of Empress Ch'en [Chen] when she had lost the Emperor's favor, further emphasizes the idea of desertion."<sup>27</sup>

The third couplet describes the lady's hopeless waiting in her chamber and in the meantime symbolizes her loneliness and despair. "The golden flickers grow dim" refers to the vanishing of the candle and therefore symbolizes despair. "石榴紅" in the next line of this couplet refers to pomegranate flowers 石榴花 which indicate the time of the year, the fifth month. But it also stands for the "red pomegranate wine" 石榴酒 that derives from a story in the Liang shu 梁書: "Three thousand miles to the south there is a Dunxun State . . . . where there are also the 'wine trees,' similar to the pomegranate: their flower juice can be obtained and made into wine after being stored in jars for a few days" 其南界三千余里有頓遜國. . . . 又有酒樹, 似安石榴, 采其花汁停瓮中, 數日成酒.<sup>28</sup> Traditionally, the red pomegranate wine can be used to refer to a harmonious union, and that reference, though used as a "gushi," is seen here in the line; hence I borrowed James Liu's translation, "the Red Pomegranate Wine."<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere in the Li Shangyin corpus "shiliu hua" is also used to refer to "shiliu jiu:"

我爲傷春心自醉，不勞君勸石榴花。

Grieving for the spring, my heart is intoxicated by itself.

Do not bother to persuade me with the Pomegranate  
Wine.<sup>30</sup>

In the present poem, the red pomegranate wine probably suggests a wedding ceremony which the lady was preparing for as indicated in the first couplet. Apparently, she is disappointed and despairs of waiting so long with "no news." And this despair, fused with other feelings, is reinforced by the textual allusions in the last two lines.

"The piebald horse is only tethered on a bank with willows" alludes to two poetic images in previous poems. The "piebald horse" comes from a "yuefu" poem about a young dandy on a piebald horse who travels around without going home. "Willow" is a conventional reference of man's visiting a courtesan in "yuefu" poems.<sup>31</sup> This line thus implies further the long absence of the lady's lover who is not only wandering about a place far away but also confined perhaps in the company of a courtesan. Despite of her despair, the lady still seems to wish a reunion with her lover in the last line. "Enjoy a kind southwest wind" allusively echoes four lines in a poem by Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232) who speaks in the person of a deserted woman:

願爲西南風，長適入君懷。  
君懷良不開，賤妾當何依？

I wish I were the southwest wind  
So I can fly far away, into your bosom.  
Even your arms you do not open.  
On whom am I going to depend?<sup>32</sup>

Mainly through the "chengci," or textual allusions. Li Shangyin in this poem presents a complex world of feelings. In this world, we see a deserted woman with sorrowful shame, suspicion, and hopeless frustration. Highly sensuous, these allusions, together with the images in the poem, construct a physical environment that implies the feelings. Moreover, by evoking similar emotions expressed in previous poetic texts, they enrich the poem, introducing to it additional associations and implications. Instead of taking the poem, as traditional interpretations do, to be an allegorical reference to the poet's desire to be restored to the favor of Linghu Tao, his lost political patron, I suggest that we read it as a love poem which, through depicting specifically a lovelorn woman, expresses female lovers' frustration and feelings of despair in general. This

amplification of feeling is made especially evident through the poem's textual allusiveness.

### **Allusions with Mythical and Legendary Figures**

As we have noted before, Li Shangyin makes use of different kinds of myth and legend in his poetry. He does this especially frequently in his love poems. For a poet like Li Shangyin who finds frustration and despair in reality, it is natural to enter the mythical world to explore the meaning of life since myths and legends, which contain many archetypes of man's life, are rich in symbolism themselves. As Feng Hao says: "Li Yishan's experiences and feelings are often expressed through mythical affections and amorous words. One cannot understand his poems if he is unaware of this" 義山身世之感，多托仙情艷語出之。不悟此旨，不可讀斯集也。<sup>33</sup> Sometimes, the poet employs allusions to these myths or legends in a spirit of confrontation and revision; at other times, he uses them merely as a means of creating an atmosphere or making a specific tone. The following poem is a sequel to the untitled poem discussed in the preceding part:

重幃深下莫愁堂，臥後清宵細細長。

神女生涯元是夢，小娃居處本無郎。  
 風波不信菱枝弱，月露誰教桂葉香。  
 直道相思了無益，未妨惆悵是清狂。

Deeply sheltered by double curtains is Sans Souci's  
 chamber:

Lying in bed, she feels the slow, slow passing of the quiet  
 night.

The whole life of the goddess is really nothing but a  
 dream:

Where the Little Maid lives, there's never been a young  
 man.

The winds and waves do not believe the water chestnut's  
 twigs are weak:

Under the moonlit dews, who could make the cassia leaves  
 smell sweet?

You may say that it is completely futile to be lovesick.

But perhaps melancholic "clear madness" will not do any  
 harm.<sup>34</sup>

The first line, with the image of deeply-sheltering double curtains, provides a setting that isolates the lady from the outside world. Although the seclusion is appropriate to the despairing mood

of the lady, deserted and lonely, the name Sans Souci 莫愁 "strikes an ironic note by contrasting the literal meaning of the name with the reality of her life."<sup>35</sup> In line two, the lady is seen lying in bed alone. Instead of working on something to spend the time, such as sewing a bed curtain as in the preceding poem, the lady here only feels the quiet and long night as it passes by slowly. "Slow passing of the quiet night" arouses a feeling of sadness and solitude while indicating time and scene.

The second couplet depicts an emotional change. Having been deliberately sinking into extreme despondence, the lady is now contemplating her past love affairs. The two allusions with these mythical figures, the "Goddess" 神女 and "Little Maid" 小娃, evoke amorous associations from previous love poems. The first allusion is made to the myth of the Goddess of Mount Wu whose origin and implication we discussed in detail earlier in Chapter 2. We know that the love affair between the King of Chu and the Goddess of Mount Wu is based on a dream but that it always has the strength to evoke reality, that is, it is a dream whose function is to recall reality. However, through the allusion to this love affair here with the emphasis that "it is nothing but a dream," our attention turns to the illusion, the dream, and the sadness of misplaced hopes, that is, the dream fails to evoke the reality. We see that the lady seems to realize that, as the love of the goddess is nothing more than a dream, her love is over like a

dream. The second allusion is made to the "yuefu" quatrain, the "Song of the Little Maid by the Green Rill" 清溪小姑曲:

開門白水，側近橋梁。  
小姑所居，獨處無郎。

Where the door opens on the white water  
A little way from the bridge  
That's the house of the Little Maid  
Who lives alone without a lover.<sup>36</sup>

This allusion serves as a consolation: since the heroine's love is denied, she would think that she has actually never had a lover, just like the Little Maid. From a broader point of view, these allusions, employed in the comparative mode, ironically imply that love is meaningless.

Images in the third couplet, such as the moonlit dew, cassia leaves, and water chestnut's twigs that are abused by wind and waves, function in a double-edged way. At the linear level, they picture a specific night scene; at a metaphoric level, they depict something much larger than themselves. Some commentators refer the "winds and waves" to the lady's lover and the "water chestnut's twigs" to herself, the "moonlit dew," to her lover's response, and the "cassia leaves,"

her passion.<sup>37</sup> Some others suggest that a comparison between the heroine and the lonesome Chang E is implied by the image of the cassia leaves in line six.<sup>38</sup> In my opinion, these interpretations are too fixed and too narrow. The poetic effect produced by the images in this couplet is that by describing the outer state in a dismal way, Li Shangyin reveals the lady's inner state of sadness. This of course is commonly seen in many poems of other poets.

In line seven, "You may say that it is completely futile to be lovesick," the lady realizes the absolute futility of her condition, but in the last line she says effectively that since she is unable to escape her passion, she chooses to be overwhelmed by it. The conflict between emotion and lucidity struck in this couplet is to a great extent presented in the entire poem. If we see the poet in the first three couplets emotionally describes some disillusionment and despair, revealed especially through the allusions to the Goddess of Mount Wu and the Little Maid, we find him calm and even rational in the description in the last couplet, examining and judging the preceding expressed passion.

Most of Li Shangyin's untitled poems are heavily charged with a complicated mood resulting from the conflict between emotional indulgence and lucid reasoning. As some scholars have noted, the cognitive awakening is usually brought into the foreground in the last couplet of a poem.<sup>39</sup> The poetic force is strengthened, however, when

the poet is weighed down at last by the emotional indulgence. In exploring the depth of disillusion and disappointment, Li Shangyin used mythical or legendary allusions, as seen above, to achieve good effect. Even if the allusions are overt and comparative ones ("ming yong" and "zheng yong"), they, while forming a perfect parallel, often contain a force of integrating the evoked mood with the present one and therefore reinforce the poetic expression. Like the untitled poem we discussed above, the following also possesses a sentiment with conflict between emotional indulgence and lucid reasoning:

颯颯東風細雨來，芙蓉塘外有輕雷，  
 金蟾嚙鎖燒香入，玉虎牽絲汲井迴。  
 賈氏窺廉韓掾少，宓妃留枕魏王才，  
 春心莫共花爭發，一寸相思一寸灰。

The east wind sighs and sighs as a fine drizzle falls;  
 Beyond the lotus pond there is the noise of a light thunder.  
 The golden toad bites the lock through which the burnt  
 incense enters:  
 The jade tiger pulls the silk rope while turning above the  
 well.  
 Lady Chia (Jia) peeped through the curtain at young  
 Secretary Han:

Princess Fu left a pillow to the gifted Prince of Wei.  
 Do not let the amorous heart vie with the flowers in  
 burgeoning:  
 One inch of longing, one inch of ashes!<sup>40</sup>

Instead of making an analogy, as seen in the last poem, allusions used here, especially the overt allusions, effectively create a contrast. The poem opens with two lines that present the place and time of a secret rendezvous: it is a gloomy scene with sighing wind and drizzling rain. The images, "east wind" 東風 and "fine drizzle" 細雨, in addition, evoke in the reader a familiar sentiment associated with the allusion of "clouds and rain" and therefore suggest a strong yet repressed passion; and the image of the "light thunder" 輕雷, which gives a kind of austerity to the already gloomy atmosphere produced by the wind and rain, assimilatively alludes to "The Long Gate" and thus functions "as an indirect reference to the imperial carriage, in which case the scene would seem to be set in the palace and the woman involved would appear to be a Court lady risking grave dangers in coming to meet her lover."<sup>41</sup> Although this last reference created by the "light thunder" image is comparatively irrelevant here in my approach, the allusive effect produced by the image and the other two images is significant in that it demonstrates at once the multiple layers of meanings in the poem. In other words, because of their metaphoric

quality, these images in the couplet, besides functioning as ordinary images that describe the natural world, evoke erotic associations and indicate the speaker's emotion. Hence, Ji Yun's remark: "The opening two lines subtly contain a spirit drawn from afar that eludes analytic comprehension yet can be sensed" 起二句妙有遠雅，不可理解而可意諭.<sup>42</sup> This kind of double imagery exists in the second couplet as well.

The "golden toad" 金蟾 in line three refers to the lock on a door, and the "jade tiger" 玉虎 in line four refers to the decorated pulley above a well.<sup>41</sup> These lines are puzzling and there have been different interpretations. Of the traditional interpretations, Zhu Yizun's 朱彝尊 (1629-1709) seems well-grounded:

Although the lock is solid, the incense can penetrate it; in spite of the depth of the well, water in it can be fetched by the rope.

鎖雖固，香能透之；井雖深，絲能及之。<sup>43</sup>

The underlying meaning of this quotation, as elaborated by Qian Zhongshu, is that despite locked doors and the well guarded by a tiger, the security is not effective and messages between lovers can eventually get through to each other.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the images of the

incense and rope are a play on words suggesting the lovers' passion since the two words, "xiang" 香 and "si" 絲, are homophones of "xiangsi" 相思.

Both allusions in the third couplet are overt. Lady Jia 賈女 was the daughter of Jia Chong 賈充, prime minister of the Jin dynasty:

She peeped through the curtain at her father's handsome young secretary named Han Shou, and had a love affair with him. The affair was discovered by Chia Ch'ung (Jia Chong) when he smelt on the Han's clothes a rare imported perfume which he himself had given to his daughter. Thereupon the young lovers were allowed to be married.<sup>45</sup>

The second allusion is made to the legend about Cao Zhi's love with a lady of the Zhen 甄 family. Cao Zhi was in love with her but could not marry her and instead she married his elder brother Cao Pi, first Emperor of Wei. After she died, the Emperor, presumably knowing his younger brother's passion for her, gave Cao Zhi her pillow. Later, Cao Zhi saw Zhen in a vision in front of the River Luo 洛水. In the vision she said to him that she left the bridal pillow to him as a love token. It was at that time that Cao Zhi wrote his well known piece, the "Ode to the Goddess of the River Luo" 洛神賦. Princess Fu 宓妃, the legendary Goddess of the Luo River, stands for Zhen.<sup>46</sup>

It is here that we can see how the allusions work as a contrast to the situation of the poem. By alluding to Lady Jia's love affair with Han Shou 韓壽 and Princess Fu's with Cao Zhi, both of which are about young men, handsome and talented, favored by fair ladies, Li Shangyin is proposing the opposite: either the impossibility of fulfilling the poet's love though he is as handsome as Han Shou and as gifted as Cao Zhi, or the impossibility of fulfilling it since he is not as handsome as Han nor is he as gifted as Cao. In either case, the allusions give examples of fulfilled love that contrast with that in the alluding text. Interestingly enough, the two allusions subtly connect themselves with "shao xiang" 燒香 and "qian si" 牽絲 in the preceding couplet respectively: from burning the incense to Jia's presenting the imported perfume to Han; and from pulling the silk rope to Princess Fu's leaving her bridal pillow to Cao as a token of endless love. The four lines in the two couplets are thus linked around an emotional point and therefore intensify the poetic expression by establishing an extra dimension of significance.

In the final couplet, as in the one of the preceding poem, we encounter lucid cognition again. As James Liu asserts:

The lover apparently warns himself not to let his heart blossom forth with love, for he knows only too well what suffering this will bring, yet we sense that he cannot really

help it. Such is the intensity of his passion that he cannot stop his longing but can only watch his heart being consumed by his unfulfilled desire until it turns to the ashes of despair.<sup>47</sup>

The despair here reminds us of similar feelings revealed in other poems in the poet's oeuvre, among which is the following line:

芳根中斷香心死。

Snap short the sweet root, and the fragrant heart dies.<sup>48</sup>

In these poems, Li Shangyin writes empathically about lovelorn women isolated in their empty chambers: to a great extent, he is covertly probing his own forlorn, lost feeling through the abandoned, lonely female persona. In doing so, Li Shangyin is not alone among classic poets.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, the traditional self-pity of a literatus in Li Shangyin's verse is not evoked by means of abstract rhetoric. Rather, as we have noted, it is done mainly with vivid and brilliant imagery, most of which is accomplished with apt employment of allusion. Although most of the allusions to myths and legends under examination are overt and familiar ones, they are applied with new

focus or association with other kinds of allusion or imagery and therefore produce special poetic effects. These uses of allusion are seen not only in poems on love but also in other kinds of poems. The following famous political poem, for example, uses some allusions in similar ways:

哭劉賈

上帝深宮閉九關，巫咸不下問銜冤。  
 黃陵別後春濤隔，滄浦書來秋雨翻。  
 只有安仁能作誄，何曾宋玉解招魂？  
 平生風義兼師友，不敢同君哭寢門。

The Heavenly Emperor's palace is deeply enclosed within  
 nine gates:

The Great Shaman does not descend to inquire about your  
 wrongs.

Since we parted at Huang-ling (Huangling), spring waves  
 have kept us apart:

Now a letter comes from the bank of the P'en (Pen) as the  
 autumn rain falls.

Only An'jen (Anren) could have written a fit funeral  
 ovation:

Who says Sung (Song) Yu knew how to summon the soul?  
 A lifelong teacher and friend--this you were to me:  
 I dare not mourn you outside the door of the inner  
 chamber.<sup>50</sup>

Line 1/ The " nine gates " ( Jiu hun ) refers to the legendary ninefold gates of the palace of Heaven ( Cf. Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, Li Shangyin shige jijie, vol. 3, 955. )

Line 2/ Great Shaman ( Wuxian ) refers to a legendary figure who is said as chief of the shamans of remote antiquity ( Cf. Shan hai jing, 7.1b )

Line 3/ Huang-ling [ Huangling ] is a place in modern Hunan province.

Line 4/ Bank of the P'en ( Penpu ) refers to the Pen River in modern Jiangxi province; it may also refer to a town named " Penpu " located at the mouth of the Pen River.

One of the four poems written by Li Shangyin mourning the death of Liu Fen 劉賈, an outstanding opponent of the eunuchs in Li's time, the poem expresses the poet's deep grief as well as his great anger against the circumstances that resulted in Liu Fen's exile and death. The opening couplet of the poem contains an allusive echo to the Great Shaman used by Qu Yuan in his "On Encountering Sorrow" 離騷: "The palace of our Emperor, like that of the Emperor of Heaven, is remote and inaccessible," paraphrases James Liu, "and no

messenger has been sent to investigate the wrongs you suffered. Since we parted at Huang-ling (Huangling), we have been separated by rivers and hills; now a letter comes from the bank of the P'en (Pen) to tell me you are dead, on this gloomy, rainy autumn day."<sup>51</sup> Two overt allusions are used in the third couplet. The first one, made to create an analogy, is to Anren, the courtesy name for Pan Yue 潘岳 who was excellent at writing funeral ovals. The second allusion is applied to enhance the poet's lament for Liu's death by partially reversing the valuation of the original source: Song Yu is traditionally said to have written the "Summons to the Soul" 招魂 to summon Qu Yuan's departed soul. Comparing himself to Pan and Song, Li Shangyin is saying that he can only write an elegy for Liu, although it may not be as fitting as one Pan could have written, and cannot summon back Liu's soul, as Sung Yu is said to have done.

"A lifelong teacher and friend--this you were to me: I dare not mourn you outside the door of the inner chamber" alludes to the story of Confucius' lament for Bo Gao 伯高 recorded in the Li Ji 禮記. In that story, Confucius says: "For the death of a teacher, I cry in the inner chamber; for the death of a friend, I cry outside the door of the inner chamber" 師吾哭諸寢，朋友吾哭諸寢門之外.<sup>52</sup> By selecting from the original source "teacher," "friend," and "the door of the inner chamber" and assimilating them in the two lines respectively, Li Shangyin shows his respect and deep mourning for Liu Fen in a neatly-

crafted couplet: "You were to me both a teacher and a friend; I would not presume to mourn you as a friend, yet to mourn you as a teacher would make our relation seem too formal. I am thus reduced to mourning you silence."<sup>53</sup>

### **A Highly Poeticized World**

The term "world" 境界 has traditionally been used to refer to "a composite impression of coherence in the presented world evoked by a particular poem or by a collection of poems" in general and to the resultant of meditation in Li Shangyin's oeuvre in particular.<sup>54</sup> Since what is presented in a type of poems, or a group of poems, or even the whole poetic corpus of Li Shangyin always has a conceptualizing force, scholars and critics have chosen names, such as "the perplexed" and "the isolated," for Li Shangyin's poetic worlds that indicate the underlying mood as well as the spirit of the poems. Zhang Shuxiang 張淑香, for example, names the world presented in one of Li's major poetic works, the "Terrace of Yan, Four Poems" 燕臺四首, as "a world of 'a long journey.'"<sup>55</sup> James Liu finds a world "that transcends the limits of space and time" in "The Ornamented Zither" 錦瑟, the most controversial and best known of all Li Shangyin's poems.<sup>56</sup> This poem, "The Ornamented Zither," which I quoted in Chapter 1 when discussing Li's ambiguity in general, is our subject in the following

pages. For the convenience of our analysis, I once again quote the whole poem here:

錦瑟無端五十弦，一弦一柱思華年。  
 莊生曉夢迷蝴蝶，望帝春心托杜鵑。  
 蒼海月明珠有淚，藍田日暖玉生烟。  
 此情可待成追憶，只是當時已惘然。

The ornamented zither, for no reason, has fifty strings.  
 Each string, each bridge, recalls a youthful year.  
 Master Chuang (Zhuang) was confused by his morning  
 dream of the butterfly:  
 Emperor Wang's amorous heart in spring is entrusted to  
 the cuckoo.  
 In the vast sea, under a bright moon, pearls have tears:  
 On Indigo Mountain, in the warm sun, jade engenders  
 smoke.  
 This feeling might have become a thing to be remembered.  
 Only, at the time you were already bewildered and lost.

In both Zhu Heling's and Zhang Ertian's editions, this poem is the first. According to scholars of Li Shangyin studies, it is the most allusive poem in the Li Shangyin corpus; whereas, in Graham's

opinion, it is "one of the most allusive of all Chinese poems."<sup>57</sup> Allusive and evasive as it is, this poem has puzzled readers for centuries since the Northern Song scholar Liu Ban's 劉頒 mention of it and it lends itself to a dozen different interpretations some of which are summed up by James Liu this way:

*Theory 1* : That this is a love poem. This may be subdivided into three theories:

A. That it was written for a woman called Chin-se (Jinse), who was a maid or concubine in the household of Ling-hu Ch'u (Linghu Chu), or his son Ling-hu T'ao (Linghu Tao). This was mentioned by Liu Pin (1023-89) and Chi Yu-kung (Ji Yougong) (fl. 1126-33), and refuted by Hu Chen-heng (Zhenheng) (fl. 1573-1620) and others.

B. That it was written in recollection of a frustrated love affair with an unnamed woman. This is the view of Chi (Ji) Yun (1724-1805).

C. That it was written for the death of Fei-luan (Feiluan) and Ch'ing-feng (Qingfeng), the two Court entertainers who allegedly carried on an intrigue with Li Shang-yin (Shangyin) and gave him a zither. This is the theory of Miss Su Hsueh-lin (Xuelin).

*Theory II* : That the poem describes four kinds of music played on the zither. This theory was attributed by Huang Ch'ao-ying (Chaoying) (fl. 1101-26) to the great poet Su Tung-p'o (Dongpo) (1037-1101), but the attribution seems unfounded.

*Theory III* : That the poem was written in memory of Li Shang-yin's (Shangyin) deceased wife. This was first suggested by Chu Ho-ling (Zhu Heling) (1606-83) in his edition of Li's poetry. Chu (Zhu) pointed out that in the poem *Chamber Music*, which was obviously written to mourn his wife, Li also mentioned an ornamented zither. Several scholars followed this lead and developed the theory further. . .

*Theory IV* : That the poem laments the poet's misfortunes in life. Ho Cho (He Zhuo) (1661-1722) remarked that this poem expressed self-pity allegorically, although later he seems to have changed his mind and adopted the third theory. However, his remark has been taken up and developed by modern scholars.

*Theory V* : That the poem is an introduction to Li Shang-yin's collected poems. This was suggested by Ho Cho's (He Zhuo) friend Ch'eng Hsiang-heng (Cheng Xiangheng), according to whom the second couplet

expresses the poet's intention in writing and the third describes his poetic skill. Ho (He) says that he was at first attracted by the originality of this theory but discarded it for lack of evidence.<sup>58</sup>

In most cases, critics or scholars who share one theory claim an interpretation and dismiss other existing ones. But sometimes we see scholars combine a few theories in an interpretation. As Liu notes, for instance, a number of modern scholars see the poem not only as a lament over Li Shangyin's past but also a recollection of his deceased wife and thus they combine theories III and IV.<sup>59</sup> In addition, some recent studies have established new interpretations, such as the theory that the poem is about the poet's response to some music played by the zither, and the theory suggesting that the poem describes various scenic spots the poet visited. The various interpretations made over centuries have proven one fact that this poem is highly complex and is indeed difficult to understand. Hence Wang Shizhen's 王士禛 (1634-1711) well known remark:

一篇錦瑟解人難。

It is difficult to interpret the poem "The Ornamented Zither."<sup>60</sup>

To a great extent, the difficulty of the poem lies in its intrinsic ambiguity; it can become more puzzling and unreadable when one adopts traditional approaches that are influenced by the criteria of "zhiren lunshi" 知人論世 and "yiyi nizhi" 以意逆志, as shown in most of the interpretations described above.<sup>61</sup> Noting this problem, perhaps, James Liu tries to resolve the difficulty of interpreting the poem by proposing that we deal with it in "more general terms," instead of pinning it down "to a particular person or event."<sup>62</sup> In my opinion, Liu's proposal seems to be able to provide a more effective way to read this poem, and in the following analysis of this poem, I treat it simply as a poem by which Li Shangyin expresses his complex feelings about life.

In writing the poem, Li Shangyin used dense images and a composite form of allusions which are made to historical figures, legends and myths, and previous texts. The first line is an allusion to the legendary story in which the god Taidi 太帝 ordered the goddess Sunu 素女, or The White Lady, to play the fifty-stringed zither; because the music was too sorrowful and she could not stop crying, the god ordered the zither broken into two halves.<sup>63</sup> Ever since the story was recorded in the Historical Records and Han shu 漢書, the sorrowfulness in the image of the "ornamented zither" was repeatedly echoed in poems. The following ancient style poem by Qian Qi 錢起

(722-780?), one of the "ten geniuses of the Dali era" 大歷十才子, exemplifies this:

善鼓雲和瑟，常聞帝子靈。  
馮夷空自舞，楚客不堪聽。  
苦調淒金石，清音入杳冥。  
蒼梧來怨慕，白芷動芳馨。  
流水傳瀟浦，悲風過洞庭。  
曲終人不見，江上數峰青。

So well he plays his cloud topped lute,  
We hear the Lady of the River.  
The god of the stream is moved to dance in emptiness.  
The traveler of Ch'u (Chu) can't bear to listen.  
A bitter tune, to chill both gold and stone.  
Pure notes piece gloomy dark.  
Deep green Wu-t'ung (Wutong) brings sad thoughts on.  
White iris there, recalls a certain fragrance.  
The waters flow, between Hsiang's (Xiang) banks.  
Mournful winds cross Lake Tung-t'ing (Dongting).  
Song done, and no one to be seen.  
On the river, many peaks, all green.64

In Li Shangyin's poems, this kind of sorrowfulness plays an important part as well:

玉盤迸泪傷心數，錦瑟驚弦破夢頻。

Tears sprinkled on jade plates repeatedly break one's heart:

Startled strings on the ornamented zither frequently disturb one's dreams.

不須浪作緱山意，湘瑟秦簫自有情。

No need to follow recklessly the immortal on Mount K'ou (Gou)—

The zither of Hsiang (Xiang) and the flute of Ch'in (Qin) have enough feelings of their own.

逡巡又過瀟湘雨，雨打湘靈五十弦。

As I lingered, over the Hsiao (Xiao) and the Hsiang  
 (Xiang) it rained again,  
 And the rain beat on the fifty strings of the Spirit of River  
 Hsiang (Xiang).65

A beautiful instrument plays a plaintive tune. But why does this happen? The poet does not know. This is called "wu duan," or for no reason or pure chance. Apparently, Li Shangyin does not attribute any particular significance to the zither's fifty strings with which the sorrowful melody is played. Yet the expression "wu duan" 無端 evokes a sadly incomprehensible life: like the zither that has fifty strings by pure chance, life, for no reason, has a limited period of time. The association is further developed in the second line. As the fifty-stringed zither is played "each string, each bridge," so are the past years recalled one by one. The zither is thus taken metaphorically as man's life.

Noticeably, the allusion to the zither functions first of all in the couplet as a concrete image and therefore produces certain immediate senses in the context which do not need to be acquired from another text. The allusive quality of the image, however, thickens the sad mood evoked by these senses, allowing us to experience a more profound human feeling by encountering the alluded text and other signifieds. Here, again, we see that Li Shangyin incorporates a mood

by drawing on the atmospheric quality of an allusion-- the sorrowful tone of the allusion. And the plaintive mood or atmosphere is seen to dominate and to spread over the whole poem.

Line three refers to the famous anecdote in the Nanhua jing. In that story, as we all know, Zhuang Zi says that he once dreamed he was a butterfly and could not know if he was a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuang Zi or Zhuang Zi dreaming he was a butterfly.<sup>66</sup> This allusion is another popular metaphor in Tang poetry. Another poem of Qian Qi's is quoted here:

葉徑深紅鮮，山窗滿翠微。  
羨君花下酒，蝴蝶夢中飛。

Path to the simples, deep in red moss.  
Window on the mountain, full of verdure.  
I envy you your wine among the flowers;  
The butterflies flying, there, in your dream.<sup>67</sup>

The preference of poets like Qian Qi for the allusion and their frequent use of it in many poems made the allusion one of the most favored and most frequently used images in traditional literature. Li Shangyin himself was attracted to it more than once:

戰功高後數文章，憐我秋齋夢蝴蝶。

Several essays were written after brilliant achievement in battles.

He sympathized with me in my dreams of the butterfly in the Qiuzhai.

枕寒莊蝶去，窗冷胤螢銷。

Zhuang Zi's butterfly flew away when the pillow became cool,

Che Yin's fireflies vanished when the window grew cold.<sup>68</sup>

Generally speaking, in most of the pre-Tang and Tang poets' poems carrying the "butterfly" allusion, especially Li's poems, the image presents an unreal world and is often invested with the author's lost or perplexed feeling, or that of frustration and even despair. Here, as Zhuang Zi recalls his dream, Li Shangyin is looking back on his own life and is perplexed as to what life really is. And the two words, "xiao" 曉 and "mi" 迷, subtly enhance the revelation of his loss as well

as ours: life is like a dream, in the end everything is past and untraceable; from the dream, a day dream, however, one can hardly wake up completely.

Line four alludes to the myth of Emperor Wang 望帝, named "Du Yu" 杜宇, an ancient ruler of Shu 蜀. About him, there are several different stories of which we have these recorded in the Shuwang benji 蜀王本記, Huayang guozhi, Shuzhi 華陽國志, 蜀志, and the Shu ji 蜀記. The Huayang guozhi, Shuzhi goes:

... Du Yu was crowned to be the Emperor. His chief minister Kai Ming breached the Yulei Mountain to conquer the floods. After Kai Ming had the floods under control, Wangdi entrusted him with government affairs . . . and turned his kingdom over to Kai Ming; he then withdrew to the West Mountain and lived in solitude. It was the second month when Wangdi left and a cuckoo was just calling, so people took cuckoo to refer to Wangdi.

... 杜宇稱帝。其相開明決玉壘山以除水害，帝遂委以政事... 禪位於開明，升西山隱焉。時適二月，子規鳥鳴，因名子規曰望帝。 69

The Shu ji says: "When Du Yu died, it was said that his spirit was transformed into a bird called cuckoo. Whenever people of Shu heard the cuckoo call, they said it was Wangdi" 宇死，俗說云宇化爲子規。子規，鳥名也。蜀人聞子規鳴，皆曰望帝也。<sup>70</sup> When alluding to versions of the myth about Wangdi like the two above, poets usually refer to the sadness of an emperor's losing his kingdom or his death. The following one recorded in the Shuwang benji adds another dimension to this allusion and fits our reading of it in the poem better. In the Shuwang benji the myth goes:

Emperor Wang sent Bie Ling to be in charge of the floods and, after Bie Ling left, seduced his wife. He felt ashamed of his own action afterwards and was convinced that Bie Ling was a morally better man: he then turned his kingdom over to Bie Ling. When Emperor Wang left, a cuckoo was just then calling. Consequently, the people of Shu found cuckoo's singing sorrowful and recalled Emperor Wang whenever a cuckoo sang.

望帝使鰲靈治水，與其妻通，慚愧，且以德薄不及鰲靈，乃委國授之。望帝去時，子規方鳴，故蜀人悲子規鳴而思望帝。<sup>71</sup>

Even if the emperor debauched Bie Ling's wife, the story that he died of shame and spiritually transformed into a cuckoo reminds one of a guilty, lonely ghost, associated with the sobbing song of a cuckoo, and is touching enough. Like Zhuang Zi's butterfly, the allusion to Wangdi is frequently used in Li Shangyin's poems: 蜀魂有餘冤 "The Shu soul has unfinished wrong;" 蜀王有遺魄 "The King of Shu has an enduring ghost;" 蜀魂寂寞有伴未 "Has the lonely soul of the bird of Shu found a companion yet."<sup>72</sup> All these lines reflect the poet's perception of the misery of the allusion and in applying the Wangdi allusion here, Li Shangyin adds the "heart in spring" 春心, and appropriates the legendary that the cuckoo that called and spit blood during the last days of spring was the incarnation of the ghost of Wangdi. In addition to the literal meaning of "heart in spring," "chun xin" could also arouse amorous associations since the word "spring" in Chinese literature is often used to refer to lovesickness.<sup>73</sup> Seen in this light, the third line evokes associations with tragic love; and "chun xin" can be read parallel with the line in one of the untitled poems we analysed before: 春心莫共花爭發, 一寸相思一寸灰 "Do not let the amorous heart vie with the flowers in burgeoning: / One inch of longing, one inch of ashes." Li Shangyin's "chun xin," however, echoes the line from Qu Yuan's "Zhao hun" 招魂: 目極千里傷春心 "The eye travels on a thousand li, and the heart breaks for sorrow," it therefore reminds

us of Chinese poets' "shang chun" 傷春, lamenting their nation's political downs as well as themselves.<sup>74</sup> This meaning of "shang chun" is conveyed in Li's other poems from which we have, for instance, these lines:

天荒地變心雖折， 若比傷春意未多。

Heaven desolate and earth in discord, but though his heart  
broke,

His wound was lighter than the pain of spring. <sup>75</sup>

Viewed in this context, the "chun xin" in the present poem means the poet's longing for love and his grief for the past. Thus, in the second couplet the poet seems to be recalling his past experiences and feelings and, as Zhuang Zi was at a loss when waking up from a dream and Wangdi entrusted his unhappy soul to a sobbing cuckoo, he is perplexed, bewildered, lamenting life. James Liu's interpretation of this couplet is agreeable to our understanding of it. He says: "When one recalls the past, who can tell what is real and what is unreal? Which is real: Chuang Tzu (Zhuang Zi) or the butterfly? Emperor Wang or the cuckoo? What has been or what might have been? This life or life after death?"<sup>76</sup> If this poetic emotion is mainly evoked by the fusion of overt and assimilative allusions ("ming yong" and "an

yong"), in the following lines Li Shangyin integrates allusions into a particularly involved rhetorical and imagistic frame.

"In the vast sea, under a bright moon, pearls have tears: . On Indigo Mountain, in the warm sun, jade engenders smoke." This couplet is highly allusive and the sources of allusions are played against each other. Functioning as an organic part of the total poetic pattern, however, Li Shangyin's allusions here, as good examples of his special use of allusion, possess some amplified vitality which is to a certain extent independent of the allusiveness. Line five, for instance, can not be fully understood without knowledge of its allusions. But, even one who is unaware of these allusions "could pertinently grasp the metonymic bonds that unite the images," as Francois Cheng has noted, the bonds are those "between the sea and the moon (interaction), between the moon and the pearls (shine and roundness), the pearls and the tears:" Cheng goes on, "and finally, the image of the tears, being that of a liquid element (and because the expression 'sea of tears' exists in the language), rejoins itself to that of the sea."<sup>77</sup> Needless to say, the images evoke a solitary and melancholy feeling which is harmonized with the plaintive mood in the preceding couplets. This poetic effect is increased by the allusions that bear the images. Several possible alluded texts are assimilated in line five. Zhu Heling quotes from the Wen xuan:

When the moon is full, the oyster has pearls, when the moon is dark the oyster is empty.

月滿則珠全，月虧則珠歇。 78

Another alluded text is the Bowu zhi 博物志:

Beyond the South Sea there are mermaids ('shark people') who live in the water like fish, but spin like women on land; their weeping eyes can exude pearls.

南海外有鮫人，水居如魚，不廢績織，其眼泣則能出珠。  
79

James Liu suggests that the line may also allude to the expression, "a pearl left in the vast sea" 蒼海遺珠, referring to someone whose talent is not appreciated.<sup>80</sup> Although the sources of the allusions are played against each other, the allusive implications of this line are not unclear. Pearls grow in the oyster in the sea, related to the waxing and waning of the moon. "Pearls have tears" can mean, as mentioned earlier, that the color and shape of the pearls seen in distance look like shedding of tears; or it means that the tear-shedding like pearls were

originally exuded from mermaids' weeping eyes. Tears become pearls and pearls seem like tears, the two things being mingled together. Thus, "the vast moon-lit sea presents an expansive space while 'pearls shed tears' is a melancholy image conveying a sad feeling beyond consolation." Moreover, such disconsolate pearls, precious and beautiful, can also be seen as an undetected pearl left in the vast sea. The poet's artful manipulation of the ambiguous sources of allusions has therefore made the already melancholy image in the line even more mournful and despairing. Hence Wang Qiugui asserts: "In the last analysis it is not pearls, nor is it the mermaids, but the poet who sheds tears because his 'spring heart' is frustrated in face of the vast life."<sup>81</sup>

The "lantian" in line six refers to Mount Lantian 藍田山 which is also call Mount Yu 玉山. The mountain was said to be located in the south of Changan 長安 and was famous for its fine jade. A few texts have been considered by commentators as possible allusive sources two of which contain relevant implications in our reading. The first is in the Jin writer Gan Bao's 干寶 Sou shen ji 搜神記 used by James Liu. In the story, Yang Boyong 楊伯雍, "a dutiful son and upright man," lived by himself on a mountain, "where he provided free water for travelers on their arduous journey. One day a stranger came and, after taking a drink, gave Yang a bushel of pebbles and told him to plant them in the earth, saying that this would bring him a wife. The stranger then disappeared. Yang did as he was told, and the

pebbles grew into jade. Later he acquired a good wife by offering her father the jade."82 The second one is the Ziyu zhuan 紫玉傳 cited from the Sou shen ji by Cheng Mengxing 程夢星. It says that Purple Jade 紫玉, the daughter of the King of Wu 吳, died of a broken heart when she lost the young man she loved and her ghost disappeared like smoke when her mother tried to embrace it.83

As stated in the first alluded text, the jade is very precious and can bring one what he hopes to obtain. As suggested by the second alluded story, however, the precious jade is seen existing only from a distance--once one wants to reach it, it vanishes. A third text cited by Feng Hao as the source for the allusion, however, sounds the most close to Li's line. It is a remark which Sikong Tu attributed to the Tang poet Dai Shulun 戴叔倫 (732-789):

The scene presented by a poet is like the smoke which issues from fine jade when the sun is warm on Blue Mountain (Lan-t'ien [Lantian], 'Indigo Field'): it can be seen from a distance but not from close to.

詩家之景，如藍田日暖，良玉生烟，可望而不可置於眉睫之前也。84

In almost the same words, Dai is obviously speaking about the effects of poetic language. Thus, Feng Hao's parallel of Dai's remark with Li's line seems rather odd here although a similar feature of jade is given in Dai's description--it can only be seen from a distance. While this parallel remains a question, it indicates that there might have been an unknown or lost source from which both Dai's and Li's words derived.

In his The Poetic Exposition on Literature, Lu Ji writes: "The mountain shines when its stones berry jade, the stream is beautiful when its water has pearls" 石韞玉而山輝，水懷珠而川媚.<sup>85</sup> Lu's writing provides us with a valuable explanation, if not another allusive source. According to ancient belief, great human beings or precious things had a sort of light or mist around them which could be seen by (other) human beings.<sup>86</sup> What is in Lu Ji's sentence here describes that the mist of jade hidden in the mountain rises and spreads and this makes the mountain shine. In other words, the beautiful jade light above stones creates a spectacular view of the mountain seen in distance. The reading of Lu Ji's line reinforces the suggestion engendered by the allusion: the shimmery jade can be seen only from a distance and cannot be reached. This shows again that what Li Shangyin is interested in expressing is a mood which in many ways transcends rational clarity. Symbolically, however, the inaccessible jade at the sun-warmed Blue Mountain may stand for life which appears beautiful and inviting in certain ways but is in the end

mysterious and unapproachable. The poet seems in a daze when he meditates on his past. Or more particularly, he is bewildered when he meditates on his experience of unattainable love or his poetic achievement.<sup>87</sup>

Besides the metonymic character as discussed earlier, images in this couplet establish a few contrasts, such as the contrast between the clear moonlit night and the vague warm daytime, and the contrast between the wetness in "sea" and "tears" and the dryness in "mountain" and "smoke." If these contrasts appeal to us at the sensuous level, following James Liu's suggestion, then, the contrasts engendered by the involved allusions, such as that between the pearl's grief for unappreciated talents and the jade's inviting promise, arouse in us a feeling of puzzlement, regret, disappointment, and disillusionment.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the simultaneous activation of the terse and fragmented imagery and the cryptic and contradictory allusion adds emotional and intellectual dimensions to the significance of this couplet. The poetic world displayed here is exquisite and gentle, yet vast and majestic: it is melancholy but also transcendent.

Taken from the linguistic parallelism and the compressed imagistic structure of the central couplets, the final couplet brilliantly tells that all the past experiences and feelings "might have become memories to be cherished; only, even at the time they occurred, one was already bewildered and could not be sure they were real."<sup>89</sup> Here,

the "feeling" 情, of love in particular and for life in general, becomes a "bewildered feeling" 惘情. This, to a great extent, indicates Li Shangyin's lucid comprehension of life: life takes place, so does love, and even at the time when it happens, it is obscure and confusing. Thus, that life is unreal like a dream is emotionally foregrounded here. Structurally, this couplet "reinforces the linear chant inaugurated in the first couplet," as Francois Cheng points out:

Line 7 can be interpreted as a supplication as well as an interrogation (since these are the same sentence type in Chinese): could this passion have lasted (as long as the zither remained)? And, by dint of the renewing of the musical play, can the initial song be rediscovered?" (It should be remarked that the zither has not reappeared in the poem: the instrument seems to have been transformed into a song, a song that is none other than the poem itself.)<sup>90</sup>

With limited words, Li Shangyin writes of "all his loves and sufferings, his hopes and disappointments," and his bewilderments and disillusionments. In writing these, or in our reading of these, it is possible for him to have remembered his wife or a lover, to have thought of his poetry and meditated on his political life. The

possibilities of so many viable interpretations come from allusions which themselves are vague and bring with them multiple interpretations. Moreover, the integration of allusion into a complex rhetorical and imagistic structure not only makes possible the juxtaposition of "things that cannot coexist. . . present sensations and emotions and past experiences, what actually happened and what is imagined," but also contributes to the achievement of rich symbolism and subtle implications.<sup>91</sup> In many ways, this poem outlines the major characteristics and qualities of the poetic vision and rhetoric of Li Shangyin's poetry in regulated verse form. And it also serves to exemplify Li Shangyin's artful manipulation of different modes of reading allusion for a distinctive poetic effect.

The foregoing discussion in this study has indicated that Li Shangyin's complex and indefinite poetry is very much related with his use of allusion, especially his creative use of it. Different from other great Tang poets such as Li Bai, whose poetry often shows effortless, and Wang Wei, who reveals his art through simplicity, Li Shangyin engages himself with sophisticated craft and complex structures to create a subtle and oblique ambience in his poetic world.<sup>92</sup> And in doing so, allusion becomes an important mode. Or, as Francois Cheng puts it, Li Shangyin "moves by allusion."<sup>93</sup>

The art of allusion in Li Shangyin, as we have seen, is often to avoid pointing and so internalizes poetic speech. It is a highly crafted art, though it involves the risk of falling flat or dying away into muteness. In this art, one needs not only to be learned but also familiar with the poet's allusive habit to identify the allusion or allusive tone in a text in which mood, tone, and atmosphere are usually dominant and can spread. To pass over an allusive line without perceiving any thickening of texture or hearing another voice will make Li Shangyin's poem trivial or even empty.

Throughout the study it is recognized that Li Shangyin's use of allusion is a development in Chinese literary history where one finds a preference for allusion among poets of previous ages. In discussing Li Shangyin's poetic creativity accomplished by using the literary past in either a mode of assimilation or that of divergence, I have attempted to show the power and richness of the literary convention to which almost all great poets have recourse. Li Shangyin deserves our attention because his highly allusive poetry provides us with some models in which we see the importance of allusion, or "yong shi," to the literary text not only in its relation to the larger, more general field of culture in its literary form, but also as an integral part of the poetic system. To further explore the significance of "yong shi" in Chinese poetry, one may examine more than one poet's works with a focus on either the

diachronic aspect of allusion or its synchronic aspect. Either one will be the concentration of my next research project.

### Notes

1 A. C. Graham, Poems of the Late T'ang (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965) 142.

2 Scholars like Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程 think that Li's untitled poems are different from those poems which lost their titles. In their opinion, poems of the Late Tang conventionally have titles many of which even give precise information. In such a situation, Li Shangyin deliberately omitted the titles of these poems, or named them "untitled," so that they became enigmatic and could give rise to multiple readings. See, e.g., Gong Pengcheng, Wenxue piping de shiye 文學批評的視野 (Taipei: Da'an, 1990) 155-191.

3 Cited in Zhang Ertian 張爾田, Yuxi sheng nianpu huijian 玉溪生年譜會箋 (Taipei: Zhonghua, 1967) 315. Trans. Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 in Wang Qiugui, Objective Corrolative in the Love Poems of Li Shang-yin, Jiaxin Theses Ser. 204 (Taipei: Jiaxin shuini gongsi, 1970) 16-17.

4 For instance, Yeh Chia-ying 葉嘉瑩 suggests that the reader should try to feel what the poem expresses rather than to explain it intellectually. See Yeh Chia-ying, Jialing tan shi 迦陵談詩 (Taipei: Sanmin, 1984) 268-269.

5 Feng Hao 馮浩, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu 玉溪生詩集箋注, *juan* 3, 566. My own translation. Other examples of this kind are "The Jade Mountain" 玉山, "The Ornamented Zither" 錦瑟, etc.

6 Tian Tongzhi's 田同之 Xipu shishuo 西圃詩說, for instance, represents this theory: "Li Shangyin's poem, the 'Jin se,' picks up the first two words of the poem as the title. This is actually untitled" 義山錦瑟詩, 拈首二字爲題, 即無題義. (Tian Tongzhi, Xipu shishuo, in Guo Shaoyu 郭紹虞, ed. and comp., Qing shihua xubian 清詩話續編, vol. 1, Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1983, 758. My own translation.)

7 For an intensive discussion of Li's excellence in composition of "seven-character regulated verse" poems and his great contribution to the sophistication of this poetic form in the Tang time, see Zhao Qian 趙謙, Tang qilu yishu shi 唐七律藝術史 (Taipei: Wenjin, 1992) 234-281.

8 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 386. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin: Ninth-Century Baroque Chinese Poet, 62.

9 For an analysis of the poem, see James Liu, 62-64.

10 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 399. Trans. James Liu, 66.

11 Guo Maoqian 郭茂倩, ed. and comp., Yuefu shiji 樂府詩集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979) *juan* 32, 469. My own translation.

12 Yuefu jieti 樂府解題, e.g., explains that both of the two "Yan ge xing" songs by Cao Pi are description of women who are lonely and waiting for their lovers who have been travelling far with no news of returning. See Guo Maoqian's citation of the Yuefu jieti in Yuefu shiji, *juan* 32, 469.

13 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 66.

14 The two lines are from the "yuefu" song "Ziye ge" 子夜歌. Guo Maoqian, Yuefu shiji, *juan* 44, 642. Trans. James Liu, 67.

15 See James Liu, 67.

16 James Liu made a similar observation on the homophones of the two words. See James Liu, The Art of Chinese Poetry (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962) 138.

17 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 633. Trans. James R. Hightower in James R. Hightower, trans., "Li Shang-yin's 'Four Yen-t'ai Poems.'" by Yeh Chia-ying, A Brotherhood in Song: Chinese Poetry and Poetics, ed. Stephen C. Soong (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1985) 45. The adverb "intratextually" I have used here is from the term "intratextuality" which, in Thais Morgan's interpretation, refers to references an author makes to his/her own works. I use this word in this chapter following Morgan's interpretation. See Thais Morgan, "The Space of Intertextuality," Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction, eds. Patrick

O'Donnell and Robert Con Davis (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989) 20-21.

18 Yeh Chia-ying, "Li Shang-yin's 'Four Yen-t'ai Poems.'" 92.

19 James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 67.

20 Quan Tang shi 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985) 2403.  
Trans. William Hung in William Hung, Tu Fu: China's Greatest Poet (New York: Russell & Russell, 1952) 101.

21 Liu further develops his idea like this: "It is tempting to connect this picture of a woman alone in the moonlight with the lonely goddess of the moon, and to accept Miss Su's theory that the poet's lover was a Taoist nun." To Wang as well as to me, Liu's interpretation here restrains in a way the meaning of the poem. See James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 67; and Wang Qiugui, Objective Corrolative in the Love Poems of Li Shang-yin, 77-78.

22 In Shan hai jing 山海經, the Blue Bird is said to fetch food for Xi Wang Mu and to be at her disposal; and in Hanwu gushi 漢武故事 the Blue Bird is described to herald the arrival of Xi Wang Mu to the court of the Emperor Wu of Han. Following these mythical stories, the Blue Bird is used to refer to a messenger of Xi Wang Mu in later stories. See, e.g., Shan hai jing 山海經, 海內北經 (Sibu congkan 四部叢刊 ed.) 12.1b, and Guo Pu's 郭璞 annotation to "Dahuang xijing" 大荒西經 in Shan hai jing, 16.2b.

23 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 457-458. My own translation. The "phoenix-tail" 鳳尾 refers to some kind of silk. See Feng Hao, 458.

24 Whether they interpret the poem allegorically or as is, most commentators and scholars, such as Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫, James Liu, and A. C. Graham, think that the lady is a bride-to-be since this kind of bed-curtain was for a bridal chamber commonly used in the Tang time. See, e.g., Zhou Zhenfu, ed. and comp., Li Shangyin xuanji 李商隱選集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986) 196; and James Liu, The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 84.

25 Guo Maoqian, Yuefu shiji, *juan* 42, 616. Trans. Graham in Poems of the Late T'ang, 29.

26 Both the song and the story told in Gujin yuelu are from Guo Maoqian, *juan* 45, 660. There are another six "yuefu" poems under the same title in this group. Trans. James Liu in The Poetry of Li Shang-yin, 83-84. Liu mistakenly uses the first line of the song as the title.

27 James Liu, 84. In the original text, Suma Xiangru 司馬相如 writes: 雷殷殷而響起兮， 轆象君之車音 "The distant roll of the thunder is like the driving sound of your carriage." ( Suma Xiangru, "Changmen fu" 長門賦, Wen xuan 文選, comp. Xiao Tong 蕭統, Changsha: Shangwu, 1939, 16.328. My own translation.) However, I think that Liu reads this line too far into the allusion by adding that "since the Emperor is said to have been so moved that he restored the

Empress to his favor, the allusion would seem to indicate a hope for a similar return to favor." (Liu, 84.)

28 Liang shu 梁書, 扶南 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1973) *juan* 54.  
My own translation.

29 Feng Hao, for instance, suggests this reading. See Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 458; James Liu and Zhou Zhenfu repeat Feng's view in their interpretations of this line, see Liu, 84; and Zhou, 195.

30 From Li's "Ji nao Han tongnian" 寄憐韓同年, Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 83. My own translation.

31 The "piebald horse" comes from one of the "yuefu" poems, "Songs of the Magic String" 神弦歌, in which we read the following lines:

陸郎乘斑駁，徘徊射堂頭，望門不欲歸。

Young Lu rides on a peibald horse

And loiters in the shooting hall.

He sees the door, but doesn't want to come back.

(Guo Maoqian, *juan* 47, 686. Trans. Wang Qiugui, 48.)

32 From Cao Zhi 曹植, "Qi ai shi" 七哀詩, Wen xuan, 23.497.  
Revised translation from James Liu's and Wang Qiugui's.

33 Quoted from Shen Qiuxiong 沈秋雄, "Shilun Li Yishan shi de yongdian" 試論李義山詩的用典 in Li Shangyin shi yanjiu lunwen ji 李商隱詩研究論文集 ed. Guoli Zhongshan daxue Zhongwen xuehui (Taipei: Tiangong, 1984) 626. Shen also thinks that not only mythical and legendary allusions are most often encountered in Li Shangyin's oeuvre, but Li is more interested in these kinds of allusions than any other Tang or pre-Tang poet. See Shen, 621-627.

34 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shi jianzhu, *juan* 2, 458. Trans. James Liu, 85.

35 James Liu, 85.

36 Guo Maoqian, Yuefu shiji, *juan* 47, 685. Trans. Graham in Poems of the Late T'ang, 152.

37 See, e.g., Wang Qiugui, Objective Corrolative, 71.

38 See Graham, 153.

39 See, e.g., Huang Shengxiong 黃盛雄, "Li Yishan qilu molian de qianghua yu shenhua" 李義山七律末聯的強化與深化. Zhongwai wenxue 中外文學 181-6 (1989): 4-21.

40 Feng Hao. Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 386. Trans. James Liu, 64.

41 James Liu, 65.

42 Cited in Liu Xuekai 劉學鐸, and Yu Shucheng 余恕誠, Li Shangyin shige jijie 李商隱詩歌集解, vol. 4, 1479. My own translation.

43 Cited in Liu Xuekai, and Yu Shucheng, vol. 4, 1470. My own translation.

44 Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書, Fengzhu Yuxisheng shiji quanping 馮注玉溪生詩集詮評 (Unpublished). Cited in Zhou Zhenfu, Li Shangyin xuanji, 203.

45 See Li Zhuowu 李卓吾, annot., Shishuo xinyu bu 世說新語補 (Taipei: Guangwen, 1980) 20.16b-17a. The condensed translation is from James Liu, 64.

46 See Li Shan's 李善 annotation to "Luoshen Fu" 洛神賦 in Wen xuan, 19.401-402.

47 James Liu, 65.

48 From Li Shangyin's "Terrace of Yan, Four Poems" 燕臺四首, Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 3, 633. Trans. James Hightower in Yeh Chia-ying's "Li Shang-yin's 'Four Yen-t'ai Poems.'" 45.

49 Lu Zhenghui 呂正惠 makes the very point in discussing the similarity between the literatus' attitude toward life expressed in classic literature and a traditional woman's life. See Lu Zhenghui, Shuqing chuantong yu zhengzhi xianshi 抒情傳統與政治現實 (Taipei: Da'an, 1989) 211-215.

50 Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 196. Trans. James Liu, 132.

51 James Liu. 132-133.

52 Li Ji 禮記 (Sibi congkan 四部叢刊 ed.) 2.5a. Trans. James Liu. 132.

53 James Liu. 133.

54 Stephen Owen. Readings in Chinese Literary Thought (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 585. Also, this term is sometimes used to describe the atmosphere or realm created with juxtaposed images in classical poetry. See, e.g., Yip Wai-lim 葉維廉, "Zhongxi bijiao wenxue zhong mozi de yingyong" 中西比較文學中模子的應用, Zhongguo gudian wenxue bijiao yanjiu 中國古典文學比較研究, by Yip Wai-lim, et al (Taipei: Liming wenhua, 1977) 6.

55 See Zhang Shuxiang 張淑香, Li Yishan shi xilun 李義山詩析論 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1974) 188-193.

56 James Liu. 206.

57 A. C. Graham, 27.

58 James Liu. 52-53. And Chen Dingshan's 陳定山 theory that it is written for the younger sister of Li's wife can be added to the first theory: Gao Buying 高步瀛 holds a view similar to Theory IV, see Gao Buying, Xin jiao Tang Song shi juyao 新校唐宋詩舉要 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua, 1992) vol. 2, 621; as for theory V, also see Qian Zhongshu, Tan yi lu 談藝錄, revised edition (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984) 114; and Guan zhui bian 管錐編, vol. 3, 1184.

59 For detailed information, see James Liu, 54.

60 Wang Shizhen 王士禛, "Xifang Yuan Yishan lun shi jueju" 戲仿元遺山論詩絕句. Cited in Yuan Mei 袁枚, *Suiyuan shihua* 隨園詩話 vol. 2 (Taipei: Guangwen, 1971) 4.

61 For a detailed criticism of these interpretations, see James Liu, 54-56.

62 James Liu, 56.

63 See Han shu, Jiaosi zhi 漢書, 郊祀志, *juan 25 shung*.

64 Qian Qi 錢起, "The Master of Xiang Plays His Lute" 省試湘靈鼓瑟, Quan Tang shi, 2651. Trans. Francois Cheng in Francois Cheng, Chinese Poetic Writing, trans. Jerome P. Seaton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) 191.

65 The first couplet quoted here is from the second of Li Shangyin's "Peonies Damaged by Rain at Huizhong" 同中牡丹為雨所敗 (Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan 1*, 117. Trans. James Liu, 59. Modified.), and the second quoted couplet from "Playing the Panpipes under the Silver River" 銀河吹笙 (Feng Hao, *juan 3*, 697. Trans. Liu, 108.), and the third one from his "Written after a Dream, while Listening to the Rain together with Candidates Wang and Zheng, on the 28th Night of the Seventh Month" 七月二十八日夜與王鄭二秀才聽雨後夢作. (Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan 1*, 190. Trans. James Liu, 114.)

66 See Zhuang Zi 莊子, Nanhua jing 南華經, 內篇, 齊物論 (Taipei: Zhongguo zixue mingzhu jicheng bianyin jijinhui, 1977) 2.22b.

67 Qian Qi. "Dedicated to the Hermit Ts'ui" 題崔頤人山亭, Quan Tang shi, 2684. Trans. Francois Cheng in Chinese Poetic Writing, 121.

68 The first two lines are from "Oucheng zhuanyun qishier ju zeng si tongshe" 偶成轉韻七十二句贈四同舍 (Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 425.): the second two lines from "Qiuri wansi" 秋日晚思 (Feng Hao, *juan* 1, 241.). Both translations are mine. Also, there are five poems in the Li Shangyin corpus that bear "butterfly" 蝶 in the title, and about thirty poems mention it in the content.

69 Chang Qu 常璩, Huayang guozhi 華陽國志, 蜀志 (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1937) *juan* 3, 2a-2b. My own translation.

70 Cited in Li Shan's annotation to the "Shudu Fu" 蜀都賦. See Wen xuan, 4.92. My own translation.

71 Yang Xiong 楊雄, Shuwang benji 蜀王本記, cited in Zhu Heling 朱鶴齡, Li Yishan shiji 李義山詩集, *juan shang*, 1b. My own translation.

72 Quoted respectively from Li's "Ai zheng" 哀箏 (Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 389. My translation.), "Jingni" 井泥 (Feng Hao, *juan* 1, 152. My translation.), and "Yan tai" 燕臺 (Feng Hao, *juan* 3, 632. Trans. James Liu, 71.).

73 See James Liu, 45.

74 Qu Yuan 屈原, "Zhao hun" 招魂 Chu ci zhushi 楚辭注釋, ed. Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元 (Taipei: Wenjin, 1993) 521. Trans. David Hawkes in David Hawkes, trans., Ch'u Tz'u: The Songs of the South (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) 109. Wang Qiugui also mentions this echo. see Wang, 37.

75 From Li Shangyin, "Crooked River" 曲江, Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 1, 144. Trans. Graham in Poems of the Late T'ang, 162.

76 James Liu, 56.

77 Francois Cheng, Chinese Poetic Writing, 88. The brackets in the quotation are original.

78 Cited in Zhu Heling, Li Yishan shiji, *juan shang*, 1b. Trans. Graham, 169.

79 Zhang Hua 張華, Bowu zhi 博物志 (Changsha: Shangwu, 1939) 9.57. Trans. Graham, 169.

80 James Liu, 51.

81 For both quotations here. see Wang Qiugui, 38.

82 James Liu, 51. For the original text, see Gan Bao 干寶, Sou shen ji 搜神記 (Changsha: Shangwu, 1937) 11.75-76.

83 See Gan Bao, Sou shen ji, 16.108.

84 Wang Yinglin 王應麟, Kunxue jiwen 困學紀聞, cited in Feng Hao, Yuxisheng shiji jianzhu, *juan* 2, 949. Trans. Graham, 170.

85 Lu Ji 陸機, Wen Fu 文賦 in Wen xuan, 17.353. My own translation.

86 See, e.g., Han shu, Gaodi ji 漢書, 高帝紀, *juan 1 shang*.

87 As suggested by scholars, the jade in this line can be taken as a symbol of an unattainable woman or reference to Li's poetic excellence. See, e.g., Francois Cheng, Chinese Poetic Writing, 89; and Qian Zhongshu's remark quoted by Zhou Zhengfu in Zhou, Li Shangyin xuanji, 2-3. In Qian's opinion, the whole poem is about Li's poetry and its effect. If viewed in the light of Qian's interpretation, which I think is too narrow in scope, Dai Shulun's 戴叔倫 words would fit the context well.

88 See James Liu, 208.

89 James Liu, 56-57.

90 Francois Cheng, 90.

91 See James Liu, 208.

92 It needs to be pointed out that in many cases Li Bai and Wang Wei expose their individual characteristics also by means of allusion. In Paula Varsano's recent study of Li Bai, for example, she displays how Li's particular employment of allusion helps the poet reach the effect of effortlessness. See Paula M. Varsano, "Immediacy and Allusion in the Poetry of Li Bo." Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 52 (1992 ): 225-261.

93 Francois Cheng. 84.

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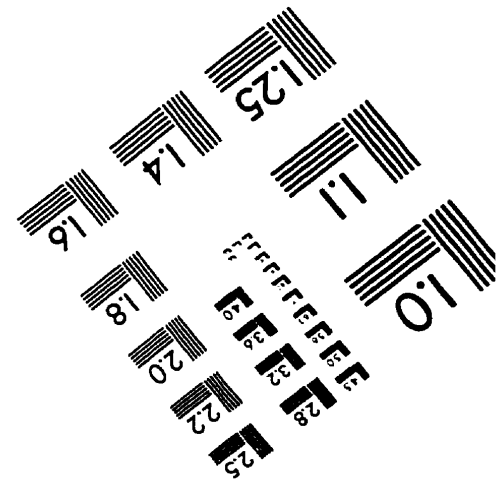
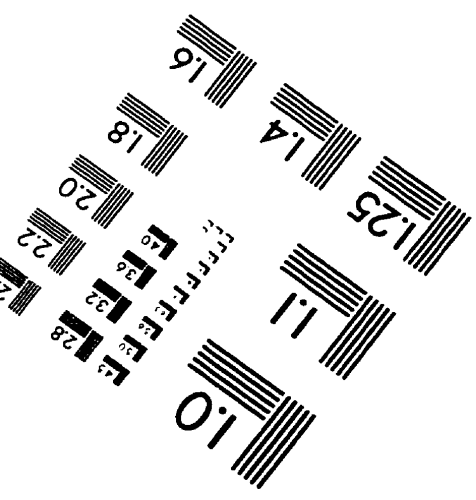
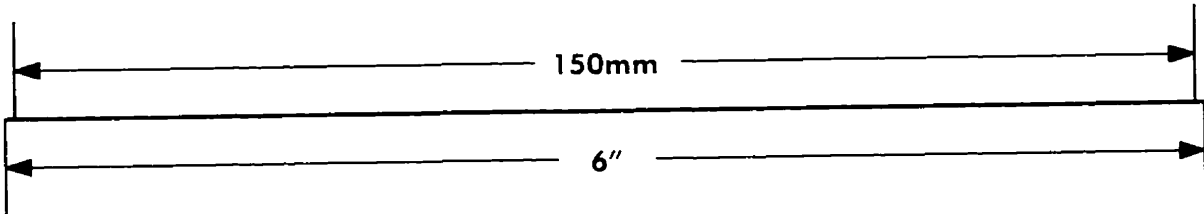
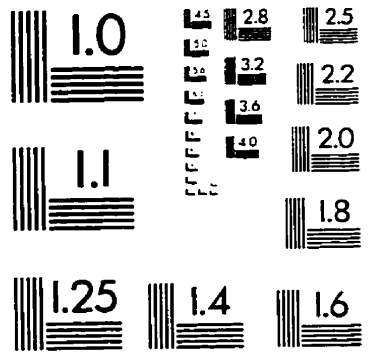
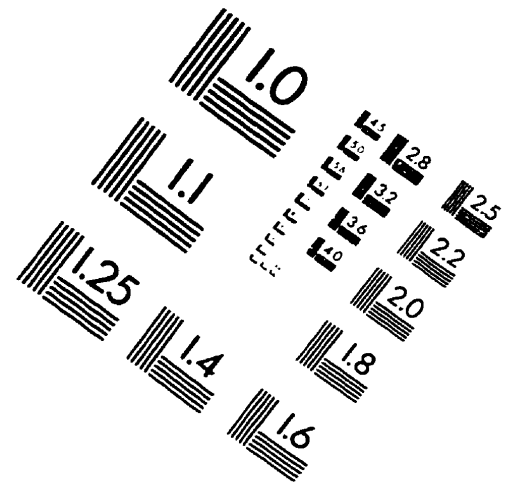
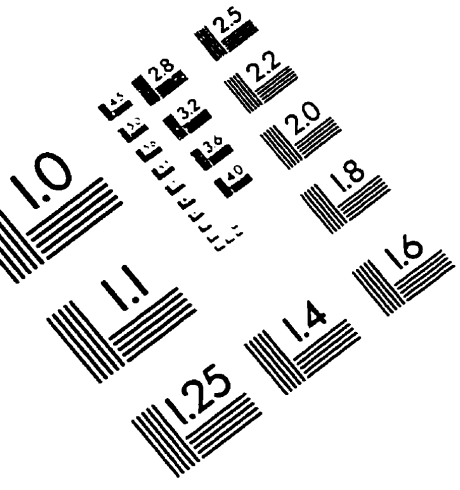
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